Prophets and Priests: Religious Leaders and Protest in Iraq

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Abstract

When do religious clerics join anti-government protest and in what capacity? In my dissertation project, I argue that clerical participation in protest is mediated by the internal structure of the religious system. Specifically, the degree of hierarchy and bureaucratization of a religious system imposes different abilities and responsibilities on individual clerics therein. In turn, these factors mediate clerical behavior and determine the type and timing of clerical participation in the face of external pressures and particular ideological leanings. I build this structural theory of clerical participation by analyzing the behavior of clerics in the Iraqi Hawza (the Shi'a religious establishment) in six instances of anti-government protest from 1917 to 2020. I triangulate data gathered from clerical, government, and opposition resources from ten months of fieldwork in Iraq in addition to archival work and interviews in the United States and the United Kingdom. I argue that clerical decisions to participate in protest are influenced by structural pressures from their respective position in their religious institutions. When religious elites feel a responsibility to maintain the institutional integrity of the religious establishment, they avoid advocating rebellion because it risks harming the institution. Rebellion is most likely to be instigated and supported by religious elites who are influential but who feel limited institutional responsibilities. These influential, low-responsibility clerics are few in number because influence and responsibility tend to go together, but their call to action can plunge a society into violence. In the Iraqi case, these tend to be clerics with informal (usually, familial) ties to the religious establishment but no official position within it. High-responsibility clerics may get involved in protest after violence has broken out, seeking to manage the conflict in ways that will leave the institutions unscathed. These arguments hold across over a century of Iraqi history and have significant policy implications for the region.

Thesis Supervisor: Roger Petersen
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Acknowledgements and Dedication

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My parents left Iraq amidst an uprising in their late twenties and, since then, have dedicated all their energy to giving me and my siblings the life that legacies of war and authoritarianism took away from them. My dad has an inextinguishable belief in my capabilities that flies in the face of all the clichés of Arab men. My mom did half of the work for this dissertation: she taught me Arabic, she taught me about Shi'ism, and she mentored me through all the ups and downs of Wellesley and MIT. They also gave me my siblings, Ahmed and Heba, who have always had my back. But family is not just by blood: Sara Minkara and Sara Hamza have made Boston a home for me. And of course Khala Um Yehya and Amu Jerry were another set of parents to me. Amu Jerry taught me everything I know about writing and he is the person I most wanted to share my dissertation with. He passed away during my second-to-last fieldwork trip. This dissertation is dedicated to him.

Chapter One

Introduction

A few months after Grand Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini instigated mass anti-government protests in Iran, a pro-clerical mass movement erupted in neighboring Iraq. Thousands of Shiʿas, from all over Iraq, flocked to the house of Grand Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, an elite cleric of the religious establishment. This show of allegiance greatly alarmed the Iraqi government, whose fears of Shiʿa mobilization were compounded by the propinquity of the Iranian Revolution. Moreover, they had reason to fear the mobilization capacity of al-Sadr himself, a revolutionary political thinker who inspired and was inspired by Khomeini.[1] However, rather than seize the opportunity to stage a Shiʿa revolution in Iraq, al-Sadr urged his followers to return to their homes. Why did Khomeini and al-Sadr, both elite clerics espousing revolutionary ideas and living under oppressive regimes, behave differently during instances of popular anti-government protest?

Far beyond Shiʿism and the Middle East, religious leaders, willingly or unwillingly, have often been implicated in rebellion. Archbishop Oscar Romero was assassinated at the altar for his support of the poor and powerless and for his condemnations of government violence against Salvadoran activists in the lead up to the Salvadoran Civil War.[2] In Poland, Cardinal Stefan Wyszynski was an instrumental force against the communist regime as well as an essential mediator who redefined church-state relations in the country.[3] And, in Myanmar's Saffron

[1] For more details on the intellectual relationship between Khomeini and al-Sadr, particularly with regards to the Iranian constitution, see: (Mallat 1988).
[2] For more information about Archbishop Romero and the Catholic Church in the Salvadoran Civil War, see: (Dada 2015; Eisenbrandt 2017).
[3] For more information about Cardinal Wyszynski, see: (Dobbs 1981; O'Donnell 2005), on the Polish Church and Communism, see: (J. Anderson 2003; Eberts 1998; Fleming 2010).

Revolution of 2007, it was a group of Buddhist monks – the All-Burma Monks Alliance – which led the protest movement.[4]

I argue that despite their ubiquity in protest movements, religious leaders are more likely to be followers than leaders of anti-government protest. More specifically, I argue that clerical response to protest is impacted by two factors: first, an individual cleric's degree of authority. Second, a cleric's sense of responsibility for the protection of the religious establishment that they are a part of. These factors are produced by the structure of the religious establishment.

Previous scholarship has highlighted two other routes to clerical participation in protest. First, studies from the political economy of religion school posit that clerics are rational actors whose relationship with other actors (e.g. the state, the rebels, the public, and other religious institutions) determines the benefits and likelihood of participation in protest (De Juan 2009; Gill 2001; Iannaccone 1998; Taylor 2008; Trejo 2009). Secondly, previous studies have emphasized the importance of ideology in determining clerical response to protest movements. However, these theories over-predict the instigation of anti-government protest by clerical elites.

In my dissertation, I highlight an overlooked factor: the responsibility that religious leaders feel to protect their institutions from harm. I argue that clerical decisions to participate in protest are influenced by structural pressures from their respective position in their religious institutions. When religious elites feel a responsibility to maintain the institutional integrity of the religious establishment, they avoid advocating rebellion because it risks harming the institution. Rebellion is most likely to be instigated and supported by religious elites who are influential but who feel limited institutional responsibilities. These influential, low-responsibility clerics are few

[4] For more information about the role of Buddhist Monks in Burmese politics, see: (M. J. Walton 2016). Also see articles on U Gambira, a well-known activist monk: (Burma: Political Prisoners Released | Human Rights Watch n.d.; Gambira: Burmese monk freed after new charges dropped - BBC News n.d.).

in number because influence and responsibility tend to go together, but their call to action can plunge a society into violence. High-responsibility clerics may get involved after violence has broken out, seeking to manage the conflict in ways that will leave the institutions unscathed. But they are not the instigators.

I build this structural theory of religious participation in protest by studying the role of the Iraqi Hawza, the Shiʿa religious establishment, across over a century of anti-government protests. I find that despite changes in the political context (i.e. a shift from colonialism to authoritarianism to democratization) and despite ideological developments in the Shiʿa clerical community (i.e. the introduction of Khomeini's theocratic model of Wilayat al-Faqih), the leaders of the Hawza (the marjaʿiyya) remained mostly un-involved in protest. At the same time, other Hawza elites displayed a broader range of proactive political behavior. In some instances, these clerics served as mediators between the state and the protestors and in other cases, they took on leadership roles. How can this variation in clerical political activism be explained?

1 The Argument in Brief

Two key variables – authority and responsibility – predict which clerics will instigate protest and which will remain un-involved. Authority is the ability to move people to certain beliefs and actions without the use of coercion.[5] Authority increases clerical *capacity* for enacting and supporting protests. Institutional responsibility is the obligation a cleric feels towards protecting the religious establishment and ensuring its well-being and perpetuation. A sense of institutional responsibility reduces clerical *motivations* for enacting and supporting protests. High-

[5] This definition of authority was inspired by Rich Nielsen's discussion of authority in *Islamic Authority in the Internet Age* (unpublished book manuscript).

responsibility clerics are wary of risky political behavior that can threaten the survival of the institution. This can happen by inviting state reprisals under authoritarianism or, by introducing economic harm under democratization.

Each cleric's authority and responsibility are determined largely by the hierarchy and bureaucratization of their religious system, and their place within that system. Hierarchy in a religious system is characterized by the presence of clearly delineated and ranked positions of authority. In these systems, power is centralized relatively in the hands of a few people. On one hand, a hierarchical system endows elites with higher mobilization capacity because they can activate power relationships to mobilize individuals and access resources. When scholars theorize the role of religious elites in protest, this mobilization capacity of hierarchy is what they have in mind (Butt 2016).

But hierarchy endows leaders with responsibilities as well as capacities. Those at the top of a religious hierarchy are often cautious. They feel responsible for maintaining the spiritual system that brings salvation to their adherents. They want to protect their own position of authority within the hierarchy. And their high position makes them the public face of the institution to outsiders. This means they feel a responsibility to manage outsiders' impressions of the institution, its leaders, and its adherents.

How is responsibility for perpetuating the institution distributed throughout a religious hierarchy? I argue that the bureaucratization of the religious system holds the key to understanding whether responsibility for the perpetuation of the system is distributed widely or rests on the shoulders of just a few. In highly bureaucratized systems, characterized by standard operating procedures and rational-legal authority, clerics are rewarded for prioritizing allegiance to the institution itself. This gives each cleric a stake in perpetuating the system.

In contrast, when a religious system is very hierarchical but has minimal bureaucratization, the responsibilities of perpetuating the system are not spread as evenly. Instead, these responsibilities stay concentrated at the top.

The matrix of configurations of hierarchy and bureaucratization impact who in a religious system will have authority and who will feel responsibility to protect the institution. Combinations of authority and responsibility determine who will be most eager to initiate protest (given a set of grievances) and who will be most cautious. These combinations map onto several observable implications for clerical behavior that are studied as outcome variables in this dissertation including: instigation, mediation, non-involvement, opportunism, and bandwagoning (following). These variables, and the theory of institutional responsibility, were inductively developed through examination of the Iraqi Hawza.

2 Why study the Iraqi Hawza?

The importance of the Iraqi Hawza as an empirical venue is three-fold: first, it is an important and understudied actor in both the Middle East and the broader Islamic world. Secondly, despite this importance, it is not an empirical outlier in its structure. Finally, it provides incredible variation on the outcome of interest (clerical behavior during protest) while providing tests of key alternative explanations.

The Iraqi Hawza, centered in the holy city of Najaf, is one of the most important religious institutions in the world. Its political involvement has proven crucial in critical junctures in Iraq's history. Its transnational reach and remarkable endurance presages an increased relevance in global affairs. Despite this and because of the Iranian Revolution, it has been sidelined in academic studies of Shi'a politics for the past several decades. Those unfamiliar

with Shiʿa politics have mistakenly attributed revolutionary Shiʿism to Khomeini and to the Iranian Revolution's legacy. In reality, revolutionary Shiʿism long predated Khomeini and the constitution of the Iranian Republic itself found inspiration in the works of al-Sadr, the Iraqi-Arab cleric described in the opening lines of this chapter.

The academic fixation with the Iranian Revolution has precluded a wider scholarship of Shiʿa politics from emerging. Currently, there is a body of work that looks into the Iranian Revolution and its aftermath (J. R. Cole and Keddie 1986; Keddie 1995; Mottahedeh 2014; Taylor 2004, 2008; Toft, Philpott, and Shah 2011) and another body of work that looks at transnational Shiʿa politics (Corboz 2015; Louer 2008; Matthiesen 2013; Walbridge 2001). There is also a small body of scholarship, spearheaded by Iraqi scholars, which examines Shiʿa political movements in Iraq (Al-Qazwini 2002; Jabar 2003; Kadhim 2013). Despite these efforts, there remains a tremendous discrepancy between the importance of the Najafi Hawza and the space it is accorded in the academic literature.

This oversight seems detrimental in light of the role that clerics have played in Iraqi and regional politics. As a politically transitioning state, Iraq has failed to achieve a consensus about the role of religious authorities in public life. Individual clerics continue to play critical roles – from Muqtada al-Sadr's populist rise to Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani's mobilization of Shiʿa paramilitaries (Al-Qarawee 2018; Cockburn 2008; International Crisis Group 2018; Jabar and Mansour 2017; Krohley 2015; Sayej 2018). Iraqi clerics matter and have always mattered in public life. Every political action and inaction in contemporary Iraqi history has sought a clerical seal of approval – from the constitution, to the elections, and most recently, the anti-establishment protests that have erupted in October of 2019.

This project conceptualizes Iraqi Shi'a clerics as members of a viable religious institution whose behavior, over time, is important to the study of Iraq's political development. It is a theory-building exercise which aims to extract generalizable arguments that can be adapted to other religious establishments operating in other states. In order to render the Iraqi Hawza comparable to other religious systems, it categorizes religious systems within states by the level of hierarchy and bureaucracy they display, sorting them into four ideal types:

Figure 1: Theory Table

	Hierarchical	*Non-Hierarchical*
Bureaucratized	Institutionalized System	Horizontal Formal System
Non- Bureaucratized	Vertical Informal System	Un-institutionalized (Not a system, not organized religion)

Most religious systems do not fit one ideal type perfectly but tend to orbit around it. For example, even the very institutionalized Catholic Church can exhibit different degrees of internal bureaucratization depending on the state that it operates within, which is one of the reasons I describe religious systems as sub-national units. Additionally, although I describe the Iraqi Hawza as a "Vertical Informal System," it is *minimally* bureaucratized and not entirely non-bureaucratized. Moreover, it is becoming more bureaucratized over time.

The Hawza is not an outlier amongst religious systems and particularly not amongst those in the Middle East. It falls between the institutionalization of the Iranian Hawza and the

fairly non-institutionalized mainstream Sunni (i.e. not Salafist) religious systems that operate through official state organs in Egypt, Ba'athist Syria, and parts of the Gulf. In some ways, it is perfectly ordinary because it is following Max Weber's recipe of becoming more institutionalized as it grows larger.

Finally, the Hawza is an important empirical venue because it presents interesting variation on the dependent variable: clerical participation in protest. Iraqi clerics have displayed an interesting range of political behavior from the mediation and non-involvement of elites to the activism and opportunistic leadership of others. The table below summarizes various clerical positions in different protest movements (not all of which are studied in this dissertation), to demonstrate that variation exists both within each protest movement as well as across time.

Figure 2: Selected Clerical Participation in Protest

Cleric	Protest Movement	Position in Religious Establishment	Observed Behavior during Protest
Kadhim al-Yazdi	1917 Najafi Revolt	Chief Marja'	Non-involvement; mediation
Fathallah al-Asfahani	1917 Najafi Revolt	Marja'	Non-involvement; mediation
Muhammad Taqi Shirazi	1917 Najafi Revolt	Marja'	Non-involvement; mediation
Mahdi al-Khalisi	1917 Najafi Revolt	Mujtahid	Non-involvement
Muhammad Taqi Shirazi	1920 Revolution	Chief Marja'	Opposition co-optation
Fathallah al-Asfahani	1920 Revolution	Chief Marja'	Mediation; bandwagoning
Mahdi al-Khalisi	1920 Revolution	Mujtahid	Instigation
Abu al-Qassim al-Khoei	1977 Safar Uprising	Chief Marja'	Non-involvement
Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr	1977 Safar Uprising	Marja'	Mediation
Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim	1979 Safar Uprising	Mujtahid	Mediation

Abu al-Qassim al-Khoei	1979 Rajab Protests	Chief Marjaʿ	Non-involvement; mediation
Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr	1979 Rajab Protests	Marjaʿ	Opposition co-optation
Abu al-Qasim al-Khoei	1991 Uprising	Chief Marjaʿ	Non-involvement; opposition co-optation; state co-optation
Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim	1991 Uprising	Mujtahid	Opportunism
Muhammad Sadeq al-Sadr	1999 Uprisings	Marjaʿ	Instigation
Ali Al-Sistani	1999 Uprisings	Chief Marjaʿ	Non-involvement

The Iraqi case also helps test alternative strategic and ideological explanations. The cases explored in this dissertation are organized into three time periods: colonial era protests, Baʿathist era protests, and post-2003 era protests. This organization allows me to examine how relationship with the state and relationship with opposition actors and protestors impacts clerical behavior. Moreover, there is doctrinal and theological change and variation within and across the Hawza that allows me to examine the impact of ideology on behavior.

3 How to study protest in the Hawza?

The cornerstone of my methodology is fieldwork. The fieldwork I conducted provided both the theoretical inspiration and the empirical substance for my research. Formally, my fieldwork in Iraq (in Najaf, Kerbala, and Baghdad specifically) began in the fall of 2015 and extended until June 2019, in combinations of months-long and weeks-long trips that tapered off in length as I gained familiarity with the Hawza and it gained familiarity with me. Less formally, I have been an observer of the holy cities and of the Hawza since June 2003 – when I was twelve years old – and visited the shrines for the first time. The experience of being an adherent first – of witnessing the practices of emulation and of the payment of religious taxes – has doubtlessly

shaped my own conceptions of what constitutes religious authority and have thus indirectly impacted the earliest theorizations of this work. It is for the sake of transparency that I raise this issue – no Shi'a Iraqi randomly selects to study the Hawza, after all. [6]

This prior exposure, coupled with the multiple rounds of formal fieldwork, has resulted in the development of the theory of institutional responsibility through a process that is described as "inductive iteration" (Yom 2014, 618). Interviews and archives constitute a large chunk of the data I collected during fieldwork. Moreover, my familiarity with the religious establishment allowed me to collect this data with an understanding of the potential biases. For example, while I used a snowball sampling strategy to interview clerics, I intentionally created different starting-off nodes in order to avoid over-representing clerics from certain cities or certain schools of thought. And although I was not able to do this comprehensively, I am aware of and can articulate the gaps in sampling.[7]

In addition to interviews, I collected materials from archives in both the United States and in Iraq. This included, for example, the Ba'ath Party Records at the Hoover Institute at Stanford University as well as biographical dictionaries of clerics in Najaf, which I use to construct a dataset of elite Iraqi clerics.

In addition to interviews and archival material, I collected secondary source data in the forms of biographies, hagiographies, and histories. I also collected primary source data in the form of official clerical output (e.g. sermons and statements) as well as "non-participant" observation of the seminaries and shrines.

I use these various forms of data to represent three points of view (clerics, protestors,

[6] See fieldwork appendix for a more in-depth articulation of positionality and its impact on my research.
[7] For example, a key short-coming of my research is that I have not interviewed clerics associated with Muqtada al-Sadr and, instead, have focused on typical Hawza academic clerics.

and the state) during six instances of anti-government protest: the 1917 Najafi Revolt, the 1920 Revolution, the 1977 Safar Uprising, the 1979 Rajab Uprising, the 2018 anti-establishment protests, and the 2019 October Revolution. I group these protests into case pairs, which allows me to examine the behavior of the same set of clerical actors over time and over changing external conditions and incentives. Then, I compare the behavior of different clerics who occupy the same rank across these three time periods: colonial-era Iraq, Ba'athist Iraq and post-Ba'athist Iraq. This allows for the exploitation of variation in key external factors: regime type, relationship with the state, and ties to the opposition. In other words, how different is the behavior of a grand ayatollah during anti-colonial protests in 1920 from the behavior of a grand ayatollah during anti-government protests in 2020?

The most difficult component of my fieldwork has been establishing trust and gaining access to the Hawza. Although some clerics display a willingness to interact with outside researchers, they rarely provide unfettered access. The Hawza's fear of outside penetration is understandable given its history of antagonistic relationships with the state (Kadhim 2013). Despite the ascendancy of a Shi'a-dominant government in Iraq today, Hawza clerics still operate uneasily, particularly when discussing sensitive political topics. My access to the institution is a result of my identity (as an Iraqi Shi'a academic) and hard-earned connections of trust. I have been able to interview and informally interact with nearly a hundred clerics of various ranks and positions. They have given me candid and thoughtful responses to my questions, and have allowed me glimpses into their private spaces of study, worship and family.

4 Plan for the Dissertation

The rest of the dissertation proceeds as follows: in chapter two, I discuss the relevant literature and answer a series of questions about it: what do we know about the study of religion and politics? And, what do we know about clerical participation in protest? In chapter three, I present my contribution to the literature: the theory of institutional responsibility. I describe how to operationalize and measure the independent variable (the structure of the religious system) and the dependent variable (clerical participation in protest). I also present a set of observable implications explaining when clerics are likely to be instigators, un-involved, mediators, co-opted, opportunists, or followers of protest. Following this, in chapter four, I describe the empirical venue – the Iraqi Hawza – and the research design.

Chapters five, six, and seven each look at a chapter of Iraqi history and the role of the Hawza during protest movements within that time period. In chapter five, I discuss two uprisings that occurred during the colonial era: the 1917-1918 failed Najafi Revolt against the British and the more successful and well-known 1920 Revolution. One of the key points that this chapter makes is that there is a perceived wisdom in the history of the anti-colonial protests that paints certain clerics as having played decisive roles. I challenge this traditional narrative by presenting an alternative understanding of the motivations behind clerical behavior at the most elite levels. I also use this chapter to introduce one recurring mechanism through which clerics attain a position of high authority and low institutional responsibility.

In chapter six, I compare the 1977 Safar Uprising with the 1979 Rajab Uprising both of which occurred during the Ba'athist era. Two points merit highlighting here. First, this chapter is important because it examines the impact of the Iranian Revolution on clerical behavior by examining protests that occurred shortly before the Iranian Revolution and those that occurred

shortly after. Much like the previous chapter, it presents an alternate history of events. However, this chapter is also important because it is (to my knowledge) the only English-language in-depth documentation of two key protest movements that have been intentionally erased from Iraqi history by the Ba'athist government.

The final empirical chapter examines clerical participation in protest and politics in post-2003 Iraq. It focuses on the 2018 anti-establishment protests and the 2019 October Revolution. The value of this chapter is that it is both a "live test" of the theory – given that the protests occur during the last round of fieldwork – and the one with the most important and pressing policy implications.

Chapter eight continues in this vein by providing policy advice to both Iraqi policymakers and Iraqi activists. It aims to uncover what the Hawza's past can teach these activists and policymakers about the Hawza's future participation in protest and politics. It presents a joint analysis of the findings: first, it re-iterates the central claim of this dissertation, that elite clerics rarely instigate anti-government protest. It then theorizes how these arguments can be used to explain behavior outside of the Iraqi case and outside of religious organizations. Finally, it ends by extracting policy implications.

Chapter Two

Theories of Religion and Protest

1 The Challenge of Studying Religion in Political Science

Political science has a renewed interest in the intersection of religion and politics, a sentiment fueled by current events that have highlighted the salience of religion in public life (Casanova 1994; Fox and Sandler 2004; Norris and Inglehart 2004; Smith et al. 2013; Toft, Philpott, and Shah 2011). Scholars tend to emphasize the role of the Iranian Revolution in alerting the world to the resurgence of religion (Halliday 2003; Toft, Philpott, and Shah 2011). But nearly four decades after the event, religion and religious leaders remain a vital force in public life. The world closely watches the political actions of religious leaders from Pope Francis' controversial visit to Myanmar amidst the Rohingya massacre in 2019[8] to the Nicaraguan Catholic Church's stand with the protestors against President Daniel Ortega in 2019[9]. Despite its understood relevance to political life, religion remains under-studied in political science, largely due to its intangibility: it can simultaneously be a formal and an informal institution and it interacts with society, culture and politics in multiple ways. It is manifested in many forms, claimed by many conflictual adherents and used by many actors. Despite its ubiquity, it does not lend itself to generalizability.

Given these difficulties, political scientists have either highlighted religion's uniqueness (what Rogers Brubaker calls "the exceptionalizing camp") or lack thereof ("the generalizing camp") (Brubaker 2015). Proponents of the former either eschew religion entirely or adopt a substantive definition that privileges theology and doctrine over other modes of understanding.

[8] See: (Horowitz 2017).
[9] See: (Nicaragua's Daniel Ortega slams Catholic bishops as allies of "coup plotters" | DW | 20.07.2018 n.d.; Ocampo and Mexico 2019).

A functionalist approach, by contrast, tends to look not at beliefs but rather at the consequences and manifestations of those beliefs in people's daily lives. Within political science, this includes, for example, Ron Hassner's approach to religion as a "system of practices" which emphasizes the need to look beyond doctrine (Hassner 2016). Scholars outside of political science have also arrived at this conclusion arguing that "…religion per se does not exist. What exists—and what may sustain, enable, or justify political violence in certain contexts—are particular practices, discourses, and structures that are understood by at least some practitioners as religious…" (Brubaker 2015).

It is not only exceptionalizing accounts that have tended to focus on doctrine, generalizing accounts have been quite limited in their approach, given their tendency to conflate religion with ethnicity or culture (Brubaker 2015; Smith et al. 2013). The distinction in the literature between these two understandings of religion is mirrored in the literature on religion and violence as well. The generalizing accounts essentially treat religious motivations in the same manner as ethnic ones. In other words, as a source of identity and claim-making. By contrast, exceptionalizing accounts emphasize that not all conflicts that involve religious actors are religious in nature. Moreover, they emphasize the uniqueness of religion as a source of social order and as a means of regulating public life. In practice, this has resulted in a host of articles that take adherence to a faith as a sufficient indicator of its causal capacity or that analyze how religious doctrine may provide motivation without considering how this understanding of the doctrine has been consumed by adherents. There is a proliferation of articles that rely on surveys with measures of individual religiosity and piety (Norris and Inglehart 2004; Putnam 1993; Tessler 2002). These surveys are used to highlight correlations between religious practice and socio-political beliefs. However, many contend that the measures of religiosity – like church

attendance or Qur'anic recitation – tell only one part of the story (Smith et al. 2013). Thus, the literature on violence and religion has shown that one of the biggest short-comings in the field is the insistence on ignoring "…that "religion" and "religious" are hopelessly inadequate as analytical categories" (Brubaker 2015).

Further yet, a third approach cautions that contemporary thought about religion is greatly informed by political practices – including colonization – that have constructed religion (and, rebellion) as categories (Smith et al. 2013). Historian Nikki Keddie warns of this failure in the Islamist context, arguing that the pervasive notion that Shi'ism is more conducive to revolt is a result of a failure in translating Western conceptions of revolt to the Islamic world (Keddie 1983). The contemporary understanding of religion and rebellion, therefore, is colored by political and intellectual history. According to these accounts, "religion does exist, but as a constructed category. Religion is not simply an object; it is a lens, one that often distorts… [we should] stop looking through the lens and start looking at the lens" (Cavanaugh 2011: 66).

In order to start examining the lens of religion, its various components must be identified. Rather than aiming to study religion broadly, scholars should specify its more tangible and manageable aspects. This approach has been endorsed by scholars who have already paved the way for studying specific facets of religion in political life (Bellin 2008; Hassner 2016). I follow in their footsteps in this project by specifically studying what I call "religious systems" as a category. I narrowly and intentionally define a religious system to be a sub-national religious community. It consists of a set of clerics, their adherents, and the array of organizations and institutions (in the form of places of worship and gathering, offices, seminaries, etc.) of a particular faith. Religious systems can be described by their level of hierarchy and their degree of

bureaucratization. In subsequent sections, I discuss why religious systems are a meaningful and useful category.

2 Extant Theories of Religion and Protest

There are several literatures that this dissertation touches upon as it explores the role of religious leaders in anti-government protest. Although some of this literature is concerned with different types of political clerical behavior (e.g. formation of political parties, participation in civil wars, etc…), it broadly falls into two categories. There are some scholars who find that clerical behavior is motivated by strategic reasons (Gill 2001; S. Kalyvas 1996; Taylor 2008) and others who argue that clerical behavior is ideologically motivated (Toft, Philpott, and Shah 2011). This project recognizes that both sets of motivations operate in a multi-causal world and highlights a third strategic-structural motivation. This third theory, the theory of institutional responsibility, re-conceptualizes strategic motivations away from simple self-interest and more along the lines of interest in the preservation of an institution that is larger than the individual cleric.

2.1 Strategic Arguments

The strategic reasons can be divided into three arguments. Firstly, there is scholarship emphasizing how a religious system's relationship with the state determines clerical behavior during protest. A second set of arguments explores the impact of transnational religious networks on clerical behavior in protest. Finally, there is a body of literature which explores how a religious system's relationship with the community of adherents and, by extension, other religious systems motivate its political behavior.

2.1.1 *Religion-State Relations*

The relationship with the state is a factor that has been studied extensively in the literature. Many scholars have identified it as a key variable motivating clerical behavior in times of protest and mobilization (J. L. Klaiber 1998; Taylor 2008; Toft, Philpott, and Shah 2011; Trejo 2009). Its most popular variant is the concept of the separation of the church and state, which has been conceptualized in several ways by different scholars.

One such conceptualization is that of "differentiation" or "the degree of autonomy between religious actors and states in their basic authority" which is measured from "fully differentiated" to "fully integrationist" (Philpott 2007: 505). Differentiation, Philpott argues, is an essential factor driving politicized religious leader behavior, including their views towards democratization and political violence. Similarly, Fox and Sandler use the term "structural separation" to indicate the degree to which the church is incorporated within the government structure (Fox and Sandler 2004). The authors use another four variables to measure the extent to which the state encroaches upon religion by restricting practice. Their measures are based on the state's authority over the religious system (and not vice-versa). By the same token, studies of the Catholic Church in Latin America have measured the degree of "integralism" of the church within political society (J. L. Klaiber 1998). In this analysis, the Argentinian Catholic Church represented the most extreme example of integralism, given its strong ties to the military dictatorship (ibid).

An alternative conceptualization is that of "the twin tolerations" which is the ideal relationship between the religious and political entities in which they are separate, tolerant of each other, and neither is subordinate (A. Stepan 2012; A. C. Stepan 2000). In describing the twin tolerations, Stepan's goal was to push back against the supposition that Western secularism

(as exemplified by French laïcité) was the only viable option for democracy (Blankholm 2012). In the process, he outlines eight patterns of religion-state relations, half of which are observed in authoritarian regimes. These patterns which range from "secular, but friendly to religion" to "theocratic anti-secularism" take into account the sentiments of the population in addition to the state policies and religious group behavior. Most importantly, in describing the relationship as the "twin tolerations," Stefan starts with an assumption that few others make: namely, that the state's stance toward the religious system does not take precedence nor does it necessarily determine the religious system's stance towards the state.

A concept similar to the twin tolerations is that of "independence" that measures "the distance that religious actors and political authorities keep from each other" (Toft, Philpott, and Shah 2011). The authors measure independence through six factors: religious authority over finances, freedom of engagement with transnational partners, the state constitution, the willingness of the state to give religious actors their freedom, the freedom of the religious actor to assign offices and leadership and conversely, the religious actors prerogative to assign political authorities. The authors make an additional distinction between consensual and conflictual independence. To clarify, the state and religious entities can be independent but conflictual when the religious entity has only arrived at this independence through a struggle against an oppressive state. They can be integrated and conflictual when the state has subsumed or nationalized religion, as the Egyptian state did in the early 1960s when it transformed al-Azhar, a great center of Islamic learning, into an official public university (Zeghal 1999).[10] Certain clerical behavior is associated with these configurations. For example, the authors argue that clerics who are in

[10] Also see: (Gesink 2010; Hatina 2010; Singerman 2009).

systems of conflictual or consensual independence are most likely to be mediators. Conversely, those in a consensually integrated relationship are least likely to oppose the state.

Most other scholarship implicitly suggests that the relationship between the political and religious entities is one in which the state's actions and preferences take precedence. Accordingly, this body of scholarship highlights the dependency of the religious system on the state and its fears of the state's coercive apparatus. For example, in dealing with the religious system in Egypt and Iran, Taylor shows that a state can choose between three behaviors: side-payment to ensure clerical cooperation (this is akin to co-optation in this dissertation), preying on clerics, or neutrality (Taylor 2008).

Taylor argues that the interaction between clerics and the state determines when clerics support the state and when they oppose it in times of popular anti-government sentiment. This interaction is influenced by three factors: firstly, the level of public opposition to the state; secondly, the agenda of the rebels; and thirdly, the source of clerical material resources. Moreover, Taylor argues that conflict between clerics and the state is unlikely because the very reasons that would motivate clerical opposition to the regime are those that make the state in dire need of clerical legitimation.

This paradoxical trade-off has been identified in non-Islamic settings as well. The Catholic Church in Spain, Poland and Latin America was faced with a similarly difficult choice: on one hand, an illegitimate regime needed clerical legitimation which gave the church an upper-hand in any dealings with the state (H. Johnston and Figa 1988). In his research on African churches, Rhodes similarly identifies legitimizing ideology as one of the three "goods" that a church can provide the state (in addition to mobilization and service provision) (Rhodes 014). At the same time, the church has a moral obligation to oppose an illegitimate regime, even at the

risk of courting state repression. Interestingly, it is the church's ideological authority that makes it attractive to an illegitimate state. At the same time, it is precisely this ideological inclination that necessitates that it not condone an illegitimate regime. Thus this complex relationship between church and state – though strategic in nature – is fueled by ideology.

These are all behaviors exhibited by the state and reacted to by the religious system. In reality, the state may see itself as reacting to behaviors exhibited by the religious system as well. In accordance to this logic, this dissertation takes into account both how the state views its relationship towards the religious system and how the religious system perceives its relationship to the state as it assesses alternative explanations.

2.1.2 Relationship with Transnational Community

It is hard to confine religion to a nation-state given the potential of transnational networks to impact local-level politics. In the protest cases studied in this project, most have occurred at times in which at least the concept of the nation-state had been formed. In the cases in which the state has not been fully realized, transnational clerical networks were in fact less relevant because transportation and communication technologies were much slower, making the creation of viable transnational networks logistically difficult. It comes as no surprise, then, that the majority of work dealing with transnational religious networks within Shi'ism have focused on the mid-twentieth century and onwards (Corboz 2015; Louer 2008, 2012). Of course, studying Islam in the confines of the nation-state may seem dismissive of the Islamic concept of the Ummah or, the broader religious community.[11] However, given that this project is concerned

[11] According to the Oxford Dictionary of Islam, the Ummah is defined as "Muslim community. A fundamental concept in Islam, expressing the essential unity and theoretical equality of Muslims from diverse cultural and

with clerical behavior in anti-government protest, it makes sense to limit the scope to the reactions of local clerics to local politics.

At the same time, the potential influence of transnational actors cannot be ignored (Toft, Philpott, and Shah 2011). No study of Shi'i politics has left the issue of Iranian influence unaddressed (Haynes 2001; Jabar 2002, 2003; Keddie 1995). In general, transnational studies look at the link between a religious core and its peripheral states (e.g. between the Vatican and its dioceses) or between religious communities across different states that are either both peripheral or that do not have a core. For example, the North American Church has historically played a large role in Latin American affairs (Gonzales 2016; Haynes 2001; Klaiber 1998). Both Archbishop Romero and Archbishop Damas communicated with and received moral support from American bishops who wrote letters to key public officials in the United States urging them to stop their military assistance to the Salvadoran government (D. E. Anderson 1982). In Mozambique and Angola, American evangelicals supported anti-government rebels under the guise of defending against communism (Haynes 2001). Not to mention monetary support – American Protestant Churches, for example, have spent nearly four billion dollars on overseas ministries in the last decade (Wuthnow and Offutt 2008). The funding is largely channeled into relief organizations, and not just worship services and proselytizing (Wuthnow 2009).

The material and moral support of foreign and transnational partners can both ease conditions for protest or make them more difficult, depending on the inclination of the partner or parent organization. For example, research on Christian churches in Africa has shown that autonomy from a parent organization makes churches more likely to oppose the government

geographical settings. In the *Qur'an*, designates people to whom God has sent a prophet or people who are objects of a divine plan of salvation" (Esposito 2003).

(Ngunyi 1995). The influence of a parent organization can go very far, including in deciding the very organizational structure of the local church in a way that is removed from local politics and that may mold the types of political engagement (Allen 1995; Hinings and Foster 1973).

At the same time, transnational powers can conceivably foment protest by providing monetary support to opposition groups, they can intercede on behalf of the local community, or they can provide support to allow a religious community to survive a repressive state. As part of the external environment of a religious system, they can make conditions more conducive to protest. However, and as previous scholarship has indicated, they are not a sufficient motivator of protest and, in some instances, can be oppositional to protest. They are impactful, but not in a particular direction.

2.1.3 Relationship with other Religious Systems

In addition to transnational networks and church-state relations, scholars associated with the political economy of religion school[12] have identified a third factor: competition with other religious (or, secular) systems for adherents (Mao and Zech 2002). This literature is not necessarily in dispute with the former literatures. It is generally concerned with time periods of political transition – like revolutions or elections – which makes the state a less relevant actor.

In Latin America and Europe, for example, the Catholic Church struggled with competition from liberal secular and religious forces respectively. In Europe, when the Catholic Church was threatened by encroaching liberalism, it allied with political conservatives to create confessional parties (S. Kalyvas 1996). In Latin America, the Catholic Church supported the anti-government opposition (and later, indigenous mobilization) only when it felt that it was

[12] For more information on the political economy of religion see: Iannaconne 1998.

losing adherents to the Protestant Church (Gill 2001; Trejo 2009). In his case study of the Irish Troubles, Isaacs (2017) makes a similar argument at a sub-religious system level. He finds that when religious firms are fragmented and compete over adherents the benefits of religious political activism should outweigh the costs. In these cases, religion will play a central role in political mobilization as various subsets of Protestantism did in the Irish case. Contrastingly, if there is one religious firm that monopolizes adherents – like the Irish Catholic Church – then there is no motivation to engage in political activism for recruitment, which means that religion will not play a central role in mobilization. In these cases, religious systems respond to counter-religious forces in society in order to preserve their monopoly on adherents. In some instances, these forces are liberalizing forces and in other instances, they are simply competitive religious systems.

What this body of scholarship demonstrates is that adherents are resources that the religious system wants to maintain. Competition, whether from outside the religious system (Gill 2001) or, from within it (Isaacs 2017), drives religious actors to support the protesting population. A cleric's relationship to protestors and rebels has proven to be very important in Islamic contexts. In the Iranian and Egyptian examples the similarity between the clerical and opposition agendas is one of the main reasons that drove clerics to support or oppose the state (Taylor 2004). In Latin America, too, the church nurtured relationships with the opposition when it feared its growing irrelevance (J. L. Klaiber 1998).

2.2 Ideological Arguments

Gill's strategic argument has faced criticism from Philpott (2007) who noted that the timing of Protestant conversion did not line up with Catholic opposition to the regime. In order to

account for some of Gill's outlier cases, like Guatemala, Philpott points out that the death of certain pro-regime cardinals and their replacement with ones who were ideologically inclined to favor liberation theology changed the position of the Catholic Church. Carnes and Thiede go a step further and argue that "the Catholic Church's embrace of these roles had a distinctly theological origin and was not undertaken for simply instrumental or organizational reasons"(Thiede and Carnes 2018, 14). Other scholars have made similar arguments concerning the importance of figures like Cardinal Jaime Sin in the Philippines (D. Johnston and Sampson 1995), Cardinal Wyszyński in Poland and Archbishop Tarancón in Spain (J. Anderson 2003). In short, these scholars have argued that ideas matter and that they particularly matter in hierarchical institutions where elite clerics have the authority to enforce them.

Others whom agree that ideas matter in motivating clerical behavior do so in two ways: one in which ideology is seen as fixed and another in which ideology is changing. In both cases, ideology is important because it is regarded as a tool of legitimation and, occasionally, as a tool of recruitment. For example, in her analysis of the Iranian Revolution, Keddie argues that "one element that has enabled Khomeini to grasp and hold power has been an ideological Shi'i tradition that contained elements that he could rework so as to legitimize revolution, republicanism and rule by a top clerical leader" (Keddie 1995: 172-173).

The first type of ideological argument identifies certain religious beliefs and values and explains how they translate into social life. A classic example of this argument is Weber's assertion that values associated with Protestantism, such as hard work, promoted economic development through the pursuit of material wealth in certain societies (Weber 1958).[13]

[13] For a summary of Weber's argument, listen to (or read the transcript for) Freakonomics Radio's "Is the Protestant Work Ethic Real?" (Dubner n.d.).

Following Weber, other scholars identified a link between Protestantism and a host of positive outcomes – from social capital to mobilization capacity and democracy (Bradley and Van Kley n.d.; Lam 2006; Tusalem 2009; Woodberry 2012; Woodberry and Shah 2004). Some of the same scholars also argue that Catholicism suffers from the lack of appropriate doctrinal roots to support these movements. In sum, some religions have more socially viable ideological capital than others.

An Islamic variant of this argument emphasizes how Islam's legal and political tradition has made it more suitable to public life. Indeed, some claim (and are largely dismissed) that Islam's inherently and uniquely political nature shapes its (lack of) democratic potential and its proclivity to conflict (Huntington 1997; Lewis 1990). Recent scholarship has dismissed this claim as essentialist (Bloom 2005; A. C. Stepan 2000). More commonly, others find correlation between Islam and a host of negative political outcomes – like a democratic deficit, civil war, or economic stagnation – but they argue that the mechanisms through which this relationship is forged are not unique to Islam or damning of it (Fish 2002; Kuran 2011; Rubin 2017).

The literature on religious terrorism has also explored ideology. On one hand, some scholars argue that religious ideology can be used as a legitimator of violence (Hegghammer 2013; Henne 2012; Juergensmeyer 2003; Kramer 1991). It can also be used to distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable levels and type of violence (Kramer 1991; Sanín and Wood 2014) or to determine what types of violence emerge (Bloom 2005). The consensus is that ideology matters in so far as it is a flexible tool used to achieve certain ends. This aligns with the broader scholarly consensus that religions are multivocal and contain themes that can be adapted to suit a wide array of practices (Smith 2014; A. C. Stepan 2000). As Kalyvas explains in the Islamic case: "religious doctrine, like all doctrines, is a contested and malleable field of

meaning, amenable to multiple interpretations. Islam has been used to support both democracy and dictatorship, while Islamists creatively deploy selected elements of Islamic tradition to justify their actions" (S. N. Kalyvas 2000, 385).

The second branch of the ideology literature stresses ideological innovations within religion. This is epitomized by work on liberation theology[14] within Catholicism and Wilayat al-Faqih[15] (rule of the jurisprudent) within Shi'ism. In general, this focus on the importance of revolutionary ideas has been debated by area experts. In some instances, ideology was a unique force of change (Montgomery 1994). In other instances, ideology interacted with other variables like the structure or the external environment (Toft, Philpott, and Shah 2011). When it interacted with structure, it was seen to impact those in the lower ranks of hierarchy more so than those in the upper ranks (Kellogg 2001; Monshipouri and Arnold 1996). In other cases, the degree of separation between the church and the state impacted the extent to which the church adopted ideologies like liberation theology (Philpott 2004). In other cases, ideology was merely a convenient dressing (Trejo 2009).

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[14] Liberation theology is a Catholic movement which originated in the Vatican II conference (1962-1965). Its impact on Latin American society was discussed at the Medellin Conference in 1968 where it called for a three-fold process of change and liberation: (1) social and political, (2) socio-economic change, and (3) liberation from sin. In practice, it sought to elevate the positions of the poor and oppressed in society as well as to make religion more accessible to the laity, oftentimes through the development of Christian Base Communities. For more details on liberation theology and its impact on political outcomes, see: (Berryman 1987; Ching 2018; Freston 2004; J. Klaiber 2009; Mainwaring and Wilde 1989; Sanders 1969; Smith 1994; Tombs 2003; Vallier 1970).

[15] Wilayat al-Faqih is a theological precept commonly associated with Grand Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini and amongst non-specialists is nearly synonymous with the Islamic theocracy of Iran. In reality, however, Wilayat al-Faqih is neither a creation of Khomeini's nor, necessarily, a form of government. Rather, it is an old and debated tenant among the Shi'i religious establishment. In Shi'ism, the entire concept of Wilayat al-Faqih rests on the question of who is responsible in the absence of the Twelfth Imam (who is in occultation) and what powers and privileges they are accorded. Because no Shi'a scholar rejects the existence of Wilayah (guardianship), the debate is not over the existence of Wilayat al-Faqih, but rather, over its form. Some clerics, like Khomeini, interpret the sovereignty of the Faqih to be total (mutlaqa) and nearly equal to that of the Imams. His opponents define the sovereignty of the jurist as only over non-litigious affairs (hisbiyya) and unequal to that of the Infallibles (the Prophet and twelve Imams). The most important distinction between the two, involves, of course, political involvement. For those in the Khomeini camp, Wilayat al-Faqih sets the stage for the development of a theocracy. I discuss these views more in chapters six and seven.

With regards to Islam, this literature manifests itself in two ways. First, some argue that Shiʿa clerics are more doctrinally predisposed to political opposition than their Sunni counterparts (Algar 1972; Ayubi 1999). Specifically, they point to the legacy of Imam Hussain whose martyrdom – commemorated in the Ashura and Arbaʿeen holidays – highlights the centrality of the struggle against oppression (Toft, Philpott, and Shah 2011). In this way, Shiʿism is said to carry anti-establishment overtones. Others disputes this claim by showing that, much like other faiths, Shiʿism's rich doctrine could be adapted to a variety of activities so that the legacy of the activist Imam Hussain could be countered with the legacy of the quietist Imam Hassan (Keddie 1995).[16]

Keddie, a leading expert on the Iranian Revolution and on political Shiʿism, acknowledges that the "Khomeinist Shiʿis in the Muslim world are more prone to such "armed struggle" than their non-Shiʿi counterparts" (Keddie 1995; 171). At the same time, she cautions against a view that Shiʿism lends itself to any particular behavior because of ideology or historical tradition. She states that "when revolution and protest are in the air among many Shiʿis, as they are today, they will often stress Shiʿism's revolutionary antecedents and when quietism and support for the powers that be are considered doctrinal, as was often the case, they will be considered to be the essential ideas of Sh'ism from the time of its founders" (Keddie 1995; 154). Keddie is also one of the few who highlight the importance of structure over ideology in her

[16] Dennis McEoin describes the distinction between the revolutionary legacy of al-Hussain and the acquiescent legacy of al-Hassan: "If Twelver Shiite activism has its roots in the wars of 'Ali and the rising of Husayn against Yazid, its quietist strand is equally well founded in 'Ali's acceptance of the rule of the first three caliphs, in Hasan's abdication in favour of Mu'awiya, and in the express policies of the Imams after Husayn" in (Mceoin 1984, 18).

analysis of the Iranian Revolution. Her views, as demonstrated in the quote above, are that ideology is malleable.

A contemporary version of this argument is the quietist/activist framework used to describe Shiʿa clerics. Proponents of this argument claim that certain "quietist" Shiʿa scholars have rejected intervention in politics on account of ideological beliefs. In the contemporary era, the quietists are those who have rejected Khomeini's reformulation of Wilayat Al-Faqih. The "activists" have either accepted it or accepted a modified version of it. In reality, to present Shiʿa clerics as historically apolitical and quietist is unrealistic. Long before Khomeini's Wilayat al-Faqih, Shiʿa scholars have engaged actively in politics and promulgated ideologies that promoted political participation (Batatu 1983; Keddie 2012; Meir 2002). In some instances, these ideologies were picked up by Khomeini and his contemporaries. And while it is true that the Iranian Revolution painted Shiʿis as no longer quietist – Iraqi Shiʿa clerics were either cast in the same lot as the Iranians or described as "quietist" despite their history of activism (Litvak 1991). That being said, even scholars who critique these labels as being too simplistic oftentimes use them as a short-hand to refer to a particular clerical school of thought or as a way to distinguish between the seminaries of Najaf and those of Qom, Iran. For example, one prominent scholar of Shiʿism says that the "Najaf clerical tradition in Iraq, exemplified by Abu al-Qasim al-Khu'i (d. 1992), tended to be quietist and to reject Khomeini's theory that the clergy should rule (*vilayat-e faqih*)" (J. Cole 2003, 546).

In the case chapters, I devote more time to critiquing this dichotomy and the myth of clerical quietism in Najaf. In the colonial chapter, I describe the rich history of clerical activism and the range of clerical behavior under occupation. In the Baʿathist chapter, I describe the impact of the Iranian Revolution both strategically and ideologically on the Najafi clerics. The

contemporary chapter highlights the ways in which a change in religion-state relationship impacts how clerics respond to protest. Through these cases, I aim to provide an alternative to the traditional ideological and strategic arguments by demonstrating how structural constraints have shaped the behavior of Iraqi clerics.

Chapter Three

A Theory of Institutional Responsibility

1. Introduction

This dissertation seeks to explain clerical participation in protest. In the previous chapter, I demonstrated that the literature has provided two potential explanations, neither of which are fully satisfactory alone. The literature has suggested that clerical behavior can be impacted by ideological beliefs or by strategic incentives, including an individual cleric's relationship with other actors (e.g. the state, the protestors, the opposition, etc…). In this chapter, I suggest a third explanation: that some clerics are driven by a sense of responsibility toward the religious institution that they belong to. Their need to protect it from harm, although constituting strategic behavior, is not a story of simple self-interest.

Clerics are driven by two countervailing forces. On one hand, each individual cleric possesses a certain degree of authority, or, the ability to move people to certain beliefs and actions without the use of coercion. Highly authoritative clerics have the ability to incite and support protests, if they choose to do so. Low authority clerics do not have that capacity. Clerical authority is determined by how hierarchical a religious system is – the more hierarchical, the more authority – which is a limited quantity – is centralized at the top of the pyramid.

Each individual cleric also possesses a certain degree of institutional responsibility – a need to ensure the survival of the religious establishment and to protect it from harm, including from instability, violence, and state reprisals. The degree of bureaucracy of a religious system determines who has that sense of institutional responsibility. In highly bureaucratized systems, with a strong organizational ethos and standardized institutional cultures, each individual cleric has a vested interest in protecting the religious establishment. Every cleric, high or low ranking,

has a stake in the system. In non-bureaucratized systems, the sense of responsibility for the perpetuation of the religious system lies with those at the top of the religious hierarchy. The sense of responsibility, too, is a limited quantity. In non-bureaucratized systems, elites have a much higher sense of institutional responsibility than elites in bureaucratized systems, where it is dispersed throughout.

Since authority and responsibility tend to go hand-in-hand, this theory provides an explanation as to why influential religious elites do not use their power to challenge governments more often, despite sometimes having both strategic incentives and doctrinal inclinations to do so. It also aims to explain the conditions under which an instigating cleric will emerge.

The rest of this chapter is organized as follows. In the next section, I define religious systems and describe their conceptual utility for the study of religion and politics. I then apply this framework to the empirical venue, the Iraqi Hawza. Next, I present my theory of institutional responsibility. I do so by first introducing the independent variables, hierarchy and bureaucracy. I operationalize these variables and link them to authority and responsibility. Then, I introduce my outcome variable – clerical participation in protest – and present hypotheses that explain various types of observed behavior: instigation, non-involvement, mediation, co-optation, opportunism, and bandwagoning.

2. Religious Systems

The analytical framework of this dissertation is rooted in the concept of religious systems. I define a religious system as the sub-national religious establishment of a particular faith. This includes the conglomeration of clerics and religious institutions – places of worship, seminaries, and associated offices.

2.1 A Framework of Religious Systems

Although previous scholarship has provided many means of categorizing religions comparatively, these typologies have tended to describe religious systems based on both their internal structure and their relationships with various groups, including adherents, the state, transnational actors or other religious systems operating in the state. These are important relationships which inform key outcome variables in political science. At the same time, they are endogenous to the internal structure.

This existing line of scholarship is rooted in a Weberian typology of religion. Its basic premise is that all societies have some form of religious system and that their relationship with this system is derived from self-interest because all members of society are assumed to be concerned with living long, prosperous lives. Over time and across communities, these religious systems develop different relationships with society and the state.[17]

Working off of Weber's assumptions and typology, Ronald Johnstone (1975) explains how to classify religious systems in a "church-sect continuum". In Johnstone's model, religious systems are cast as a set of ideal types book-ended by churches and sects. The church is characterized by a claim to universality and an amalgamation of society, religion and the state into one cohesive unit. Next to the church is "ecclesia" which "shares the… characteristics of the universal church…but is less successful in incorporating diversity and does not have such full support from all levels of the society" (Johnstone 1975: 63). Johnstone cites the original state churches of Europe as an example. On the opposite end of the spectrum, a sect rejects the existing social structure (be it the dominant religion or the secular community) and is characterized by several features including a de-emphasis on organization, hierarchy and

[17] See Bader 2003 for a typology of state-church relationships.

bureaucracy. Furthermore, it encourages spontaneity in religious expression while calling for a return to the past. Its membership draws from lower social classes and its religious leaders tend to be laypeople.

Falling between these ends, Johnstone identifies a "denomination" as the transformation of the church into merely one religion amongst many others in society. In this dissertation, most of the religious systems that are discussed are denominations (e.g. Orthodox, Conservative or Reform Judaism; Sunni or Shi'a Islam; Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy or Protestantism). Unlike a sect, it is characterized by better relations with the state and the secular community, a trained clergy, routinized religious practices and services, and is tolerant of religious pluralism. Halfway between a sect and a denomination is an institutionalized sect, which Johnstone characterizes as a case of "arrested development" or a sect on its way to become a denomination but because of its slow (or, nonexistent) growth has remained a small, segregated group (ibid: 76). One such example is the Amish, Mennonite and Quaker communities in the United States. The final group on the spectrum is the cult or the New Religious Movement (NRM) which is occasionally described as more extreme than a sect due to its small size and rejection of the dominant religion and secular society. It is personalist, un-bureaucratic and un-hierarchical. Because of its likelihood to be centered on a key charismatic figure, it tends to be short-lived.

Johnstone's Weberian typology emphasizes certain aspects of religious systems: their internal organization, their relationship with the state, the composition of their membership, the degree of formalization of their religious practices, and their relationship with the community

and other religious systems.[18] Johnstone assumes that bureaucracy, relationship with the state, and formalization weaken in the descent from church to sect. I dispute this assumption because many established religious systems can have highly antagonistic relationships with the state as Anthony Gill (2001) demonstrates in his overview of the Catholic and Protestant Churches in Latin America. In addition, churches and denominations – despite their size – can be non-bureaucratized and informal with Burmese Buddhism being one such example. Any critical examination of religious systems will reveal that bureaucratization and hierarchy are not synonymous. Some religious systems are hierarchical but minimally bureaucratized (e.g. the Iraqi Hawza) while others are highly bureaucratized but non-hierarchical (e.g. Congregationalist American Churches).[19]

Therefore, I categorize religious systems by their degree of hierarchy and bureaucracy. This categorization results in four ideal types which are displayed in the figure below: an "institutionalized religious system" (hierarchical, bureaucratic), a "horizontal formal system" (non-hierarchical, bureaucratic), a "vertical informal system" (hierarchical, non-bureaucratic) and an un-institutionalized system (non-hierarchic, non-bureaucratic).

[18] The rise of non-denominational Protestant "mega-churches" in the United States raises a critical question about the future of organized religion. For the purposes of this project, these "mega-churches" can be considered religious systems in of themselves. See Steensland et al. (2000) for how to measure religions in America.
[19] American Protestant Churches have generally developed into bureaucratic organizations with democratic structures and loose, multi-organ, hierarchies. They resemble civil society organizations more so than traditional religious institutions. This follows Weber's assertion that religions tend to become more bureaucratized as they get bigger.

Figure 3: A Typology of Religious Systems

	Hierarchical	*Non-Hierarchical*
Bureaucratized	Institutionalized System (e.g. Catholic Church in most countries; Iranian Hawza)	Horizontal Formal System (e.g. Sunni religious establishment in Ba'athist Syria; American Congregationalist Churches)
Non- Bureaucratized	Vertical Informal System (e.g. Iraqi Hawza)	Un-institutionalized e.g. Quakers; Amish

The chief advantage of both the Weberian typology and my own framework is that they avoid conflating religion in general with a religious system in a particular community. For example, rather than treating the Catholic Church as a monolith, this framework can distinguish between how the Catholic Church operated in Peronist Argentina in contrast to Troubles-era Ireland.

2.2 Transnational Religion and the State-level Approach

Scholars of religion, and particularly scholars of Islam, may argue that the state-level approach obscures the importance of transnational faith networks. Indeed, as many scholars argue, "like religion itself, religious actors are generally not territorially bound, but transnational" (Toft, Philpott, and Shah 2011, 23). In Islam's case, scholars may find that it defies the Islamic concept of the Ummah, the border transcending Muslim community (Mandaville 2001).

The direct theoretical implication is that transnational Islam has an impact on clerical protest behavior. In other words, that it represents an alternative explanation to the theory of

institutional responsibility. Consequently, ignoring it by applying a state-level approach obstructs a key part of the story.

I provide two justifications for my decision to confine religious systems within a state while treating transnational networks as a key strategic alternate explanation. Firstly, clerics themselves have tended to define their community of adherents at the state level. While they pay tribute to the rhetoric of the transnational Ummah, they also recognize the importance of the state and seek to operate within it. This behavior has been exhibited by contemporary and historical clerics. For example, Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim (founder of SCIRI[20]) was critical of Ayatollah Khomeini's transnational aspirations. As Sayej explains, Hakim thought that "although the Islamic nation was united, each nation-state within it had unique 'political problems and cultural circumstances' that needed to be considered" (Sayej 2018: 102). Indeed, many Shi'a clerics have advanced the concept of the "civil state" including Grand Ayatollah Sistani, Ayatollah Muhsin Shams al-Din and Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Hussein Fadllullah. In my interviews with contemporary Shi'a clerics, many clerics interpreted my question of "what is the role of a cleric in society" automatically into what their role is within Iraqi society. Similarly, the Lebanese and Kuwaiti clerics I spoke with also interpreted their roles within the confines of the Lebanese and Kuwaiti states respectively.[21]

Clerics from various faiths have been forced to operate within the confines of a nation-state and in a way that suggests their commitment to it. Many clerics express themselves in the

[20] The Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq is an Islamist opposition party founded by Iraqi clerics in exile. Since 2003, it has transformed several times, adopted different names, and produced new off-shoots, the most recent of which is the civil Al-Hikma front, led by Ammar al-Hakim. For more information on SCIRI see: (Isakhan and Mulherin 2018; Jabar 2002).

[21] Author Interview with Sheikh Hassan Al-Khishin. Beirut, Lebanon (November 2018) and with Sheikh Hassan Baluchi. Kerbala, Iraq (December 2018).

language of the modern nation-state, with emphases on concepts like "self-determination" and "sovereignty" which, arguably, are rather modern political constructs. Consider, for example, the words of Cardinal Wyzinski about loyalty to God and the state: "Next to God, our first love is Poland. After God, one must above all remain faithful to our homeland, to the Polish national culture. We love all the people in the world, but only in this order of priority" (Dobbs 1981).

The Catholic Church is arguably one of the most trans-national religious institutions and, yet, even one of its most elite clerics expresses adherence to the concept of the nation-state. This type of rhetoric exists elsewhere. Indeed, reflecting on Islam and the nation-state in southeast Asia, Hefner and Horvatich write "whatever its current uses, the state appears to offer the means for realizing long cherished dreams of religious and social transformation on a societywide scale" (Hefner and Horvatich 1997, 6.).

In addition to how clerics themselves view their relationship with the nation-state, there is also the fact that the laws and governance of states have a direct impact on how religious institutions operate. An extreme example of how the state has forcibly created this space is the story of the installation of a bishop in the Chinese city of Jining. In order to do so, the Vatican had to coordinate with the Chinese government-approved Bishops' Conference of the Catholic Church in China, an organization that is not recognized by the Holy See but that nevertheless has a say in the appointment of clerics (Johnson 2019).

Finally, the state-centric approach is particularly suited to the subfield of comparative politics, which aims to create generalizable theories that extend beyond single cases and single countries. This dissertation is a theory-building exercise, focusing on cases from within the Iraqi Shi'a context. The theory it proposes, however, should be conceptualized in a way that allows

for testing outside of the case that has produced it. In order to accomplish this in future extensions to this project, the concept of a religious system as existing within a state is crucial.

3. The Structure of a Religious System: Hierarchy and Bureaucracy

In this section, I describe religious systems as having degrees of hierarchy and bureaucracy. I operationalize these variables and explain how they concentrate or disperse authority and responsibility.

3.1. How does hierarchy produce authority?

A hierarchical system is one in which there are recognized and ranked positions of authority. In other words, there is a central leadership and a tiered class of subordinates. Hierarchical organizations exist everywhere and include militaries, companies, governments, and universities. They are characterized by the existence of a central executive figure – the CEO of a company or the president of a university – and by the existence of recognized subordinate positions (vice-presidents, heads of departments, etc.).

There are several indicators of a hierarchical organization. First, hierarchies tend to use titles to differentiate between positions. Some of these titles are more prosaic (president, chief, principal). Other organizations, like militaries and some religious systems, employ unique sets of titles (e.g. "ganden tripa" in Gelug Buddhism). In most cases, it is a combination of honorifics and rankings (e.g. "chief rabbi" or "grand ayatollah"). Critically, there can be non-hierarchical organizations that use titles. For example, the title "sheikh" or "imam" can refer to a wide range of Muslim clerics. In varieties of Sunni Islam, a sheikh can simultaneously be a well-known cleric like Abdul Aziz Bin Baz or a prayer leader of a small mosque. Titles, therefore, must come with a recognized job description.

Second, hierarchies have a pyramidal structure in which positions are more limited at the top. Although hierarchies can be decentralized – there can be multiple smaller pyramids – there is always a central and limited leadership. In other words, certain positions can only have a certain limited number of occupants. The degree to which positions are limited is dependent on the organization. In some organizations, the limitations are more tightly enforced – for example, in Tibetan Buddhism, there are only two positions open for an abbot. By contrast, there may be any number of cardinals in the Catholic Church at any given time. Centralized systems that enforce limits to the number of leadership positions are more hierarchical than decentralized ones with seemingly limitless positions. I follow Rhodes' (2014) definition of centralization as "the degree to which national-level leadership and decision-making authority – executive power – is concentrated into one entity or spread out over multiple entities, and whether or not those entities are each composed of single individuals or bodies of individuals" (Rhodes 2014, 41).

Therefore, when assessing how hierarchical religious systems are, this project considers three factors: whether there is a clearly identifiable central leadership with ranked positions of subordinate authority, whether there are titles associated with positions, and whether there are limited numbers of leadership positions. Systems that satisfy the three conditions are considered "highly hierarchical" while those that satisfy two are "hierarchical" and those that only satisfy one are "minimally hierarchical".

How does hierarchy impact authority? Hierarchy determines who has authority. It creates elites and non-elites; positions of authority and positions of compliance to that authority. In a hierarchical religious system, authority is concentrated at the top and the most elite clerics have a monopoly on authority. As previously mentioned, the specific type of authority they have stems

from the religious system, which is characterized by a divine legitimacy. In a non-hierarchical system, this influence is dispersed amongst clerics.[22]

Authority is important for protest participation for several reasons. First, influence makes leadership of and participation in protest easier. Clerics with authority can impact how their adherents and subordinates behave. Moreover, elite clerics within a hierarchy have access to exceptional mobilization capacity: the pyramidal structure of the institution enhances their ability to communicate their messages and to control material resources. Therefore, elites in a hierarchy may be able to rebel because they may have greater access to material resources (such as religious taxes). Resources increase a cleric's ability to successfully mobilize or to support mobilization particularly when aided by claims to moral authority. Non-elite clerics do not have this ability and, moreover, cannot act independently without incurring the risk of excommunication. Thus, these arguments suggest that that the constraints clerics face within a hierarchical system decrease with rank.

At the same time, there is a position-based responsibility that comes with a hierarchical system: the knowledge that the elites are most visible and thus are most accountable to observers. Elites are the public face of the institution and are held accountable by other clerics and by adherents. This gives them institutional position-based responsibility.

Previous scholarship on religion and conflict has emphasized the importance of hierarchy and centralization, arguing that centralized and hierarchical religious traditions (like Catholicism) encourage obedience rather than participation, thus impeding collective action. In fact, this can be a double-edged sword: a system which encourages obedience gives

[22] Whether there is more or less authority in hierarchical systems than in non-hierarchical ones is beyond the scope of this paper. Regardless, an institution is primarily authoritative to its adherents, which makes a comparison of degrees of authority unnecessary.

disproportionate mobilization power to the elite. This argument finds support in previous scholarship, which suggests that centralized organizational structures – like Catholic, Anglican and Presbyterian Churches – have been more successful at promoting democracy and human rights than Protestant Churches, despite having an equal or lesser number of adherents (Toft, Philpott, and Shah 2011). This counterintuitive finding can be attributed to the internal organizational structure of Catholicism and "can be surprising: democratization was facilitated by a hierarchical and autocratic religious structure and hindered by a decentralized and democratic religious structure"(Kalyvas 2000, 393). In fact, when scholars argue that Protestantism is correlated with positive outcomes (e.g. democracy, economic development, etc...) they tend to identify ideological and normative mechanisms through which this process happens, such as support for civil society, media, and education (Bradley and Van Kley n.d.; Tusalem 2009; Woodberry 2012). Conversely, those that argue for Catholicism's positive impact on political outcomes tend to identify its centralized communication and decision-making apparatuses (Kalyvas 2000). To account for this, Rhodes (2014) argues that concentrated and authoritarian internal leadership structures are supportive of status-quo governments, rather than of democracy or authoritarianism per se. These structures are able to communicate more effectively with the government, due to their simpler communication and decision-making channels and their ability to move their constituents along. In addition, they are highly visible and are thus more susceptible to co-optation.

Because hierarchical systems entail positions of power, they can create incentives for elite clerics to either maintain or gain power, resulting in behavior like opportunism or mediation. Brubaker (2015) argues that centralized hierarchy dampens competition and decreases risk-taking incentives, including participation in protest. Centralization can also constrain

autonomous clerical behavior by forcing the religious establishment to respond as one coherent unit. A geographically decentralized system – wherein elite clerics belong to certain localities – may allow clerics to respond to a protest at its very inception in a particular community. Indeed, some scholars argue that it was the Catholic Church's inability to decentralize (unlike the Protestant Church) in Latin America that drove it to side with the rebels (Trejo 2009). A more centralized system forces clerics to wait until the protest has reached the locality of the central pyramid or has hit a point where the central pyramid must respond to it. In short, it removes both autonomy and lengthens the decision making process. A decentralized system makes it easier for a cleric in his locality to act autonomously and to make decisions that are suited to that one place.

3.2. How does bureaucracy produce responsibility?

Bureaucratization is measured on a continuum and tries to capture the degree of professionalization and uniformity of the clergy. Following Weber, I assess levels of bureaucratization by focusing on the following metrics: standardization, demarcation of jurisdiction, professionalization of staff, meritocracy, and an emphasis on a rational legal-order.[23]

First, a bureaucratized religious system is characterized by standardization or the execution of a series of assigned tasks and obligations in a consistent manner that is specified by a set of codified regulations. Standardization may include specific programs for the development of clergy, such as training programs that routinize the way in which they perform their functions. These institutions mold religious figures in certain ways to create internally and

[23] I differ from Weber in that I do not include hierarchy (which he includes). I choose not to do this because of the aforementioned point that hierarchy and bureaucracy are neither synonymous nor mutually inclusive.

externally uniform systems. Take, as an example, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, which has a specific organizational structure with committees, departments and directorates that oversee the educational standards of priesthood as well as manage relationships with the state and the media.

Second, bureaucratized systems demarcate jurisdiction by dividing the realm of clerical activity. Clerics are assigned particular roles that they are required to perform and expected not to exceed. For example, Johnstone identifies the leadership positions of religious leaders as "priests, shamans, rabbis, gurus, prophets, pastors, etc…" and their other functions as "choirs, treasures, acolytes, deacons, theological professors, public relations directors, ushers, chargers, etc…" (Johnstone 1975).[24]

Third, a highly bureaucratized religious system has a salaried professional staff. This means that there are clerical and non-clerical staff but all have expert training in their respective fields. Fourth and similarly, clerics in bureaucratized systems are selected on a meritocratic basis. These qualifications are evaluated by organizational rules and not by individuals. Finally, a bureaucratized system is characterized by the existence of an organizational ethos wherein affiliated individuals see themselves as guardians of a legitimate impersonal order that transcends the individuals that comprise it.

How does bureaucracy impact responsibility? A bureaucratized system is characterized by being impersonal and by having an identity that is independent of the clerics that comprise it. Thus, its existence and identity do not rely and revolve around specific individuals. Moreover, its socialization processes and uniformity create a sense of ownership and responsibility for the

[24] Note that these are not the same as titles mentioned in the definition of hierarchy. They do not give authority, but rather they represent expectations of duties to be performed.

institution that is shared by all who are a part of it. In other words, bureaucracies disperse institutional responsibility throughout the system. In this way, all clerics have a stake in perpetuating and preserving the system. This responsibility informs the way they react to risky behavior, including protest.

Furthermore, there are two key mechanisms through which highly bureaucratized systems can constrain clerics: first, they can impose outright impermissibility to act, such as when the Vatican barred involvement in politics during the era of Latin American revolutions (Dodson 1986). Similarly, there can also be subtler constraints enforced through processes of socialization that set tones of non-involvement. This starts with the assumption that a religious system sees itself as a religious institution and not a political one.

Second, clerics in highly bureaucratized systems are more likely to be assigned to serve in particular communities which means that their connections to the local community are weaker than their connection to the organization. A bureaucratized system disperses responsibility throughout by fostering stronger ties to the organization than the community of adherents. Thus, when the local community engages in rebellion, they are less motivated to act autonomously and will conform to the standards of the system. By contrast, clerics who come from non-bureaucratized systems may opt into communities where they have pre-existing strong social ties making them more likely to sympathize with the local community. This behavior is reinforced by the lack of responsibility they feel towards the religious establishment. These particular constraints are more relevant to local-level clerics rather than elites, but they may also apply when elites emerge from a transnational educational program and then later become immersed in a foreign political culture.

5 Dependent Variable and Hypotheses

Religious systems can be characterized by their degree of hierarchy and bureaucracy. These two variables impact how much *authority* and *institutional responsibility* an individual cleric possesses which, in turn, impact how that cleric behaves during protest.

The combination of hierarchy and bureaucracy results in four ideal types. Within each of the ideal-type systems, clerics can occupy different positions. Depending on the structure of the system, each of these positions confers different abilities and responsibilities on clerics. For example, a hierarchical system allows elite clerics to monopolize authority. At the same time, the degree of bureaucratization determines whether responsibility for preserving the institution is dispersed throughout or whether it is also concentrated at the top.

Thus, one of the assumptions made in this paper is that authority comes from the religious system itself. In other words, clerics are what Weber would call "priests" (deriving authority from strict compliance to religion) and not "prophets" (deriving authority from innovating religion) (Swedberg and Agevall 2005; Weber 1978, 1993). I define a cleric as an individual whose primary occupation is to provide spiritual counsel, religious services, and/or religious knowledge to a community where a majority of adherents and clerics recognize him/her as having the authority to do so.[25]

[25] Although clerics can be men or women, I use male pronouns throughout the dissertation because the vast majority of clerics in this project are men. Female clerics are only mentioned in chapter seven.

Figure 4: Authority and Responsibility in Religious Systems

	Hierarchical	Non-Hierarchical
Bureaucratized	Institutionalized System Concentrated authority Dispersed responsibility	Horizontal Formal System Dispersed authority Dispersed responsibility
Non- Bureaucratized	Vertical Informal System Concentrated authority Concentrated responsibility	Un-institutionalized (not a religious system)

I derive five observable implications of this theory which I examine in the case studies. First, I argue that elites rarely instigate anti-government protest because authority and responsibility tend to go together. Second, in the rare case that authority and responsibility do not go together, clerics who instigate protests likely to be those with high authority and low responsibility. Third, clerics with little influence and a stake in the system tend to follow or "bandwagon" behind other clerics. Fourth, those who are most likely to behave opportunistically – to join a protest in a leadership capacity after it appears successful – are those with little influence and little responsibility. In other words: "petty" clerics who are trying to jump-start the process of advancement. Finally, elite clerics, on account of their influence, are most susceptible to co-optation regardless of their institutional responsibilities, which are generally only visible to insiders.

These hypotheses do not line up with specific religious systems. Rather, they are manifested in different ways in each type of system. Thus, some systems may be more

conducive to creating protest-instigating clerics while others may produce mediators. The possibility of different types of clerics emerging is present to different degrees in all systems. This dissertation traces the mechanisms of clerical behavior in one type of system – the vertical informal system – exemplified by the Iraqi Hawza.

Figure 5: Hypotheses

	High degree of Authority	**Low degree of authority**
High degree of Responsibility	**(1)** Non-involvement; mediation **(5)** susceptible to co-optation	**(3)** Bandwagon **(5)** not susceptible to co-optation
Low degree of Responsibility	**(2)** Instigation **(5)** susceptible to co-optation	**(4)** Opportunism **(5)** not susceptible to co-optation

5.1 Non-Involvement and Mediation

Hypothesis 1: Elite clerics rarely instigate anti-government protest. They are more likely to remain ***un-involved*** *or to* ***mediate*** *when violence escalates.*

Elite clerics occupy high positions within a hierarchy, which endows them with the authority to mobilize resources and to direct adherents. However, elite clerics also have a responsibility to maintain the institutional integrity of the religious system. Whether or not the

system is bureaucratized – and whether or not they share this responsibility with lower-ranking clerics – they remain the public face of the institution and responsible for protecting it. Thus, elite clerics within non-bureaucratized systems shoulder even more responsibility to protect the religious system than those within bureaucratized systems.

Therefore, although elite clerics have the capacity to mobilize protest, they are unlikely to be first movers. Their institutional responsibilities preclude these clerics from having the requisite zero percent threshold necessary for political first actors (Petersen 2001). Rather, these clerics choose to remain un-involved, and if violence breaks out, they may choose to mediate in order to manage the conflict in ways which will preserve the integrity of the religious institutions.

Mediation "refers to an approach to conflict management in which a third party, which is not a direct party to the dispute, helps disputants through their negotiations and does so in a non-binding fashion…The overall aim of mediation is to stop violence and establish peaceful relations between conflicting parties" (Bercovitch and Kadayifci-orellana 2008). In this case, the third party is the cleric and the disputants are the rebels and the government. Many clerics have served as mediators between the government and rebel groups, including, for example Bishop Samuel Ruiz who mediated between the Mexican government and the Zapatista rebels in Chiapas.[26]

Elite clerics may choose to keep attention away from the religious establishment by remaining peripheral to the conflict. Indeed, many Iraqi clerics that I spoke with complained of the difficulty of managing their identities as individual citizens versus their identities as representatives of the clerical establishment. Thus, even if they had a personal inclination to

[26] See (Sampson 2007) for more examples of clerics as mediators in civil conflict.

participate in a protest movement, many feared that they could not do so without implicating the entire religious establishment. High responsibility clerics recognize that they are the public face of the institution: this is how both the state and the rebels perceive them.

There are different levels of non-involvement. Passive engagement – the less costly option – is simply to engage in the rhetoric of apoliticism. A cleric in this position may declare engagement in politics to be unsuitable on account of religious convictions. In fact, one of the ways in which religion is multivocal is that even the most visibly ideologically apolitical religions can be politicized and the most politicized religious traditions can find doctrinal justifications for quietism.

For example, Theravada Buddhist Monks, like many other religious figures, derive their legitimacy from their asceticism and detachment from worldly concerns. Despite this detachment, Burmese monks have had a long tradition of political participation dating as far back as the late 1700.[27] Burmese monks who were active in the Saffron Revolution did not consider their behavior as interference in politics, but as a religious affair. This in fact is part of a long tradition of Burmese monks developing "increasingly sophisticated and nuanced explanations of their engagement with politics, reflecting… a partial redefinition of the monastic vocation" (Walton 2017: 147).

This rhetorical flexibility exists in many religious systems and gives clerics the ability to divinely legitimate their inaction, if they so choose. However, clerics can also maintain their non-involvement through public criticism of both sides. For example, elite Catholic clerics in the Irish War of Independence maintained a position of condemnation of violence on both sides

[27] See Michael Charney (200) for how Monks in the late eighteenth century used their proximity to the monarchy to promote their beliefs as orthodoxy, indirectly influencing politics (Charney 2009: 142).

from 1919-1923, despite the fact that lower ranking clerics were joining the opposition (ÓhAdhmaill 2013; 10).

The reasons for inaction or condemnation for non-involvement certainly vary with the situation at hand, but they essentially are either passive or critical. The former defines non-involvement as a cleric's ideological choice. The latter defines non-involvement as a reaction to the behavior of other actors.

5.2 Instigation

Hypothesis 2: Clerics with authority but no institutional responsibility are more likely to be ***instigators*** *of protest.*

In the rare case that authority and responsibility do not go together, an instigator cleric will emerge. Instigation of protest by a religious leader is the intentional application of pressure – through the use of religious symbolism and rhetoric – to incite protest in a situation in which there was no ongoing protest, or in which ongoing protest was at a very early stage. Much of the literature on religion and violence assumes that clerics are instigators of protest and in particular, that they incite and support violence when they feel threatened by competitors (De Juan 2009; Toft 2007; Trejo 2009). In this dissertation, I argue that instigators are rare but over-represented due to the importance of their roles.

Identifying instigation can be complicated when protest movements build off of one another. In this project instigation is taken to mean the instigation of a set of self-constrained protests (occurring days, rather than months, apart) that may have social or ideological roots in prior movements. An additional concern is that of direct or indirect instigation. Indirect

instigation – through channeling funds or through intermediaries – is harder to capture than direct instigation, which is active and public behavior. In this project, I am interested in direct instigation because I am interested in the motivations for a cleric's public position during protest.

5.3 Bandwagoning / "Followers"

Hypothesis 3: Low authority, high responsibility clerics tend to ***bandwagon*** *by following elite clerics.*

The term "bandwagoning[28]" refers to the behavior of clerics whose reaction to protest movements is to follow the precedent set out by more elite members of the religious establishment. In other words, they are *followers* of other clerics. These clerics are doubly constrained by their ties to the religious establishment and by their lack of mobilization capacity. In order to preserve the religious system and their place within it, they are more likely to follow the lead of more elite clerics. The tipping point for bandwagoning clerics – or the point at which their behavior changes – can operate through many different mechanisms. For example, in hierarchical systems, they may be ordered to behave in a certain way by a more elite cleric. Or, in highly bureaucratized systems, they may be socialized into elite mimicry or into non-involvement. They may also do so through observation of colleagues.

There are behavioral and observational indicators of bandwagoning. For example, the timing of joining protest indicates whether a cleric is a follower or a leader. If a cleric joins after a tipping point – when a significant number of other clerics have joined – then it is an indicator

[28] Bandwagoning is a term borrowed from the international relations literature and refers to the choice that weak states make to align themselves with a more powerful one in order to avoid danger. For more information see: (Walt 1987; Waltz 1979).

of bandwagoning. There can also be rhetorical indicators in which clerics describe their decisions as being inspired or enforced by colleagues or superiors.

5.4 Opportunism / "Leaders"

Hypothesis 4: Low authority, low responsibility clerics are most likely to behave opportunistically and to "jump ahead" of a protest that has already started.

Opportunism is joining protest in a leadership capacity after a protest movement has hit a tipping point and appears to be successful. Opportunism is temporally bound as well. It occurs after a tipping point, when the uprising appears to be headed firmly in one direction. In a protest, an individual identifies a personal tipping point when a certain amount of people within his community join the protest.[29] The community referents for opportunism are not the clerical community, but, rather, the rebel community. Thus, each cleric has a threshold in which they will rebel when a certain percentage of other people appear to have joined.

Clerics may act opportunistically in order to increase their influence. Thus, low influence and low responsibility clerics may attempt to jump-start their careers by taking risks, like leading a protest, particularly if they have little to lose. I argue that opportunism is a much more prominent behavior amongst religious leaders than instigation. I also argue that clerics who are inclined to instigation may resort to opportunism because of the structural constraints they face. Moreover, successful opportunism looks like instigation and has been mischaracterized as such.

For example, in the lead up to the Iranian Revolution, many ayatollahs remained distant from the protests. However, after observing Khomeini's success and the role of clerics in the

[29] On protest dynamics, see: (Kuran 1989; Petersen 2001).

protests, many of them joined the protest movement and used their clerical credentials to advance to leadership positions in the post-revolutionary government.

Implicitly, many scholars agree that clerics are more likely to be opportunists than instigators because, like politicians, they tend to follow rather than lead public opinion. Sometimes, opportunistic behavior has been intentionally mischaracterized as instigation by clerics looking to rewrite history in their favor. For example, some clerics associated with various Islamist parties have tried to assume responsibility for the instigation of the 1991 Iraqi uprising, going as far as to claim that it was organized entirely by the Islamic Da'wa party. Most participants, by contrast, suggest otherwise: it was a grassroots uprising, devoid of centralized planning or leadership.[30]

5.5 Co-optation

Hypothesis 5: Influential clerics – those with a high degree of authority – are the targets of rebel and state ***co-optation*** *attempts.*

Co-optation occurs when religious leaders are coerced by political leaders to display a certain type of behavior. Political leaders (from either the rebels' side or the state's side) may seek to exploit the legitimacy of religion to gain political traction. These political entrepreneurs recognize that religion is a useful and unique tool for mobilization and legitimation. At the same time, because they do not recognize institutional responsibilities, they tend to co-opt clerics regardless of the stake these clerics may have in a religious system.

[30] Author Interview with Nouri al-Maliki. December 2018. Baghdad, Iraq. Also, author phone interviews with two anonymized Da'wa party province-level members. October 2018. In addition, see: (Makiya 1993, 1998).

Religious rhetoric can be used to construct threats, condone violence, and encourage self-sacrifice. As Brubaker says, "religious entrepreneurs and organizations—or political entrepreneurs who speak the language of religion—may be able to mobilize an additional layer of rewards, sanctions, justifications, and obligations beyond those available to their secular counterparts" (Makiya 1993, 1998).

Co-optation can occur at any point in the timeline of a protest movement. However, evidence of co-optation can be difficult to obtain for several reasons. For one, the pressure exerted upon clerics by other actors can be informal and difficult to identify. Secondly, political entrepreneurs may feel incentivized to hide their co-optive behaviors, in order to not delegitimize them (voluntary clerical approval is more legitimate, after all). For these reasons, assessing clerical behavior from the three points of view – rebel, state, and cleric – is essential. Sudden changes in behavior and rhetoric may indicate that co-optation is occurring.

Of all the hypotheses, this is the only one that shows how the structure of a religious system impacts pressures that clerics face from the outside. Therefore, it does not preclude the simultaneous clerical exhibition of other types of behaviors including mediation, instigation, and non-involvement.

6. Beyond Religious Systems

An additional advantage of this theory is that it implicitly suggests hypotheses for how clerics from different religious systems will behave. While I do not test these hypotheses in this

dissertation – which is a theory-building and *not* a theory-testing exercise[31] – I outline them below in order to reflect on external validity and on expansions.

First, elite clerics who enjoy equal amounts of authority but who belong to differently bureaucratized systems will behave differently during protest. For example, those who are from non-bureaucratized systems, which are oftentimes personalistic, are even less prone to political activism than their counterparts in hierarchical systems. In other words: Cardinals Wyzinski and Sin could afford to intervene heavily in politics in Poland and the Philippines respectively *because* they did not have a fear that the religious establishment would collapse with their personal demise. By contrast, an Iraqi grand ayatollah of a similar level of authority would fear the damage done to the religious establishment by his own involvement. The former have direct mechanisms for political activism – they have authority with less responsibility. In the latter system, by contrast, clerics find different ways to achieve authority without responsibility, it does not come naturally from the structure.

Secondly, Horizontal Formal Systems, which are characterized by a high degree of bureaucratization and a low degree of hierarchy, disperse authority and responsibility throughout the system. This should result in more opportunistic clerics and less instigators at the elite level. By contrast, one would expect that an institutionalized system is more likely to create a set of elite instigators as well as a set of lower ranking bandwagoners.

[31] In describing this dissertation as theory building, I follow (Van Evera 1997) who provides frameworks for different types of dissertation projects. For theory-building, a "good" theory is defined to be parsimonious, satisfying, clearly framed, falsifiable, prescriptively rich, with large explanatory power and the ability to explain important phenomena. In addition, Van Evera suggests four tools for theory building through the case study method, all of which are employed in this dissertation: controlled comparison, congruence procedures, process tracing, and "the Delphi method" (Van Evera 1997: 71-73). The advantages of these methods are that they provide conceptual validity, the ability to derive new hypotheses and the ability to explore causal mechanisms in depth.

These are the observable implications of a comparative version of this theory. They assume, however, that clerics in each of these systems seek authority and acquire responsibility in direct, structure-driven ways. However, in reality, and as I demonstrate in the case chapters there are many times that clerics are able to create a position for themselves that is far different from the typical opportunities granted by the religious system. One of the goals of this dissertation is to uncover these mechanisms in one type of system, the Vertical Informal System, which is hierarchical but not bureaucratized. The typical outcome for this system is that it is more likely to produce a set of politically un-involved elite clerics as well as a set of opportunistic low-ranking clerics, but that is not to say that other behaviors cannot be exhibited within it.

7. Conclusion

After having presented this structural theory of institutional responsibility, the rest of this dissertation proceeds as follows. In the next chapter, I apply this framework to the Iraqi Hawza. I then move onto my first empirical chapter which discusses the role of clerics in protest during the colonial era. This chapter briefly deals with clerics in Ottoman Iraq but is primarily focused on analyzing how a particular set of Hawza elites reacted to the 1917 Najaf protest movement and the larger 1920 Iraqi Revolution. Then, I discuss the role of clerics in Ba'athist-era protest movements both before and after the Iranian Revolution, relying on novel data gathered from field and archival research. Finally, I describe the role of clerics in both protest *and* formal politics in the post-2003 democratizing era, relying on public opinion data and interviews with contemporary clerics. I end with a concluding chapter which proposes ways in which this theory can travel as well as its policy implications both within Iraq and across the region.

Chapter Four
Introducing the Iraqi Hawza

1. Empirical Venue: The Iraqi Hawza

This project examines the protest behavior of clerics in the Hawza, the Iraqi Shiʿa religious establishment. Etymologically, the word "Hawza" connotes a border or a spatial unit of authority and is generally taken to mean the non-material space of scholarly authority in which a teacher conveys knowledge to a group of students. The term "Hawza" is usually preceded by a qualifier such as a geographical location (e.g. the Najafi Hawza) or a particular elite scholar (e.g. Grand Ayatollah Muhsin al-Hakim's Hawza). These categories frequently overlap because a cleric's reach can transcend national borders. In this project, the phrase "Hawza", unless partnered with a qualifier (e.g. the Hawza of Qom), refers to the general body of Shiʿa clerics, clerical offices, seminaries, and libraries scattered throughout Iraq and centered in the holy city of Najaf (though oftentimes extending to other holy sites such as Kerbala, Kadhimiyya, and Samarra). I classify the Iraqi Hawza as a "Vertical Informal System" because it is minimally bureaucratized and hierarchical, as I demonstrate in the descriptions I provide in this chapter and in the empirical chapters.

The Hawza is not an outlier amongst religious systems and particularly not amongst those in the Middle East. It falls between the rigid institutionalization of the Iranian Hawza and the various Christian churches of the Levant and Iraq and the fairly non-institutionalized mainstream Sunni religious systems that operate through official state organs in places like Egypt, Ba'athist Syria and parts of the Gulf. The table below lists some of the religious systems in the Middle East and how their structure can be described:

Figure 6: Examples of Religious Systems

Institutionalized System	**Horizontal Formal System**
• The Hawza of Iran, post -1979 • The Maronite Church in Lebanon • The Ahmadiyya Community in Syria • The Syrian Orthodox Church in Syria and Iraq. • The Druze in Lebanon and Syria	• The Sunni Religious Establishment of Egypt, exemplified by the clerics of Al-Azhar, post-1961. • Salafi Sunni religious establishment of Saudi Arabia, as represented by Ministry of Islamic Affairs • The Ismailis in the United Arab Emirates. • Alevis in Turkey
Vertical Informal System	**Non-Institutionalized**
• The Hawza of Iraq • The Hawza of Iran, pre-1979.	

The Hawza is a hierarchical institution whose understanding of authority differs from conceptions of authority in Sunni Islam. While both sects rely on the Qur'an and the Hadith (the transmitted sayings of the Prophet), the Shi'a additionally rely on the sayings and practices of the infallible Imams, who they view as both the descendants of the Prophet and the heirs to his spiritual authority. The twelfth and final Imam, a messianic figure, set the precedent for clerical authority by assigning emissaries from the clerical community to act on his behalf during his periods of occultation. The Usuli branch of Shi'ism – which came to dominate modern Twelver Shi'ism – differs from the Akhbari branch because it believed this deputyship for the Imam granted clerics the authority to issue rulings based on reasoning ('aql) and consensus (ijma'), rather than simply being transmitters of the traditions and Qur'an (the akhbar).[32] The Usuli tradition paved the way for modern concepts of clerical authority to emerge such as

[32] For more on the Usuli and Akhbari dispute see: (Gleave 2007; Newman 1992).

marjaʿiiyat al-taqlīd (the emulation of the most learned scholars) and Khomeini's version of Wilayat al-Faqih.

The concept of marjaʿiiyat al-taqlīd, which emerged in the 19th century, is central to modern Shiʿism and what gives it a hierarchical air. According to this precept, every member of the Shiʿa community who is not a marjaʿ taqlīd (a source of emulation) is required to select a marjʿi to emulate. The first cleric to formally state this concept as an Islamic legal requirement was Grand Ayatollah Tabatabi'i Yazdi whose role in the anti-colonial protest movements will be discussed in chapter five (Walbridge 2001). Thus, when the Shiʿa refer to the "marjaʿiyya" they are referring to the body of clerics who have attained that status and who are emulated by the community. At any point in time, there are only a handful of clerics in this position though their ascension to this status is determined by both formal standards (their training and certificates) as well as informal standards (their scholarly and patronage networks).

Scholars date the emergence of marjaʿiyyat al-taqlīd to Murtada Ansari who emerged as the chief marjaʿa following the death of his mentor, Muhammad Hasan Najafi, in 1850 (Louer 2008; Meir 2002). Prior to Ansari, the concept of the "mujtahid" (or, the cleric who is able to issue binding religious edicts) and the centralization of his authority was accomplished by Najafi who utilized his "wakil" (representative) network effectively and who benefited from a clerical leadership vacuum occurring in Iraq and in Iran (Louer 2008, 75). Before his death he designated Ansari as his successor – an unprecedented move which was not fully supported by other clerics. Because Najafi eschewed assigning his son as his inheritor in the Hawza (as was expected), this move also set the norm of non-hereditary transfer of authority from one chief marjaʿ to the next (Meir 2002, 79). This meant that Ansari had to distinguish himself in other ways in order to consolidate his authority in the Hawza, which resulted in his introducing the concept of marjaʿiyyat al-taqlīd (Meir 2002, 79).[33] Moreover, Ansari defined "most learned" (one

[33] Grand Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, a prominent Najafi cleric and thinker (and a key protagonist of chapter six), divided the history of the marjaʿiyya into four time periods: the subjective marjaʿiyya, the administrative marjaʿiyya, the central marjaʿiyya and the popular marjaʿiyya (Jabar 2002). The first period ends with 'Allama al-Hilli's death in 1325 and was perhaps the period in which the marjʿi's only responsibility was to provide religious laws to his constituents (Aziz 2001). The second period, which ends in 1374, is characterized by advancements like the establishment of representative networks that collected tithes (ibid). Sheikh Jafar Kashif al-Ghita, who started the third period, is well-known for challenging the apoliticism of the Hawza as well as having played an integral role (along with Mohammad Bahr al-Uloom) in founding the modern Najafi Hawza (Abbas

of the qualifications of being the chief marja') to the clerical community (excluding laymen) (ibid.).

There are other background conditions and qualifications that must be fulfilled, some of which highlight the bureaucratized nature of the Hawza. These conditions are: adulthood, sanity, faith, justice, asceticism, freedom, and being a living male of legitimate birth (Jabar 2003).[34] More practically, a cleric must fulfill a set of academic requirements including a knowledge of theology, methodology, grammar, syntax, Arabic, conditions of inference and mastering the four sources of authority (the Qur'an, the Sunna, ijma' and 'aql).

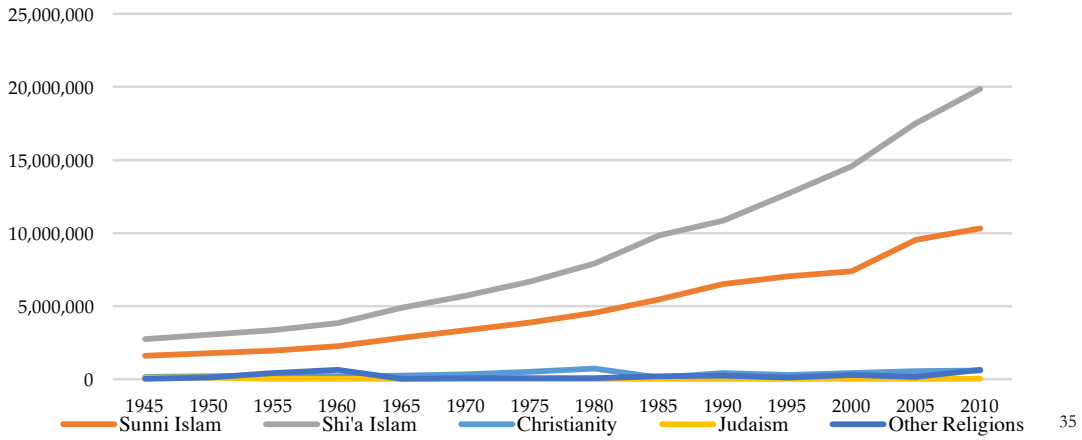
Many clerics wait to declare their candidacy for emulation because they hope to inherit the patronage network of their teachers rather than develop one of their own. A cleric's patronage network is the group of people from which he receives religious taxes (his emulators) as well as the students to whom he gives stipends. The more well-endowed a cleric is, the more he is able to expand his network of representatives nationally and internationally, thus promoting his own name and teachings. The primary source of income is then the religious tithes and donations (specifically the Khums and Zakat) and particularly through those who channel large funds of money, such as businessmen.

Thus, while there are numerous mujtahids – clerics who have achieved the level of ijtihad – not all of them announce their marja'iyya candidacy and not all of the maraj''(pl.) are equal. Those with the greatest authority are those with the strongest patronage networks who enjoy the spiritual and material support of their followers. Given the historic and current size of the Shi'a population of Iraq, the institutions of Khums and of emulation represent the engagement of a significant portion of the Iraqi population.

1997). The third period lasted until the age of British colonialism. The popular marj'ayya, commencing in the early 20th century, was one in which the clerics became heavily involved in political life (Aziz 2001).

[34] Most, though not all, clerics agree with these standards. For example, Grand Ayatollah Asef Mohseni does not think being male is necessary. Regardless, I refer to clerics with masculine pronouns in this paper because despite this debate, all the clerics who have reached an elite level in Iraq are men.

Figure 7: Religion in Iraq 1945-2010



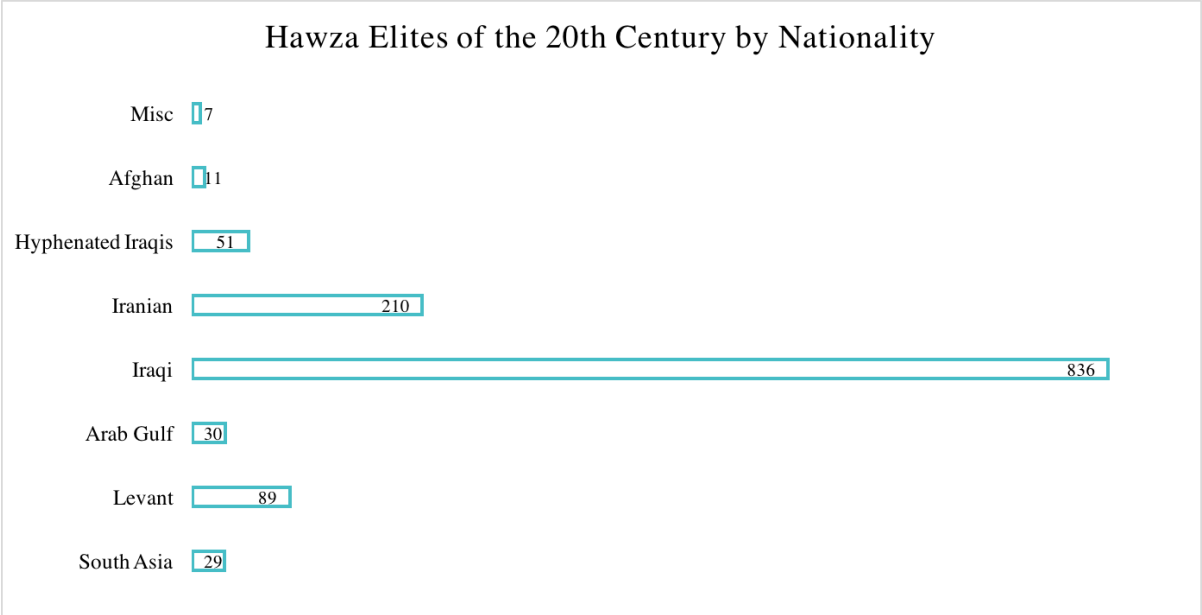
[35]

In this way, the Hawza can be described as a religious system that enjoys strong ties of dependency with its community of adherents. The size of the patronage networks and the centralization of authority in a single cleric have been made easier by modern advancements. In the past, local clerics enjoyed authority solely at the local level, but more recently, the ability of a cleric to attract a transnational audience of adherents has grown.

Moreover, the Hawza is known to attract many non-Iraqi students. Students from Iran, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and elsewhere in the Shi'a world flock to Najaf for religious training. In fact, many claim that up until the 1960s, the majority of the Hawza students in Iraq were actually Iranian, until Grand Ayatollah Muhsin al-Hakim made an exerted effort to include more Iraqis. Jabar's research shows that by 1957, there were 896 Iranian students in the Hawza but only 326 Iraqis (Jabar 2003, 156). Litvak's analysis of the nineteenth century, which measures only mujtahids, shows that forty-seven mujtahids were Persian[36] and only thirteen were Arab (Meir 2002, 191). Litvak's analysis differentiates between Persians and Arabs as well as migrants to the shrine cities and native born residents. My own analysis of biographical dictionaries, presented in the table below, covers the twentieth century and relies on slightly different definition of what constitutes nationality. I discuss these coding decisions in the next section, but the figure below is meant to represent the diversity of the Hawza in the twentieth century:

[35] (Maoz and Henderson 2013).
[36] Persian is used to reference ethnicity, while Iranian is used to reference nationality.

Figure 8: Hawza Elites in the 20th Century by Nationality



Although there have been time periods when there was a duality or plurality of the most elite maraj', the contemporary trend has been the monopolization of the Hawza by one particular marja'a taqlīd. In the time periods covered in this dissertation (1910-1920, 1970-1980, 2002-2020) the Hawza has been characterized by a single marja'. In the end of the Ottoman period and the early Colonial period, the supreme marja' in Najaf was Muhammad Kadhim al-Khurasani (d.1911) followed by Muhammad Kadhim Tabataba'i Yazdi (d.1919) then Muhammad Taqi Hai'iri Shirazi (d.1920) and finally Sheikh al-Shariah Fathallah al-Asfahani (d.1920). The second period was characterized by the ascendancy of Abu al-Qassim al-Khoei (d.1992) in Najaf who had succeeded Muhsin al-Hakim (d.1970). Khoei was first succeeded by Abd al-A'la al-Sabzawari (d.1993) for a short duration before the rise of the elite marja' of the contemporary period, Ali al-Sistani.[37]

These elite clerics have networks of agents throughout the country (and outside of it) who serve as their representatives in various capacities. Depending on their credentials and their trustworthiness, these agents are sometimes allowed to issue rulings in accordance to the marja''s

[37] For a list of all of the maraj'a see Jabar 2002 p.76-77. For a list of elite clerics relevant to the time periods discussed in this dissertation, see appendix.

teachings while others are only allowed to collect the tax and others still are allowed to designate how the tax will be used.[38]

This ability of the marjaʿiyya to collect and distribute resources through the religious taxes – most notably the Khums tax – demonstrates that the Hawza has some bureaucratic capacity. In this sense, the Hawza is both self-funding and able to provide social services. The Khums is invaluable for the Hawza because its guarantees clerical independence from the state. At the same time, it makes the Hawza accountable to its financiers, and as Faleh Jabar describes "channeling the sahm al-imam, zakat and other taxes towards a certain mujtahid… is tantamount to a popular vote" (Jabar 2003: 172). The sahm al-imam is the part of the Khums that is designated as "the Imam's share" in reference to the twelfth Imam, it is directed towards maintaining the faith and is generally given to clerics. The other half is directed towards the poor amongst the Prophet's many descendants.[39]

Some clerics have viewed this democratic aspect as being particularly stifling to reform. For example, Morteza Motahhari, an Iranian cleric and contemporary of Khomeini and al-Sadr, bemoans that "when a cleric relies on the populace, he gains power but loses his freedom" and in fact, he later explains that the reason that the Hawza has failed to reform itself was because there was popular pushback against reform from the population (Motahhari 2001, 173). Motahhari is not the only cleric who finds the practice of the Khums stifling to a cleric's intellectual freedom and cites several examples of how the marjaʿa's reform attempts were thwarted by a traditional emulator class. He even claims that the marjaʿiyya learned, over time, what changes they were not allowed to pursue. He describes Ayatollah Burjurdi's attempt to reform the Qom Hawza as one where the cleric was met with a system of rigidity he had not expected to encounter. Motahhari's main claim is that this has led to a lack of institutional reform. In fact, Motahhari's worries are echoed by Taylor's research which "strongly

[38] Author Interview with Jawad Al-Khoei. Najaf, Iraq. December 2018.
[39] For more details about the Khums, see questions and answers from Grand Ayatollah Sistani (https://www.sistani.org/english/qa/01234/) as well as a breakdown of Islamic laws on various taxes including zakat (https://www.sistani.org/english/book/48/2281/) and Khums (https://www.sistani.org/english/book/48/2280/). Also see an essay from the website of Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah of Lebanon (in Arabic): http://english.bayynat.org/HowTo/HowTo_Al-Khums.htm. For an English academic account of the Khums, see: (Sachedina 1980).

demonstrates that Muslim clerics, like politicians, follow public opinion more than public opinion follows them" (Taylor 2004: 190).

This dissertation follows Motahhari and Taylor's claims, noting that institutional constraints and a trade-off between power and freedom do not only stifle institutional innovation within the Hawza but they also define the realm of acceptable political behavior. Thus, what this trade-off amounts to is that, in practice, elite clerics become followers – rather than leaders – in their community. And that the practice of politics is defined by the "necessity for the religious institution to maintain a certain distance from politics if it wishes to preserve its autonomy" (Louer 2008: 139). Thus, only the clerics who do not have the incentive to preserve this autonomy (those without a stake in the religious system) are likely to risk political involvement, particularly in protest.

In the case chapters, I discuss the institution of the Hawza in each of the time periods in more detail. In the next section, I discuss the data collection strategy and methodology I employed to study this religious system in depth.

4 Studying the Hawza: Data Collection and Methodology

4.1 Case Selection

The empirical portion of this dissertation is divided into three comparative case study chapters: the colonial era, the Ba'athist era, and the post-2003 era. In turn, each of these chapters examines the behavior of a set of clerical actors across two protest movements. In the colonial era, this is the 1917 Najafi Revolt and the 1920 Revolution. In the Ba'athist era, the cases are the 1977 Safar Uprising and the 1979 Rajab Uprising. Finally, in the contemporary case, the protests are the 2018 anti-establishment protests and the 2019 October Revolution (which continued into 2020). I selected these protest movements from a large set of protest movements, which are fully presented and discussed in the appendix. These case pairs were selected for various reasons, including their ability to test key alternative explanations such as: the impact of religion-state relations, clerical ideology, transnational political pressures, and individual clerical characteristics. The case selection was also impacted by data availability.

I rely on different types and sources of data for each of the protest movements. Most of the data was collected through ten months of fieldwork in Iraq (from 2015 to 2019), in the cities of Najaf, Kerbala, and Baghdad. To a much lesser extent, and particularly for the

Ba'athist-era cases, I relied on interviews with the Iraqi expatriate communities in the United States and the United Kingdom. In each of the case chapters, I discuss the relevant data collection and methodology at length.

In every case, my goal has been to triangulate and adjudicate amongst three points of view, which occasionally overlap in meaningful ways: the protestors (or, the opposition broadly), the state, and the clerics. In each case, I have tried to find primary material – including interviews or original documents – illustrating these views.

The case selection was designed to address competing explanations. I selected case from three distinct political time periods: colonial, Ba'athist, and post-Ba'athist in order to examine how political context impacts general trends in clerical behavior. As discussed in chapter two, a religious system's relationship with the state is one of the most prominent explanations of clerical participation in protest and I have selected sets of cases that vary across this.

In order to test competing ideological arguments, I examine within-case variation in ideology to see if it has an impact on clerical behavior. In other words, I explore whether clerics with complementary political ideologies tend to behave in similar ways. I also examine how an individual cleric's behavior changes across protest movements. I rely on process tracing within each of the cases to uncover the mechanisms that drive clerical behavior. Process tracing is the attempt to "trace the links between possible causes and observed outcomes" by relying on "histories, archival documents, interview transcripts and other sources…" (George and Bennett 2005: 6). The table below summarizes the case selection and the data that is used to represent the three key points of view:

Figure 9: Case Selection

Cases	Clerics	State	Protestors/ Opposition	Purpose of Case Selection:
Colonial (1917 Najafi Revolt and 1920 Revolution)	Secondary historical scholarship; Hawza biographies; official publications	Secondary historical scholarship; colonial archives	Secondary historical scholarship; biographies and memoirs of participants;	**Theory Building; deriving mechanisms** Testing validity of alternative strategic arguments.
Baʿathist (1977 Safar Uprising and 1979 Rajab Uprising)	Interviews; Hawza biographies; Hawza archives; official publications	State archives; media sources (public interviews & newspapers)	Interviews; political party official documents; media sources (public interviews & newspapers)	**Theory Building; deriving mechanisms** Testing validity of alternative ideological and strategic arguments.
Post-2003 (2018 anti-establishment protests and 2019-2020 October Revolution)	Interviews; non-participant observation; Hawza biographies; publications; sermons	Interviews; media sources; official publications	Interviews; media and social media sources; official publications; election data; public opinion data; event data.	**Theory Building and theory testing** Testing validity of strategic arguments in real-time.

4.2 The Inductive Iteration Method

The general methodological process employed in this dissertation can be described as that of "inductive iteration"(Yom 2014). Inductive iteration is a process of arriving at explanations through repeated travel between theory and data rather than procedurally going from research question, to hypothesis, to empirical testing. Inductive iteration recognizes that theories are

developed through the course of research and fieldwork: "Qualitative scholars conducting immersive fieldwork frequently revise their causal propositions after discarding old assumptions and uncovering new mechanisms from interviews and archives" (Yom 2014, 617).

Inductive iteration relies on the researcher having pre-conceived "theoretical hunches" about the phenomena of interest, without examining the data (ibid, 626). Additionally, they go back and forth between the data and the theoretical framework until it is internally satisfying. Then, researchers have to decide when to end the process of inductive iteration. Indeed, and as I will demonstrate in the subsequent theory chapter, theoretical hunches about the nature of religious organizations inspired the first round of fieldwork for this project. Then, immersion in the field highlighted new theoretical insights and produced the theory of institutional responsibility. The occurrence of the 2019-2020 protest movement, during the course of writing this dissertation, put an end to the process of inductive iteration. It did so by making fieldwork more difficult to conduct and by presenting itself as an opportunity for real-time theory testing.

In the sections below, I describe the data collection process in more detail. Because they all rely (to some degree) on fieldwork, I devote the concluding section of this chapter to reflecting on my fieldwork experience.

4.3 Data

This dissertation relies on four types of primary data, collected primarily through fieldwork: interview, archival and historical materials, clerical texts, and "non-participatory" observations.[40] In this section, I briefly discuss what each of these entails. In the case chapters, I discuss the relevant data collection process in more detail.

4.3.1 *Interview Data and Meta-Data*

Interviews are one of the most important sources of data for this dissertation. I interviewed clerics of various rankings, politicians, protestors and opposition party members, un-involved observers of protests, historians, and journalists. I conducted a total of 143 in-person interviews

[40] Research was conducted with permission of the MIT Institutional Review Board, known as the Committee on the Use of Humans as Experimental Subjects (COUHES) under protocol #1709094934.

during my ten months of fieldwork. I also conducted a few phone interviews although those tended to be follow-up interviews.

I had several prepared templates for semi-structured interviews which I selected from depending on the profile of my interviewee.[41] For very high-profile interviewees, I adapted the templates in order to avoid redundant questions that they have previously provided answers to, be it in their publications or in public interviews, many of which I consulted prior to the actual interview.

One of the main problems of semi-structured interviews is that they tend to inspire scripted answers until the respondent has gained familiarity and ease with the researcher. For this reason, the first few questions in every interview guide are demographic and non-sensitive. Critical questions – concerning views towards protest, for example – were always saved for the middle of the interview, for when rapport has been established.[42]

Although the style is semi-structured, interviews sometimes transitioned into conversations. Some interviews were recorded on a phone, with the permission of the interviewee. Depending on context and on the environment, there were times that I did not request to record an interview and decided to only take written notes. Other times, I asked for permission to record but was denied for various reasons. For example, interviewees who were discussing contemporary clerical politics were oftentimes the ones who refused to be recorded. Many of my interviewees have selected to remain anonymous and many others I have chosen to anonymize due to the sensitivity of their responses. I include the names of most high-profile respondents.

The interviews were all conducted in a formalized colloquial Iraqi version of Arabic and in the presence of several observers, including a contact in Najaf who helped arrange the interviews, associates of the cleric, and my father who accompanied me for cultural reasons. In addition to collecting answers to my specific questions, I also collected observations of the space and the experience of the interview. These constitute what Lee Ann Fujii refers to as "meta-data," which includes things like body language (did the respondent maintain eye contact?) in

[41] See the appendix for a sample interview guide in English and Arabic.
[42] In thinking about and designing interview guides, I relied on and was inspired by: (Aberbach and Rockman 2002; Fujii 2018a; Hochschild 2009; Mosley 2013).

addition to rumors and stories that are told after an interview (Fujii 2010, 2018b). These observations are recorded in hand-written fieldwork journals.

These observations inform my analysis and inspire my understanding of the clerical community. For example, commentary on current news events sometimes reveals more about clerical views towards politics than a carefully curated answer for a researcher from a Western university. I interviewed many of these clerics during critical times in the Iraqi political calendar: shortly after the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria's invasion of Mosul, before and after the 2018 election and the success of Muqtada al-Sadr's coalition of Islamists and leftists, and right after protests broke out in Basra.

Clerics also frequently commented on international news and it was always interesting to see what events drew their interest and how well they corresponded to what the Iraqi street was discussing. Like most Middle Easterners, they puzzled over American behavior in the region. Others discussed other religious institutions – most notably the Catholic Church – and their struggles with social issues. They tended to focus on the United States, perhaps because I was American or because of the United States' history of involvement in Iraq.

My American identity frequently raised concerns about the purpose of my research and its intended audience. Inquiries ranged from the polite, to the chastising ("shame on you if you're working for the Americans"[43]) to the outright aggressive. These concerns, as a I discuss in the contemporary chapter, were largely a reflection of their having lived through severe authoritarianism. The fears about my intentions and the purpose of my research subsided over the course of the conversation.[44]

Additionally, these conversations also revealed interesting dynamics between clerics from traditional clerical families and those who were not. Those from non-clerical families oftentimes used self-deprecation to hint at a certain dynamic. Those from clerical families were respectful of all their peers but also tended to reveal biases of socio-economic status.

Both the interviews and the meta-data surrounding the interviews have been essential in constructing the stories of clerical activity in protest. There are advantages and disadvantages to structured data (e.g. semi-structured interviews) including the ability to compare answers across

[43] Author's fieldwork notes. December 2017. Najaf, Iraq.
[44] Please see fieldwork appendix for a deeper reflection on this experience.

clerics, tie responses to specific variables, and provoke serious thought. On the other hand, these formal interviews also welcome more scripted answers. But there are also disadvantages to meta-data, including the fact that observations are biased by what the researcher is interested in. In my case, for example, I was highly alert to gender dynamics, which, fortunately, had little to do with my research topic.

4.3.2 Archival and Historical Evidence

The second major source of data I collected was historical and archival materials. First, I analyzed materials from the Ba'athist government archives, housed at the Hoover Institute in Stanford University, to represent the state perspective for chapter 5. I describe the types of materials found there in more detail in the methodological section of chapter 5.

Second, I collected several memoirs, hagiographies, and biographical dictionaries from visits to various clerical archives and libraries in Najaf including the Kashif al-Ghita library and the al-Alamain Institute library. I collected different sets of biographical dictionaries that include information on important public figures with ties to the religious establishment in Najaf. One of the dictionaries was created by the Iraqi historian and archivist, Sabah Nouri al-Marzouk.[45] Al-Marzouk relied on various sources to create his multi-volume piece. I cross-referenced al-Marzouk's list with other biographical dictionaries as well as burial records of the Holy Shrine of Najaf. I digitized these dictionaries and limited them to exclude clerics who had passed away before 1910. This resulted in a total of 1479 clerics, born either in the nineteenth or twentieth centuries. Because biographical dictionaries, by definition, focus on "notable" figures, most of the clerics in the database are elites. Other scholars have relied on biographical dictionaries including Meir Litvak who says that "by their nature, the biographical dictionaries tend to focus on the more important ulama, while omitting many of the rank and file students" (Litvak 1991, 39).

My clerical dataset, based on these dictionaries, includes mainly those at the level of Bahth al-Kharij or higher, with very few clerics of lower levels being represented. Lower-level clerics received recognition if they were a popular preacher known for their religious services

[45] Al-Marzouk is a renowned Iraqi archivist. He passed away in 2014 and is known to have created various sets of biographical dictionaries concerning a wide array of topics.

during holidays or if they were particularly active in a critical time period of Iraqi history. For example, if they were a founder or member of an important political party.

In building the dataset, I coded several different types of information. First, demographics including date of birth and date of death. On the rare occasion that this information was not available, I tried to record a time period in which they were active based on either the names of their teachers or other information contained in the biographies (e.g. when they moved to Najaf).

Second, I recorded Hawza-specific information. This includes the type of cleric, whether they were a mujtahid or a marjaʿ as well as whether they have written a code of religious conduct, whether they have written and recorded a teacher's sermons, whether they have taught in the Hawza, if they were a representative of another cleric, which cleric and to which location, and finally, whether they lead prayers at a particular mosque.

Third, I recorded information about nationality. The most difficult coding decision was regarding nationality for various logistical *and* ethical reasons, which I describe below. To begin, if the biographical dictionaries provide a city of birth for a cleric then I code them as being from the country which that city is located in. For example, if a cleric's last name is "Tehrani" or "Qazwini" (which are Persian names) but they were born in an Iraqi city (e.g. Najaf), then they are coded as Iraqi. Those who are born elsewhere and live in Iraq or vice-versa, I consider to be hyphenated (i.e. Iraqi-Iranian). Where the city of birth is not listed but a cleric is said to have "gone back to..." a certain country, I code that country as being their place of origin.

Several issues arise here. First, some Najaf-born clerics of Iranian origins may not self-identify as Iraqis, despite having been born and raised in Najaf.[46] Second, drawing conclusions about the degree to which they are Iraqi or Iranian harkens back to the chauvinistic and racist policies enacted by Saddam Hussein's regime, which deported Iraqis of Iranian origins and accused them of disloyalty to the Iraqi state (an issue I discuss more in chapter seven). Therefore, the coding of nationality here should not be taken to mean much more than its described intent. With this cautionary note, I add that if I have no information on city of birth or on country of return, I code the cleric as Iraqi based on the assumption that clerics who are categorized as "prominent Najafis" by an Iraqi historian are indeed Najafi, and thereby Iraqi. In

[46] Phone interview with anonymized cleric. February 2020.

other words, this dataset has an Iraqi bias which means that it may conflict with other analyses produced by other scholars.

A potential way to account for this is to code clerics by their last name and thus create a category for ethnicity. While this is feasible, it risks miscoding and discriminating against Iraqi clerics of Iranian origins. That being said, the majority of clerics in the database have Persian last names. The reader should recognize that the category of "Iraqi" or even hyphenated Iraqi can easily include Iranian students who do not self-identify as Iraqis, despite having been born in Najaf and having lived there. In each of the case chapters, I discuss the number of seminary students and their nationalities according to other sources.

Finally, I included a variable for whether they were recorded to have any political involvement as well as a description of the type of involvement. The dichotomous variable for political involvement took into account a very broad definition of political activity. It included, for example, activities like starting or joining a political party, protesting, running for office, and occupying a government position (including that of a judge).

The dataset is used to primarily provide descriptive statistics of the structure and the membership of the Hawza over time. However, the biographical dictionaries also allowed me to re-create networks of teachers and students in each of the case studies.

4.3.3 *Sermons and Text*

Clerical output – in the form of statements, religious edicts, and sermons – is usually the main source of data that informs scholarship on clerics, particularly in the contemporary era. This dissertation relies on this form of data particularly for the marja'"s of the religious establishment. For the contemporary era, I have collected texts of sermons by scraping the website associated with the Imam Hussain Holy Shrine, where these sermons take place. I have also manually collected hundreds of statements, edicts, and interviews from official clerical websites. For the more historical cases, I collected documents from second-hand historical accounts and from libraries.

4. Non-Participatory Observation

In addition to accessing archival materials and interviewing clerics, I was also able to observe the on-goings of the Hawza as a "non-participant" observer. This included sitting in on seminary

classes, observing the visitors to clerical offices, and even sitting in on conversations of some teachers. I hesitate to describe these as "participant observation" because, as a woman in a traditionally male-dominated space, I was very clearly a visitor. Even when I visited a women's-seminary in Najaf, I was able to observe as a guest but not directly as a participant. In fact, claiming to be a participant suggests having the same academic credentials that the seminarians have, which I do not. The discussions – except for those concerning logistics that occurred in clerical offices – were oftentimes specialized, narrow, and required a background that I did not possess.

Regardless of the limitations of my position, these experiences – like the meta-data from the interviews – shape my understanding of the Hawza and particularly in the post-2003 era. It was during these experiences that I refined my understanding of what constitutes institutionalization and how the Hawza is adapting to modern life in some ways and yet continues to be very traditional in others. In the same office, I witnessed a seminary class live-streamed from a mosque as well as the transfer of Khums, cash-based, with the request for a "receipt, hand-written, please"[47].

5. Conclusion

While this chapter presented the basic methodological toolkit employed in this dissertation as well as the various forms of data collected, each chapter's methodology and data collection process is distinct. This is a natural outcome of these chapters encompassing entirely different time periods and occurring over the course of a century. Their commonality is that the data collected and the insights gleaned arose from months of fieldwork in the shrine cities. A discussion of this fieldwork and the access it required is included in the appendix.

[47] Author's fieldwork observations from Kufa, Iraq. December 2018.

Chapter Five

Protests in the Colonial Era

1 Introduction

In his memoir of the 1917 Najafi Revolt against the British, Sheikh Muhammad al-Khoei, a Najaf-born and Iranian-bred cleric, recalled that a group of seminary students decided to take up arms against the British and join the revolt, believing it to be a religious obligation. One of those seminarians was a student of Grand Ayatollah Yazdi, the chief marjaʿ and the head of the Hawza, at the time. Upon hearing of his student's decision to bear arms and join the revolt, Yazdi ordered his expulsion from the seminary. As events unfolded in Najaf, Yazdi's stance remained fixed: so long as the rebels continued to invite British ire, and its associated economic hardship, he was unsupportive of them. When Yazdi passed away – shortly before the onset of the much larger 1920 Revolution – his critics, as well as later historians of Iraq, credited the relative success of the 1920 Revolution (and the relative failure of the 1917 Revolt) to his absence. His successor – Grand Ayatollah Shirazi – was seen as fundamental to the success of the 1920 Revolution. Any other chief marjaʿ, revolutionary Iraqi nationalists worried, would have withheld support as Yazdi did with his own student only a few years before. Why was the behavior of one chief marjaʿ's so different from the other? When do elite clerics support anti-government protest and why?

In this chapter, I examine these questions in the political context of the British colonization of Iraq. Throughout this dissertation, I make the argument that elite clerics rarely instigate anti-government protest because they are constrained by their sense of responsibility towards the Hawza. In this chapter, I examine whether this argument holds up when the

protests are directed at non-Muslim occupiers (the British). I do so by examining clerical behavior, at the elite and non-elite levels, in two instances of anti-British protest in 1917-1918 and in 1920. In addition, this chapter examines other instances of clerical political activism. This includes the decision of some clerics to support the Ottomans in their war against the British. This chapter also takes into account clerical stances on international political events, including encroaching colonialism in the broader Middle East and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution.

The 1917 and 1920 cases also allow me, within the broader context of the dissertation, to examine the impact of regime type on the theory of clerical institutional responsibility. In chapter 5, I will examine clerical behavior under conditions in which the Hawza had an antagonistic relationship with the Ba'athist state. In chapter 6, I examine clerical behavior under conditions of democratic transition in which the Hawza enjoyed a historically unprecedented degree of freedom and good relations with the state.

I find that – regardless of regime type – elite clerics continues to behave cautiously during instances of anti-government protest, seeking to maintain some degree of stability for the religious establishment. Oftentimes, this leads them to the role of the mediator. I also demonstrate the mechanisms through which politically active clerics are able to be so. This includes, for example, being able to rely on familial ties to the religious establishment to gain authority, a type of secondary authority or authority by association. Historically, this has enabled some clerics to become well-known leaders of the nationalist movement and has constrained others. However, it has also meant that the Hawza's protest participation record inspires confusion. This dissertation seeks to demystify this seemingly inconsistent and inexplicable behavior.

In order to do so, I rely on several sources of novel and secondary data to triangulate evidence and analyses from three key perspectives: that of the clerics, the protestors, and the colonial state. In the next section, I briefly describe the data that informs this chapter. Following that, I use this data to present the Hawza in the early twentieth century. I argue that it was, and continues to be, asymmetric in its high degree of hierarchy and minimal bureaucratization. I complicate this account by also arguing that it was relatively more decentralized and less bureaucratized than it is today. I connect this structure to specific theoretical implications: a high degree of institutional responsibility that is manifested in local-level non-involvement in anti-government protests. This connects to the state-building project and explains an incongruity between the Hawza's stance on local level opposition politics and regional opposition politics (particularly, anti-colonial movements).

To make this connection in detail, section 3 is devoted to a discussion of centralization, hierarchy, and bureaucracy in the early twentieth century. In the process, it presents the major teachers, seminaries, and the intellectual atmosphere of the Hawza at the time. Section 4 takes up the question of the historical political context. It presents the background of the Hawza's political involvement in the early twentieth century, setting the stage for a comparison of behavior in local and international settings as well as for a comparison of Muslim and non-Muslim foreign occupiers. Section 5 examines the behavior of a set of clerics in the 1917 Najafi Revolt. Section 6 examines the behavior of a comparable set in the 1920 Revolution. Section 7 concludes with a critical comparison of these two events.

2 Data and Methods

This chapter seeks to accomplish three goals: first, to understand which clerics are involved in anti-government protest. Second, to uncover mechanisms of this clerical participation in protest. Third, to address competing explanations arising from both the general political science literature and the specialized scholarship on the 1920 Revolution. The case selection strategy, which compares the 1917 Revolt with the 1920 Revolution, is designed to accomplish these three goals.

The selection of two closely occurring protest movements allows for the examination of the behavior of individual clerics over time. Is it consistent? How and when does it change? The selection of cases that occur during the political context of non-Muslim colonialism allows for the examination of the impact of ideology. Simply stated, non-Muslim colonialism can intensify the ideological incentives for the participation of Muslim clerics in anti-government protest. Figure eleven lists some religious edicts, issued by various Hawza elites, and directed at European colonizers.

To answer these questions and to uncover the mechanisms that drive clerical behavior in this time period, I rely on a strategy of process tracing of historical evidence. As with the other cases in this project, I attempt to triangulate between three points of view: the clerics, the government (the British in this case), and the protestors.

Process tracing is "an analytic tool for drawing descriptive and causal inferences from diagnostic pieces of evidence — often understood as part of a temporal sequence of events or phenomena" (Collier 2011: 824). This dissertation does not seek to causally identify a relationship but to present evidence of the existence of an undocumented phenomenon and to provide a rich description of what mechanisms motivate it. This phenomenon is the major

theoretical contribution of this work: the sense of responsibility that some clerics have towards their religious establishment, which transcends typical self-interest.

The first step in process tracing is to develop a timeline of key events that the researcher focuses on. In this chapter, I present a timeline of "critical junctures" for each of the 1917 Revolt and the 1920 Revolution. Within these critical junctures, I describe the behavior of a set of clerics who occupy different positions in the religious establishment.

The selection of what constitutes a critical juncture is influenced by the way in which these historical events were recorded and analyzed. First, and given data limitations, scholarship on the 1917 Revolt is much more limited than scholarship on the 1920 Revolution. In fact, the 1917 Revolt is usually discussed as part of the background context for the 1920 Revolution.[48] I try to account for this data limitation by examining descriptions of the 1917 revolt that are found in the memoirs, biographies, and hagiographies of Iraqi figures – usually clerics – from the time period. These come with their own sets of biases usually involving personal motivations for presenting certain clerics in a positive or negative light.

The personal biases that color Iraqi accounts and early Iraqi scholarship on the protests of the early twentieth century have been documented by a recent wave of scholars, most notably by Abbas Kadhim and Peter Sluglett (A. Kadhim 2013; Sluglett 2012b, 2012a). Kadhim presents a revisionist history of the 1920 Revolution in which he highlights both sectarian and colonial biases in historical preservation as well as more mundane sycophantic ones (A. Kadhim 2013). In my own exploration of primary sources, particularly arising from the religious establishment, I encountered the latter much more frequently than the former. Indeed, overly reverential or overly critical accounts of certain clerics are one of the greater biases in the primary sources I

[48] One example of a book that examines 1917 as a precursor for the 1920 Revolution is: (Rutledge 2015).

consulted. And, as Sluglett points out, it colors colonial archives as well (and presumably the scholarship produced through their consultation): "For their part, British reports routinely portrayed the Shi'i mujtahids as extremists, fanatics, and reactionaries irrevocably opposed to progress…"(Sluglett 2012b, 292). The only strategy available in these circumstances is to triangulate evidence from different sources and representing individuals with different biases. To that end, this chapter relies on a body of secondary scholarship ranging from classic accounts of the Iraqi Revolution (Batatu 1983; Marr 1985) to more revisionist modern ones (A. Kadhim 2013; Rutledge 2015). It also relies on classic Iraqi histories including some that were written by eyewitnesses and participants (Bazirgan 1991; Far'ōn 1952). In addition, there is a large body of dissertation manuscripts produced by Iraqi historians in the 1970s and 1980s at British Universities (Atiyyah 1973; Nadhmi 1974).[49] I use these data sources to establish universally agreed on "critical junctures" in the history of each of these two key events. For example, a common critical juncture is the transition from non-violent protest to the bearing of arms.

Then, within each of these critical junctures, I describe and analyze the behavior of clerics. For this, I examine both the aforementioned historical sources as well as Hawza-produced histories and hagiographies. Some of these have been written by Hawza clerics and others have been written by scholars associated with the Hawza, including members of prominent clerical families. Some of these materials are accessible through libraries and online. Others, including primary sources (e.g. local newspapers and journals), I collected during visits to clerical archives and libraries during my fieldwork in Najaf.[50] Much like the personal accounts

[49] Peter Sluglett, who advised many of these dissertations himself, explains that this was due to "increasingly severe censorship, and a great measure of self-censorship [during the Ba'athist era]…" (Sluglett 2012a, 4–5).
[50] I am particularly obliged to the Kashif Al-Ghita family for generously sharing material from their rich collection. They painstakingly preserved and protected many books that were banned during the Saddam Hussein dictatorship.

of the 1920 Revolution, these texts are also biased in the perspective they represent. Fortunately, the biases and political inclinations tend to be written without subtlety and in a way that makes it easy to discern what information needs substantiation. Moreover, the central claim of this dissertation – that clerics have a sense of institutional responsibility – is a claim that does not lend itself easily to the deification or the derision of clerics. In some ways, this makes the work of process tracing a little easier.

In addition to these resources, which are specific to the time period, I rely on the clerical dataset that informs the analysis of the other empirical chapters. As previously discussed in chapter 2, this dataset is a complication of different sets of biographical dictionaries as well as burial records of the Holy Shrines. For this specific chapter, this dataset allows me to single out two types of clerics. First, those were who were preserved as "activists" in the historical record. What attributes did they share? What proportion of the total number of clerics in Iraq did they constitute? How were they connected? What constitutes "activism" in the historical record? Secondly, those who were intentionally recorded as being "uninvolved" rather than not being recorded at all. Does this decision constitute a condemnation of their behavior? Is involvement or non-involvement the norm amongst their contemporaries that share similar attributes?

I also use this dataset to inform section 3, which describes the structure of the Hawza in the colonial era. It is through analysis of this dataset that I was able to uncover the key seminary teachers at the time period, the education patterns of students, the nationalities of clerics, and their distribution over time.

Ultimately, the value of this chapter lies in its connection with the next two chapters and in the story it tells about the durability of structural motivations through changing political environments and ideological settings. In the next section (3), I provide an overview of the

structure of the Hawza and its relationship to the colonial state in the early twentieth century. In addition to discussing its relationship to the British, I also review its historical political involvement in other instances of protest and rebellion, including some instances of anti-Ottoman rebellion.

3 The Structure of the Hawza in the Colonial era

In chapter four, I described the Hawza as being hierarchical and minimally bureaucratized throughout its modern history, including this time period. In this chapter, I revisit the definition and indicators of hierarchy and bureaucracy and use them to demonstrate that the Hawza in the colonial era is slightly less hierarchical, less bureaucratized, and less centralized than in the Ba'athist and post-2003 eras. I explain the hypothesized behaviors that result from this. I also describe why centralization matters to institutional responsibility in this context.

Following this, I present a set of clerical actors who are the key protagonists of the case studies. They are protagonists by virtue of either their involvement in anti-government protest or their high-ranking status in the religious hierarchy.

3.1 Centralization

Although there were several successive chief marja''s in this time period, there were also many competing inheritors and centers of authority outside of Najaf, including in the cities of Samarra, Kerbala and Kadhimiyya.[51] Najaf only became the center of Iraqi Shi'ism and the designated home of the chief marja' in recent history. In fact, during the life of Grand Ayatollah

[51] At the time, Kadhimiyya was its own city. Now, it is the Baghdadi suburb of Kadhimiya.

Hasan al-Shirazi (d.1894) (who is best known for his famous tobacco fatwa) the marjaʿiyya (the head of the religious establishment) was based in the city of Samarra, just north of Baghdad.[52] After his death, it returned to Najaf, then briefly to Kerbala, and back to Najaf where it remains until today. Although the head of the religious establishment lived in various cities, Najaf's importance as a site of religious learning did not waver.

In the early twentieth century, it was much more common for the marjaʿiyya to be outside of Najaf than it is today. This was due to a decentralization of the Hawza which created competing claims to authority that were sometimes recognized and exploited by political entrepreneurs. This decentralization could be attributed to the limitations of communication and transportation technologies, which necessitated the establishment of local clerical authorities in each city, even in the presence of one chief marjaʿ (Meir 2002, 55).

The religious establishment, as we know it today, is quite new. Indeed, and as many scholars have pointed out, the Shiʿa religious hierarchy was only established in the mid-nineteenth century under Murtada Ansari (d.1864) (Nakash 1994; Sluglett 2012b). Prior to this, there was a "multiplicity of centers both in Iran and in the shrine cities, none of which had outright superiority, on the personal level the leadership was diffused among several rival mujtahids" (Litvak 1998, 62). The centralized hierarchy of the twentieth century was still in development.

One possible reason for this was the development of the Iraqi state itself. In the nineteenth century, for example, having multiple elite clerics presiding over different holy cities was simply a reflection of the structure of communities and the limits of communication and

[52] For more information about the Tobacco Revolt and the role of Hasan al-Shirazi, see: (Keddie 2012).

transportation technologies. As the Iraqi state itself became more centralized and fixed, the Najafi Hawza became more and more the Iraqi Hawza. The early twentieth century was a transformative time for national identity. It also transformed how clerics perceived their community of adherents and the scope of political instability that could impact their well-being and the well-being of the Hawza.[53]

1.2. Hierarchy

In the early twentieth century, the process of becoming a marjaʿ involved studying in the Hawza until a more senior cleric issued a certificate of ijtihad, indicating qualification to arrive independently at religious rulings. The mujtahid is thus the cleric who is capable and licensed by more senior clerics to arrive at religious rulings and issue religious edicts (or, fatwas). Clerics who ascend to positions of chief marjaʿ tend to have more than one certificate and in different specializations. The options available to those who ascend to a high degree of scholarship, but not to ijtihad, include becoming agents or representatives of elites (otherwise known as a "wakil" or a "mu'tamdd"). They are able to collect Khums and to settle minor issues (Nadhmi 1974: 96). With regards to hierarchy, the Hawza had an identifiable central leadership with ranked and titled positions of subordinate authority. In the early 20th century, the titles were recently developed and are slightly different than those from today. Litvak claims that the title of

[53] Interestingly, the increasing preoccupation of the Najaf elite with Iraqi affairs has been noted and criticized by some Iranian writers. One such writer, a professor at the University of Tehran, highlights several "shortcomings" of the Hawza of Najaf when it came to Iranian affairs: "…sometimes Najaf was preoccupied with Iraqi and international issues more than with Iranian domestic matters. Although this point was positive from a global point of view, at times it impacted negatively on Iranian politics." (Samiei 2012, 291).

"ayatollah" in fact came out in the early twentieth century, bestowed by clerics rather than upon them (Litvak 1998, 98).

Figure 10: Index of Clerical Titles and Ranks

Title	Description
al-Fadhil **الفاضل**	Student who has completed the introductory phase with distinction.
al-ʿAlama **العلامة**	Student who finished the intermediary phase and is teaching others at the introductory phase.
al-Hujja **الحجة**	Student at the advanced phase.
Ayatollah **اية الله**	Recognized as a Mujtahid, someone who has achieved the level of ijtihad.
Ayatollah al-ʿudhmā **اية الله العظمى** **"Grand Ayatollah"**	A Mujtahid who has distributed his religious views to followers.
Marjaʿ **المرجع**	A Mujtahid with followers.
al-Marjaʿ al-aʿlā **المرجع الأعلى** **"Chief Marjaʿ"**	The Marjaʿ who has the most followers.

The first three rows represent *mutually exclusive* categories describing different levels of schooling in the seminaries. They are roughly equivalent to the same categories used today (and discussed in the next chapter). The fourth category, "ayatollah", tends to describe someone qualified to issue rulings but who has not declared their candidacy for emulation. The last three rows represent *non-mutually exclusive* categories. Critically, the title "grand ayatollah" is used to describe clerics who are in the position of marjaʿ and of chief marjaʿ.

Writing about this time period, Wamidh Nadhmi states that "the highest stratum in the Shi'ah religious hierarchy is the Chief Mujtahid.[54] This position is again not gained by appointment or certificate (as the Sunnis) but rather by sheer popularity and prestige" (ibid; 97). Ali al-Wardi, an Iraqi sociologist and historian, echoes this:

> There are a few social differences between the two factions [Sunni and Shi'a clerics]. The Sunni clerics are similar to government employees because they depend on the government for their salary and they move from place to place according to the government's orders and his duties and commissions may increase or decreased based on the leader's wish or degree of the leader's approval of him. The Shi'a clerics, however, receive their living from the masses and the more his popularity increases, the more his resources increase. For that reason, he has strong ties to the public and he is sensitive to their feelings and he leans towards standing with them against the ruler. He may be obliged to tolerate their outdated and inherited beliefs and customs but, at the same time, he will not allow for them to be oppressed. (Wardi 1989: 36).

The existence of this hierarchy is also represented by both internal Hawza descriptions of the time period as well as colonial ones. Gertrude Bell, a British political officer in Baghdad, describes it in an October 1920 letter:

> Well to return to the Shi'ahs. 'Abdul Majid said "What are you going to do if the Chief Mujtahid [Chief Marja'], whose voice is the voice of God, issues a fatwah that no Shi'ah is to sit in the Legislative Assembly" - while the govt was under the British Mandate, he meant - "or when a law is being debated, suppose the Mujtahid cuts in with a fatwah that it's against canon law and must be rejected, irrespective of other considerations?" Imagine the Pope exercising [sic] real temporal authority in Italy and obstructing the Govt at every turn, and you have the position.[55]

[54] Also referred to as the "Chief Mujtahid" by British Colonial Records and historical sources.

[55] **Letter** from Gertrude Bell to her father, dated October 3rd 1920.

Bell's comparison of the chief marjaʿ to the pope suggests that the colonial state perceived the Hawza to have a hierarchical structure. And, that its hierarchical structure imbued the chief marjaʿ with a monopoly on authority.

Despite the existence of these titles and the meritocratic nature through which they are achieved, the Hawza was and remains governed by norms. One of these norms, that continues to this day,[56] is the practice of waiting until their teacher passes away before a mujtahid formalizes their own rise to emulation. Even when the student has arrived at the level of their teacher – be it through the accumulation of certificates or through achieving a large following of students – they will defer the formalization of this status out of respect to their mentor. For example, Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Kathem al-Akhwand al-Khurasani (hereafter: al-Akhwand al-Khurasani) refused to ascend to the pulpit in Najaf to preach so long as his teacher, Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Hasan al-Shirazi was alive, despite the fact that al-Shirazi lived in Samarra and al-Akhwand al-Khurasani was in Najaf. After al-Shirazi's death – when al-Khurasani finally ascended the pulpit – his first words were in remembrance of his teacher, despite the fact that he himself had arisen to the highest levels of the Hawza of Najaf and had outpaced many of the scholars who had taught him (Ali 2011, 353).[57]

Although this particular hierarchy, along with its informal norms, is similar in many ways to the contemporary and Ba'athist eras, it remains that the Hawza, during this time period, was at its least institutionalized. In describing the nineteenth century, Litvak writes of "the diffused nature of the teaching system and of the leadership as well as the lack of bureaucratic and clear hierarchical organization" (Litvak 1998, 105). The validity of Litvak's description diminishes

[56] Interview with Hossein al-Qazwini. Kerbala, Iraq. December 2017.
[57] In fact, Al-Akhwand Al-Khurasani taught over three hundred elite clerics, dispersed across Iran, Iraq, Pakistan.

slightly in the twentieth century, as the Hawza becomes more institutionalized. For example, it was not until the late 1920s that financial authority of the religious elites was consolidated at the top of the religious hierarchy. This happened when Grand Ayatollah al-Asfahani mandated that a certain part of the Khums – specifically what is known as "the share of the Imam" - be paid directly to the marjaʿ and not to other, lower-ranking, clerics (Abbas 1997: 161).[58]

In addition, elite clerics in the shrine cities derived financial benefit from the shrines during pilgrimages and religious holidays. The shrines served as focal points for followers looking to donate money or to pay their religious taxes. Recall that each of Najaf, Kerbala, Kadhimiyya, and Samarra housed important holy shrines. However, in the early 1900s and prior to Asfahani's ruling, the payment of religious taxes was less centralized and dispersed amongst various clerics. In addition, foreign funds – like the Oudh Bequest (which I discuss later in this chapter) – were allocated *by the state* to numerous clerics who acted as distributors, rather than to the chief marjaʿa solely. Thus the clean narrative of state-reliant versus independent clerics is much more complicated than commonly expressed in the typical history of the political economy of the Hawza. The financial distribution of funds, the geographic spread of centers of learning beyond Najaf, and the newness of the religious establishment itself suggest a hierarchical structure that is challenged by decentralization.

3.3 Bureaucracy

As an academic institution, the Hawza was a set of loosely associated seminaries with no overarching administrative structure that directed student life and learning. The seminaries

[58] Prior to Asfahani, in the early 1800s, Jafar Kashif al-Ghita established clerical claims to the Imam's share of the Khums.

mostly served as dormitories for the many non-local students. Seminary students had freedom in selecting which classes to sit in on and how long their course of studies would take. They could attach themselves to any willing teacher and have had no formal examinations (something that has changed in the contemporary era) as well as no deadlines, pre-requisites, or other standardized requirements. However, there were norms dictating which books were to be studied at which level (recall that the Hawza is divided into beginning, intermediate and advanced levels) although the pace of scholarship was set entirely by the student himself.[59] Litvak describes the informal yet norm-based nature of learning in the seminary:

> Conventions and customs rather than written rules were the predominant feature of learning in the 'Atabat. Lack of formality, however, did not necessarily mean greater openness to new ideas than other religious hierarchies. Orthodoxy and conservatism appeared to have been the hallmark of learning in the 'Atabat. (Litvak 1991, 414)

Advanced students taught these introductory courses while taking more advance courses themselves with the mujtahids. Classes taught by elite clerics could be attended by hundreds of students. These classes can be taught at seminaries, in the shrine (or, one of its famous adjoining mosques), in the burial shrines of important clerics, or even in the home of the cleric himself. The late Ottoman era saw the establishment of some of the most important seminaries in Najaf (some of which are still operating today), this includes, for example: Madrasat al-Qawwam/ al-Fatihiyya (est. 1883), Madrasat al-Hajj al-Mirza Hussein al-Khilili al-Kubra (est.1899), Madrasat al-Shirbayani (est.1901), Madrasat al-Khurasani al-Akbar (est.1903), Madrasat al-Mirza Hasan al-

[59] Roy Mottahedeh (Mottahedeh 2016)wrote about the Hawza curriculum and cites an anonymous publication from 1913 (in *Revue du Monde Musulman*) which lists the books taught at the Hawza in 1913.

Shirazi (est. 1893), Madrasat al-Sayyid Kathem al-Yazdi (est. 1908), and Madrasat al-Hindi (est. 1910). In fact, sixteen of Najaf's most important seminaries were established in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[60] All these seminaries were built in the immediate vicinity of the Holy Shrine and ranged in size from as small as one hundred square meters to over seven hundred. They housed anywhere from twenty to eighty students and usually were organized not only by the sponsoring marjaʿ but also by a common nationality. For example, Madrasat al-Irawani, which was established in 1890, was built for Turkish students.

The Hawza's calendar included many religious holidays including months off to observe Ramadan and the mourning rituals of Ashura and Arbaʿeen as well as the birth celebrations and death commemorations of Imams. Classes were cancelled when an important cleric passed away and mourning prayers were held instead. In addition to these universally acknowledged holidays, teachers had freedom in cancelling or postponing classes at will and students were under no obligation to attend. The burden of advancement in the Hawza is placed largely upon the student who may be motivated by competition with his peers for the attention and mentorship of his teachers. In addition, students from clerical families were advantaged in their pre-existing connections as well as their insider knowledge of how the Hawza operated.

In addition to these familial ties to the religious establishment, there were also class cleavages and ethnic cleavages. What attests to the Hawza's meritocratic nature was that despite the fact that "Iranian domination was sometimes resented by Iraqi Arabs, its scale should not be overstated. All the leading teachers had students from all ethnic groups, and patronage relations cut across ethnic lines" (Litvak 1991, 414). In fact, the meritocratic nature of the Hawza was so

[60] See appendix for list of Najafi seminaries and their establishment dates.

discernable that, in his dissertation, Litvak jokingly commented that the "Mujtahid Dream" was very much like the "American dream" (ibid.). The open-ness of the institution is described by a Hawza student (later, prime minister of Iraq) who reflects on his experience in the 1930s and his father's experience in the 1910s: "Najaf resembles a great fountain to which anybody can go and drink of its learning as much as he can and as long as he cares. Nobody requires him to drink if he does not choose to and no amount of drinking is required or prescribed." (Jamāli 1960). In contrast to this rather rosy description, Muhsin Amin (as described by Litvak) points out the flaws in this system:

> The learning system depended too much on the students themselves. Many students rushed too fast, attending, for instance, the dars khārij without attending the Sutūh level courses in order to attain this mujtahid rank as soon as possible. Consequently, they retained very little from the lectures. Teachers could not prevent unqualified students from attending their classes because of the lack of examinations or other procedures and because they competed for students among themselves. Non-Arabs were not sufficiently proficient in Arabic, a serious handicap considering the importance of that language in Islam, and the fact that all text books were written in Arabic. (Litvak 1991, 64).

Litvak's study points to other problems in the religious establishment that are driven by the excessively open nature of learning, including: plagiarism, narrow specializations, and the lack of intellectual freedom. In my own interviews with contemporary seminarians, the latter two problems continue to plague the Hawza.[61]

Although this general description of the seminaries holds in the mid to late twentieth century, there are some major differences. One is that the number of students and seminaries fell sharply under Baʿathist rule, though the nature and informality of study remained constant.

[61] The former plagues Iraq in general.

Estimates from Hawza and colonial records from this time period suggest that there were around twenty-four to twenty-six schools in operation with anywhere from six to ten thousand students (Abbas 1997; Al-Gharwi 1998; Batatu 1983). For reference, scholars of the present-day Hawza estimate the number of students to be around fifteen thousand in 2019 (having picked up significantly after 2003).[62]

One of the distinguishing features of the Hawza during this time period is the number of students who sought basic education in its seminaries. In addition to religious studies, the Hawza offered classes in grammar, language, mathematics and philosophy. Many of Najaf's well-known non-clerical public figures – lawyers, doctors, businessmen, journalists, and politicians as well as the afore-mentioned prime minister – received their primary education in these seminaries. At the time, the Hawza was the most accessible option for Iraqis, particularly in the shrine cities. Ottoman authorities left Iraq with a short supply and high demand for education and British authorities feared feeding this demand, lest they inadvertently produce nationalists.[63] This meant that the Hawza remained a provider of education for Najafis for a long time.

Therefore, when applying the measurements of bureaucracy outlined in chapter three, it appears that the Hawza was almost entirely non-bureaucratized in that time period. It had minimal academic standardization and a highly informal sense of meritocracy. Although there was some demarcation of jurisdiction, particularly geographically at the level of the marja''s, these were not official and the system of representatives that exists in the Baʿathist and contemporary eras had not been fully realized in the colonial era. The Hawza lacked a teaching and administrative professionalized staff. It also tended towards the personalist and lacked a

[62] This number was given to me by several clerics during interviews.
[63] For an excellent history of education and nationalism in the Middle East, see "Schooling the State: Educators in Iraq, Palestine and Transjordan: c.1890 – c.1960" by Hillary Kalisman (Kalisman 2015).

rational-legal order. This has been highlighted by several scholars of the religious establishment. Meir Litvak, for example, bemoans the "lack of a unified organization of the madrasa" and highlights that "the problem lay in the individualistic nature of ulama society, where inter-personal relations played the key role in social organization." (Litvak 1991, 411).

According to the theory proposed in this dissertation, the Hawza has been and continues to be characterized as a vertical informal system, a religious system characterized by a high degree of hierarchy and a low degree of bureaucratization. Of course, these categories represent ideal types. The Hawza in the colonial period was not as centrally hierarchical as it currently is (or, as it was during the Baʿathist era.) Moreover, it was even less bureaucratized then than it is now. Altogether, it was less institutionalized in the colonial era than the Baʿathist and contemporary eras.

Theoretically, this means that responsibility and ownership of the system is restricted to high-ranking elites. At the same time, authority is more widely dispersed. Less institutionalization increases the number of actors who may take on politically active positions. In other words, there is less of a universal stake in preserving the institution and a higher number of clerics who are willing to risk its continued existence, compared to the later time periods. When compared to other types of religious systems, however, the Hawza's chief marjaʿ's are hypothesized to be constrained by a sense of institutional responsibility. What distinguishes them from their later successors is that the legible community of adherents in this time period was much more the local Shiʿa population than the broader Iraqi or broader Middle Eastern community. Therefore, their sense of responsibility for the religious establishment comes from concerns about politically destabilizing behavior at the local-level, where cities – rather than an entire community of religious adherents – is threatened. It also means that lower-

ranking clerics in the Hawza, will behave opportunistically when protests happen. Those who are lower-ranking, but with connections to the marjaʿiyya, are most likely to be politically involved.

3.4 Key Hawza Figures

In this chapter, I examine the protest behavior of three successive chief marjaʿ's in Iraq: Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Kadhim al-Yazdi (hereafter: Yazdi) (d.1919), Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Taqi al-Shirazi (hereafter: Shirazi) (d.1919), and Grand Ayatollah Fathallah al-Asfahani (known as Sheikh al-Sharia Al-Asfahani, hereafter: Asfahani) (d.1920). Yazdi passed away before the 1920 Revolution and many considered his death to be one of the reasons that it was more successful than the 1917 Revolt. Shirazi, who succeeded him briefly, is credited as being a key leader of the 1920 Revolution and was based first in Samarra and then in Kerbala. Shirazi passed away a year into the Revolution and was succeeded by Asfahani who picked up his predecessor's mantle and brought the marjaʿiyya back to Najaf. I choose to focus on these figures for two interconnected reasons: they are the heads of the religious establishment in this critical time period. As such, historical data on them is less scarce than some of their contemporaries. There are some important figures in this time period of which there is less available information and that is, unfortunately, one of the limitations of this chapter.

In order to uncover who their contemporaries were, I rely first on the biographical dictionaries to paint a picture of the Hawza during this time period. Then, I rely on various secondary sources to analyze the behavior of certain clerics. As previously mentioned, the data I have collected on clerics can provide three types of information: which clerics were considered

notably "active", which clerics were considered high ranking (and which clerics are important seminary teachers), and which clerics were noted for their apoliticism.

For example, in addition to the three marjaʿs, I also discuss and compare the behavior of a handful of high-level clerics from Najaf, Kerbala and Kadhimiyya who are considered contemporaries and colleagues of these elites. These include, in Najaf for example, grand ayatollahs who frequently taught the same students as Yazdi and Asfahani did: Dhia al-Din al-Iraqi (d.1924), Ahmed Kashif al-Ghita (d.1925), Muhammad Hussein Naini (d.1936), Abu al-Hasan al-Asfahani (d.1946), and Muhammad Hussein Kashif al-Ghita (d.1953). Most notably, this also includes prominent nationalist figures like Ayatollah Mahdi al-Khalisi (d.1925, hereafter: Khalisi) from Kadhimiyya. Many of these clerics had views on the Iranian Constitutional Movement – some, like Naini, agreed with al-Akhwand al-Khurasani (constitutionalist) and others, like Ahmed Kashif al-Ghita, with Yazdi (anti-constitutionalist). According to the dictionaries, there are at least thirty mujtahid-level contemporaries of Yazdi, Shirazi, and Asfahani who shared advanced students in Najaf.

There are drawbacks to this methodology. Although I am able to paint a picture of the number of elite clerics in Iraq, I am unable to gather high quality biographical information on all of them. The table above, for example, show general trends of elite clerical non-involvement in protest, broken down by nationality. In general, high-ranking Hawza clerics – defined as those in the advanced stage of learning or higher and included in the biographical dictionaries – tended to be un-involved in protest. In the next sections, I try to highlight the motivations of that minority which was involved in protest. In general, data availability is skewed to favor the most elite (e.g. the marjaʿ) and those who were highly active in politics (even if they are not of a high rank). This leaves behind a key gap in the analysis: there is little data available on non-elites who

were not involved in politics. The biographical dictionaries provide a baseline for these figures, but little else. Perhaps the greatest drawback is the lack of information on Khalisi – a biography was written by his son, but the source is questionable.[64]

Despite this drawback in the data, this chapter nevertheless contributes to the discussion by examining the behavior of clerics of different positions in the hierarchy across cases. The appendix to this chapter contains a list of the key clerical actors mentioned.

4 The Hawza and the Colonial State: Local and International Positions

As Iraq transitioned from Ottoman to British colonialism, many of its political and societal elites found themselves unsure of who to ally themselves with. On one hand, although the Ottomans were Muslim, they had ruled Iraq with an overtly sectarian agenda. Iraqi Sunnis vastly outnumbered the Shiʿa in public offices and government representation. On the other hand, although the British represented a break from Ottoman rule, they were non-Muslim invaders.

To further alienate the Shiʿa, the Ottomans also had a contentious relationship with the clerics of Najaf and Kerbala, a relationship which had worsened in the mid-nineteenth century (Atiyyah 1973; Jabar 2002; Sluglett 2007). Despite this, Shiʿa clerics had not been united in their anti-Ottoman stance. In fact, when an Iraqi Sunni cleric issued a fatwa in support of the Ottomans against the British in 1914, four elite clerics from Kerbala supported his fatwa with one of their own (Sluglett; 220). The justification for the fatwa was to protect a Muslim state against non-Muslim occupiers.

[64] Khalisi's biography suffers from multiple threats to validity. First, it was compiled by different people and the original version is unidentifiable. Secondly, its records may have been destroyed by the Baʿathist government's attacks on centers of Shiʿa learning. Relatedly, the colonial government had incentives to down-play his role and minimize his public position in their records, which are our main source of information on mandate-era Iraq. See (Luizard 2001).

When the British reached the Fao Peninsula, the southernmost tip of modern day Iraq[65], in October 1914, the Ottomans sent a missive addresse to the clerics in Najaf and the other holy cities. The message read: "Surrounding infidels have invaded Basra, everyone is under arms, we worry for the rest of the Muslim world, help us by ordering the tribes to defend" (Al-Hasani 2004: 82). In response, a group of Najafi clerics of various rankings met in the symbolic Hindi Mosque in Najaf and delivered speeches against foreign occupation (ibid.). The group included popular preachers like Ali al-Habubi (d.1922), as well as mid-level elites like Abd al-Karim al-Jazairi (d.1962). At the same time and in the adjacent Imam Ali Shrine, the Chief Marjaʿ, Yazdi, preached jihad to protect Muslim lands. Meanwhile in Kadhimiyya, high-ranking mujtahids like Khalisi and Mahdi al-Haydari (d.1918) were also issuing fatwas of jihad against the British. In Samarra, Shirazi issued an anti-British fatwa. In general, elite clerics were united in their stance against the British. Later, these very same clerics would take on different positions in the 1917 Revolt and the 1920 Revolution. It comes as no surprise that most clerics supported the Ottomans against the British at this time. For high-ranking elites, the preservation of the status quo – keeping the Ottomans in power – was infinitely preferable for the well-being of the religious establishment than ushering in a non-Muslim occupier. That it was ideologically compelling was an additional advantage.

Despite this, convincing the Shiʿa community to support the Ottomans proved to be difficult. The Middle Euphrates tribesmen, who made up the bulk of the manpower, were resentful in obeying, saying: "If it was not for the fatwa of our ulema, we would not be on your side"(Nadhmi 1974: 107). The Khaza'al tribe, in particular, proved impossible to sway. The

[65] Kuwait was a district of colonial Iraq and the southernmost region at the time.

sheikh of Khaza'ail tribe received letters from both the chief marjaʿ and from the lower ranking cleric, Abd al-Kareem al-Jazairi, ordering him to jihad. He refused to comply, despite the fact that he was an emulator of the chief marjaʿ at the time, because he had financial interests with the British that he wanted to protect (Al-Hasani 2004: 85; Rutledge 2015). Yazdi also sent multiple (public and private) letters to the reluctant sheikh of the Shatra tribe who refused to join the war because he did not want Ottoman rule to continue (Al-fHasani 2004: 92-93). The same process was repeated with tribal leaders elsewhere in the south and south-central regions. The final result was a conglomeration of reluctant tribes encouraged by clerics who were more opposed to non-Muslim rule than supportive of Ottoman rule.

Both the British and the Ottomans were surprised by the support of the Shiʿa clerics and by their mobilization of the tribes. Many clerics even led groups of fighters against the British invasion. Amongst these fighters were the sons of important clerics – like Yazdi and Shirazi – as well as some clerics who would later become leaders of the Hawza like Fathallah al-Asfahani and Muhsin al-Hakim. Clerics of a variety of ideological leanings were active in the British-Ottoman struggle, but their participation could not be sustained in the face of popular anti-Ottoman sentiment which had intensified due to Ottoman conscription and requisitioning practices.

By 1915 and 1916, the cities of Najaf and Kerbala gained de facto autonomy from Ottoman rule. Najaf was the first to successfully gain independence when a popular uprising erupted in response to the Ottomans sending a force to Najaf to capture army deserters (Nadhmi 1974). The city rose against the Ottomans with the support of the religious establishment, including Yazdi. Months later in June 1915, Kerbala revolted as well. Although the Ottomans made some concessions, they were not enough to stop the Kamuna family from leading a second revolt in May 1916 during which Kerbala succeeded in establishing self-rule.

Not only did these cities gain autonomy, but their local notables (Abu Kulal in Najaf and the Kamuna family in Kerbala) offered the British their support against the Ottomans (Nadhmi 1974). Later, they would be joined by several clerics in congratulating the British on their victory against the Ottomans.

Shiʿa clerics were not unified in their behavior. A group of them remained staunchly anti-British and did not switch their position with the popular change in sentiment. This group included mujtahid-level elites like Khalisi as well as some high-ranking Najafi clerics such as the Jazairi brothers (Muhammad Jawad and Abd al-Karim) and and Mohammad Ali Bahr al-Uloom.

The majority, however, supported local anti-Ottoman rebellions, though they did not instigate them. Even those who had initially preached anti-British Jihad, including Yazdi, supported the anti-Ottoman movement. In the backdrop of this oscillation was the fact that the British were responsible for distributing a very large sum of Khums, the Oudh Bequest, to Iraqi clerics.

The Oudh Bequest was a sum of money that went from India to the clerics in Iraq starting in 1825. By 1918, the British picked clerical distributors who were described as "of no influence" (Nadhmi 1974, 106). In other words, these were clerics who were perceived to have little societal authority and a general disinclination to be involved in politics. This list of clerics included many elite mujtahids, including Asfahani, who later became the chief marjaʿ (as chief marjaʿ, the British opinion of him changes). The list also includes students of Yazdi, including Jafar Bahr al-Uloom (d.1957) (Nadhmi 1974; 106). The Oudh Bequest represents one of the few historical instances in which financial resources are distributed to Shiʿa clerics by the state. Shiʿa clerics pride themselves on financial independence from the state but the British selection of

distributors created a set of state-dependent clerics. Although Meir Litvak's analysis[66] describes the recipients as "second rank mujtahids," the recipients of the Oudh Bequest include very prominent figures like Akhwand Khurasani.[67] Some clerics, like Abdallah Mazanarani and Hasan al-Jawahiri refused to receive money from the Oudh Bequest. Yazdi, too, refused the sum (presumably because it was too small a sum) and a handful of other clerics, "reputed as great ascetics" also refused it (Litvak 1991). An alternative explanation for clerical behavior in this time period should take into account this strategic incentive. In other words, would clerics avoid protest behavior in order to protect access to the Oudh Bequest?

The clerics that received accusations of vacillating the most on their Ottoman-British stance were those who were at the head of the religious establishment, like Yazdi. Although these clerics sanctioned and became involved in these movements, they were never the leaders nor the instigators. In the anti-Ottoman, anti-British and generally anti-colonial movements that swept through Iraq, it was the more junior clerics – exemplified by Abd al-Kareem al-Jaza'iri – who preached protest and jihad. The chief marja'ʿs, to some extent, were forced to follow public opinion, sometimes despite their own ideological leanings. Historically, this frequently resulted with them acting as mediators between rebels and the government with the rebels frequently being tribes (Litvak 1998). Even cultural or ethnic affinity – for example, between Arab clerics (of tribal origins) and Arab rebels – did not result in clerical political activity amongst the Arab clerics of tribal origins.[68] The default behavior of the very elite tended to be non-involvement, mediation, and a surprising lack of opportunism. This behavior was exhibited in the various

[66] For a list of the distributors and recipients, also see: (Nadhmi 1974).
[67] Other recipients according to Litvak were: Mohammad Bahr al-Uloom, Abdallah Mazandarani, Ali Nahavandi, Hasan Jawahiri, Abd al-Hasan Lucknawi, Mohammad al-Mir Shuj'at Ali Razavi Hindi.
[68] For more on the ethnicity of clerics and its role in their activism, see: (F. J. Kadhem 2012).

tribal rebellions that occurred in the mid nineteenth century. For example, Litvak writes of Kerbala:

> The elite of mujtahids did not share the general enthusiasm so it is not possible to speak of a unified stand by the 'ulama' in the affair. The Shaykhi leader, Sayyid Kazim Rashti, played a key moderating role both in Karbala' and in the negotiations. Unfortunately for him, he had very little power over his supposed ally and client, Ibrahim al-Za'frani. During various meetings held by the besieged urban leaders, Rashti "pleaded with them to accept Najib's terms" but no to no avail. Moreover, he was often "abused and threatened" for is stance. Clearly the mujtahid-gang alliance was tenuous and neither party felt obliged to support the other" (Litvak 1998, 139).

Similarly, although elite clerics attempted to convince the tribes into fighting for the Ottomans, the marja'ʿs could not maintain this position indefinitely:

> It was frequently the case that the tribal leaders themselves sought validation of their anti-British or anti-government activities from the clergy rather than simply accepting their dictates. Perhaps it is more accurate to say that before 1923, the ulama would tend to encourage rather than discourage concerted acti8on on the part of the tribal leaders: it is rare to find them instigating such action. (F. J. Kadhem 2012).

Though they tended not to instigate anti-government movements, Shiʿa clerics had taken positions on several key political issues prior to the Ottoman-British conflicts. For example, Akhwand Khurasani (the chief marjaʿ preceding Yazdi) issued a fatwa of jihad against the Russians in Persia in 1911. After he passed away, his fatwa was supported by Khalisi, Sadr and Shirazi (though not by his successor, Yazdi) (Nadhmi 1974: 102). Yazdi, however, did join other clerics in issuing a fatwa of jihad against the Italian invaders of Libya in 1911. Clerical support of anti-colonial movements depended, for the most part, on the position of the local population. Moreover, although their stance against the British was shrouded in the language of fighting infidel rule, this sentiment did not hold when public opinion turned against the Muslim

Ottoman state. The table below is a non-exhaustive summary of key political fatwas that were issued and endorsed by elite Shi'a clerics from 1910 to 1920. It shows, among other things, how much easier it was for a cleric to issue a fatwa in support of protest outside of their own community.

Figure 11: Key Political Fatwas

Fatwa	Cleric(s) *indicates Chief Marj'a at the time	Date	Political Context
"All Muslims should be united."	Five Mujtahids published in *'Ilm* magazine in Najaf.	December 1910	In solidarity with Sunni clerics.
Declaration of jihad against the Russian invasion of Persia.	First issued by Khurasani*, Hassan al-Khalili, Abdallah al-Mazandarani. Endorsed by Khalisi, Sadr, and Shirazi (April 1912).	Late 1911	Russian invasion of Tabriz, Iran.
Declaration of jihad against colonization.	Khurasani*, Mazandarani, Asfahani, Ali Rafeesh, al-Habubi, Hassan Sahib al-Jawahir.	Late 1911	Indicative of support for Sunnis and pan-Muslim solidarity.
Declaration of jihad against the invasion of Libya.	Yazdi*, Shirazi, Khalisi and Sadr.	Late 1911	Italian invasion of Libya.
Declaration of jihad against the British. It was phrased as "Muslims should not fight against other Muslims" and that "Muslims should not side with non-Muslims."	First issued by Sunni Sheikh Al-Islam on behalf of Ottoman Sultan. Endorsed by Shi'a Mujtahids (Muhammad Said al-Habubi, Abd al Karim al-Jazairi, Abd al-Razzaq al-Hallu, Sahib al-Jawahir). Asfahani followed them.	November 12-14, 1914	In support of Ottomans against the British.
Declaration of jihad against the British. Muslims are obligated to spend all their money on this jihad until the enemy has been defeated.	Mahdi al-Khalisi.		

Second declaration of jihad against the British.	Yazdi*	October 10, 1915	Ottomans asked the Shi'a clerics to renew the fatwa as part of a strategic move to endorse a pan-Islamic jihad.
"No Muslim may choose to elect any other than a Muslim to an emirate or sultanate over Muslims."	Shirazi*	December 24, 1918	In response to the plebiscite.
Good treatment of British prisoners "a religious, civil and human obligation."	Asfahani	1920	During 1920 Revolution, in response to British criticisms.
Letter encouraging rebels to maintain 1) peaceful demonstrations, 2) call for an independent Iraq and 3) to safe-keep other religious communities.	Shirazi*	May 29, 1920	1920 Revolution.
The text reads: "It is the duty of Iraqis to demand their rights. In demanding them they should maintain peace and order. But if the English prevent them from obtaining their rights it is permitted to make use of defensive force."	Shirazi*	June 1920	1920 Revolution; Shirazi's son and other clerics were arrested then exiled.
Declaration of jihad against the British.	Shirazi*	August 6, 1920	1920 Revolution.

The behavior of Hawza elites in this time period suggest the weakness of ideological explanations of clerical political participation. Elite clerics – and particularly the Chief Marjaʿ Yazdi – vacillated in their support of the Ottomans against the British. This occurred in spite of the fact that the Ottomans were strategic about marketing a pan-Islamic jihad. Rather, elite Hawza clerics followed public opinion domestically and maintained an anti-colonial pan-Islamic position towards the rest of the Muslim world (i.e. Iran and Libya). It is not surprising that Hawza elites could afford to take on positions against Russian and Italian colonialism; these

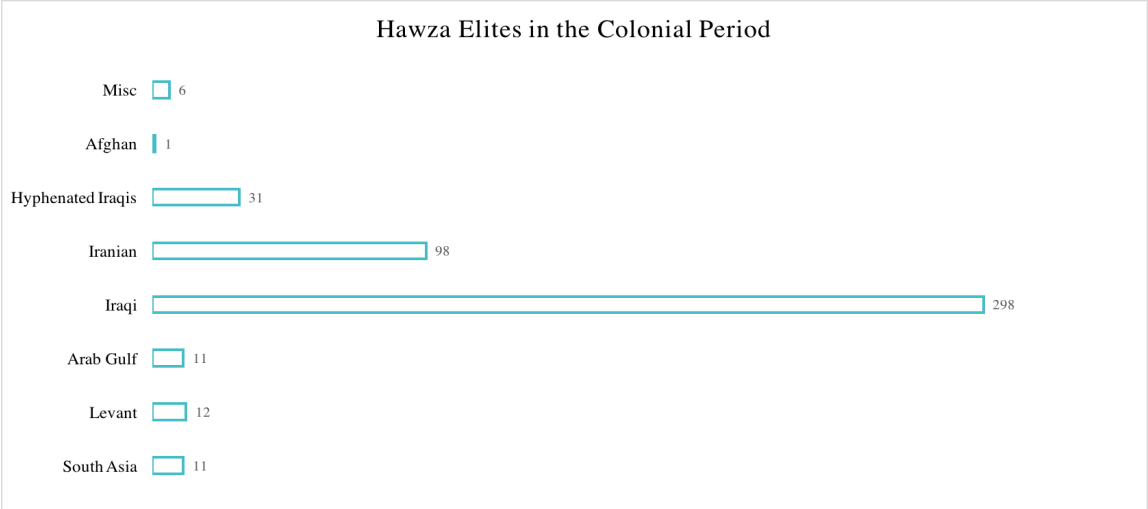
positions had no direct impact on the survival of the Iraqi Hawza. In fact, their contrasting views towards the Iranian Constitutional Revolution illustrate the degree to which they are able to express their ideological beliefs when those beliefs had no immediate impact on the Hawza in Iraq.

By contrast, the Iraqi public (including the tribes) was one of the main sources of clerical authority and especially so for mujtahids seeking to advance and consolidate that authority. The state, too, represented control over some finances and the ability to severely harm the institution in retribution. Thus, the clerics that had a stake in the survival of the Hawza – the chief maraji' 's – behaved cautiously and in a manner that prioritized institutional survival when it came to local politics. At the Ottoman position became increasingly precarious, so did clerical and tribal support for them, albeit for different reasons.

There were, however, some clerics who were not swayed by the changes in public opinion and maintained anti-British views. The theory posited in this paper suggests that they were able to do so because of the lack of responsibility they felt towards the institution of the Hawza. Although one would have to interview them to understand their specific motivations, it remains that what all these clerics have in common is that they are lower ranking elites who have no immediate claims to ascending to the position of chief marja'. In other words, these are the clerics who could afford to maintain ideological positions. Other scholars rightfully point out that many of these clerics were also Arab nationalists (F. J. Kadhem 2012). This suggests that their loyalty to the Iraqi nation was greater than their institutional loyalty and *not* that their institutional loyalty was non-existent. Indeed, the biographical dictionaries do show that a large proportion of Hawza elites are foreign, particularly Iranian, although the definition of nationality used for coding the dictionaries sometimes clashes with clerical definitions of nationality. In fact,

amongst Hawza experts, it is well-established that most of the students in the early twentieth century were Iranian.[69] Even if the definition of "elite" were narrowed to a cleric at the level of mujtahid, at the time, there were at least 43 Iranians of this description and 85 Iraqis.

Figure 12: Hawza Elites in the Colonial Period



In the next section, I describe an instance of rebellion which would have been extremely costly for the Hawza to endorse and which was not accompanied by public support. In the 1917 Revolt, both the Hawza elites *and* many lower-ranking activist clerics maintained a distance from the events, although for different reasons. The elites attempted to mediate in order to save the city and its inhabitants from harm. The ideologically activist clerics remained uninvolved and resistant to rebel co-optation because of their belief in the likely failure of the movement. The

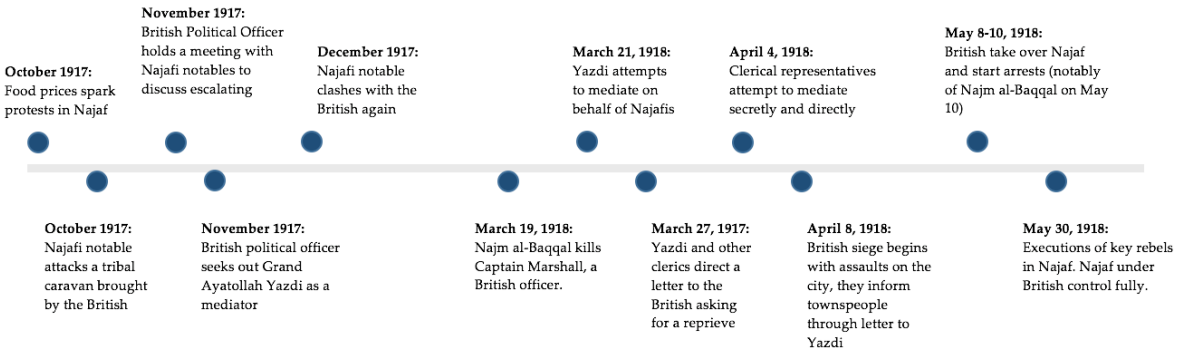
[69] Author's phone conversation with Hossein al-Qazwini. February 2020. Also see (Litvak 1991, 40–42) who provides data from different sources, including a different set of biographical dictionaries, all which suggest that the majority of seminarians and elite clerics were Iranian. Litvak's data suggests that elite clerics of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century amounted to 187 Iranians, 67 Iraqi Arabs, 36 Azeri Turks, 23 Lebanese, 8 Indians and 3 Gulf Arabs. Other resources from the time period which he cites include Mahdi Kashif al-Ghita's estimate of 800 Arabs and 1300 Iranians as of 1873 as well as Hajji Pirzadeh's estimate of 8000 Iranians and 1400 Arabs in 1888. Litvak stresses that most data sources, including biographical dictionaries, are in some way biased. What we do know, however, by all accounts is that Iranian students outnumbered the rest. However, when it comes to seminarians who *stayed* in Najaf, even Litvak acknowledges that it made sense for Iraqis to remain in Najaf. In fact, his analysis of biographical dictionaries shows that when it came to the number of clerics who settled in Najaf, 190 were Iraqi while 178 were Iranian (Turks were 33 and Lebanese were 15) (ibid., 50).

few clerics who got involved were much lower-ranking students, like the student mentioned in the opening anecdote of this chapter.

5 The 1917 Najafi Revolt

The Najafi Revolt of 1917 was a violent event involving some Najaf-based rebels and the British. It started with protests sparked by economic grievances, transformed into violent skirmishes, and escalated into an oppressive siege against the city and its people. Throughout the duration of these events, which are summarized in the timeline below, communication remained constant between Najafi clerics (especially Grand Ayatollah Yazdi) and the British authorities.

Figure 13: Timeline of the Events of 1917-1918



5.1 The Islamic Renaissance Society

After nearly two years of self-rule, Kerbala and Najaf came under British control in August 1917 (Batatu 1983:19). Self-rule did not entail leadership of the marjaʿiyya but, rather, of certain notables. Najaf, for example, was split into four quarters (each called a 'mahallah') with a

notable, known as a sheikh, leading each.[70] Due to their position, the four sheikhs were able to amass much wealth. This induced the resentment of other notables, merchants, and clerics in Najaf who only accepted the leadership of the sheikhs because it was preferable to Ottoman rule (Nadhmi 1974: 338). Therefore, when an uprising against the British occurred in late 1917 and early 1918, many locals and notables were reluctant to support the uprising, lest the mahallah sheikhs be brought back to power. In fact, some argue that the revolt was an attempt by the four leaders to regain their power. Moreover, the clerics and the wealthy did not have the same economic grievances as other Najafis.

Many historical accounts claim that the instigation of 1917 was sparked by Jamʿiyyat al-Nahdha al-Islamiyya (hereafter: The Islamic Renaissance Society). This group was established in late 1917 by two Arab clerics: Mohammad Ali Bahr al-Uloom (d.1936) and Mohammad Jawad al-Jazairi (d.1959) (Atiyyah 1973:229).[71] Al-Jazairi, who was thirty-six at the time, was a respected Hawza teacher, a representative of Asfahani, and an anti-British activist.[72] Bahr al-Uloom, who was forty-seven at the time, was also a respected cleric, a representative of Asfahani, and a recipient of the Oudh Bequest.[73] He was also known to have a history of anti-British mobilization and had preached jihad against them continuously. In 1916, the British tried and failed to bribe him to stop. Although both these clerics would go on to have illustrious careers in the Hawza, at this point, both were middle-ranking elites and far less prominent than Yazdi and the other marjaʿs. In other words, they occupied positions of lower authority and lower

[70] Sayyed Mahdi Salman of the Hwaish mahallah, Haji Attiyah Abu Kulal of the Amara mahalla, Kadim Subi of the Buraq mahallah and Haji Sa'ad Radhi of the Mishraq mahallah (Babakhan; 413). The constitution of one of the quarters, Buraq, is frequently cited in Iraqi history books and displays strong tribal characteristics (Batatu; 19-20, Atiyah; 383).
[71] See chapter appendix for the list of other clerical members.
[72] His biography can be found in (al-Marzouk 2013, Book 2, 428).
[73] Lists of the recipients of the Oudh Bequest can be found in (Atiyyah 1973; Meir 2002).

responsibility than the marja's. Their founding of the Islamic Renaissance Society suggests that they both espoused ideological proclivities towards clerical involvement in politics. This is particularly evidenced by the group's manifesto, which consisted of twenty-one items, including: an emphasis on Islamic unity, implementing Islamic law and working within it, and supporting Muslim (and, particularly Iraqi) independence movements (al-Hasani 2004; Wardi 1989b).

Nearly all historical and biographical accounts of Najaf at the time recognize the existence of this group, though accounts differ as to its membership structure and its role in the uprising.[74] This group also contained non-clerical members including three of the four sheikhs. In fact, the only absent Najafi notable was Mahdi al-Sayyid Salman of the Hwaish Mahallah, the second most powerful man in Najaf after Attiyah Abu Kulal (Litvak 1991). The society had a pan-Islamist vision and was composed of an armed group and a central committee. The Najafi notables led the armed group while the central committee was staffed by clerics.[75]

The group's existence signaled a clerical-notable alliance within the city and, outside of it, an alliance between Najafis and nationalists throughout Iraq, including key opposition figures like Muhsin Abu Tabikh and Mahdi al-Khalisi. Thus, the background conditions for an uprising were present in the very formation of this group. They were compounded by economic grievances, stemming from high taxation and British policies favoring the tribes over the locals.

[74] Notably, the famous Najafi Poet – Muhammad Mahdi al-Jawahiri – does not mention them in his biography of Najaf at the time, despite coming from a well-known family of clerics himself. Jawahiri could not have been older than eighteen at the time and his account of the uprising may reflect the view from a distance. This is understandable given that many Najafis – including some Najafi elites – viewed this movement as being too hasty.
[75] One historian claims that it was headed by Yazdi though this is highly unlikely given that Mohammad Ali Bahr al-Uloom was critical of Yazdi and believed that he stood in the way of a revolution.

5.2 The Revolt Begins

The 1917 Najafi Revolt was sparked by an economic crisis, attributed by Najafis to the British, within the city. In October 1917, caravans from the Aniza tribe arrived in Najaf and, with British permission, bought most of the grain in the city, causing both a shortage of food and a spike in prices. In response to increased prices and British favoring of the tribes, the Najafis came out to protest. Along with the protests, Abu Kulal (the most powerful Najafi notable) and his men attacked and looted the tribal caravan. Captain Frank Balfour, the British officer responsible for Najaf, held a meeting with Kadhem Subbi and Abu Kulal in November 1917, in which he demanded that the Najafis pay reparations. The Najafis refused and another meeting was held in which arguments intensified, culminating in a fist fight followed by a robbery and burning of the local government office by Kadem Subbi's men. By then, attacks against government buildings had spread beyond Najaf proper and into Kufa. In response, Balfour sought out Yazdi who served as a mediator between Abu Kulal and Balfour, encouraging the latter to de-escalate (Al-Hasani 2004).

Abu Kulal and his men clashed with the British again on December 12th, 1917 when they fired on a British cavalry patrol outside of the Najaf city wall. They also attacked a British airplane flying over the city because it got too close to their quarter (Rutledge 2015: 142). In response, the British issued a fine (which was paid by Salman and Radhi) and attempted to arrest Abu Kulal, who had escaped a few days later. Abu Kulal's men and the Islamic Renaissance Society – whose members were extremely anti-British – were working (though not in unison) on a campaign of turning public opinion against the British (Wardi 1989).

Several other clashes occurred between Najafis and the British in this time period. The one that brought about the siege of Najaf was instigated by Najm al-Baqqal killing the new

political officer, Captain Marshall on the March 19th , 1918. Although the British could not identify who had killed Captain Marshall, they were wary of the Najafis. Thus, when a fight broke out between another notable – Hajji Radhi and his sons – and the British, things escalated rapidly.

Yazdi attempted to step in again by hosting a meeting on the March 21s in which he encouraged Hajji Radhi to turn in his sons (who had killed the policeman), with the promise that he would try to negotiate for their release. Yazdi's pleas fell upon deaf ears; Hajj Radhi refused to do so and enlisted the help of other notables to amass nearly six hundred fighters to ward off the British. Thus, the revolt against the British occurred against Yazdi's wishes and despite his many attempts at mediation. In Wardi's account of what transpired in Najaf, he claims that Baqqal's son – formerly of the Ottoman army – was in touch with the Ottomans who were encouraging rebellion in Najaf. Moreover, Wardi describes an alliance between Baqqal and the Islamic Renaissance Society many of whose members were pro-Ottoman and anti-British (Wardi 1989b).

Four days into the revolt, Balfour sent a message to Yazdi and other clerics – including the caretaker of the Imam Ali Shrine – asking them to serve as mediators. The rebels then met up in the home of the caretaker (the kilidar), and decided upon a committee of representatives to send to Balfour for negotiations. The committee comprised notables and clerics including al-Jawahiri, the founder of the Islamic Renaissance Society, and Mohammad Hussein Kashif al-Ghita, who later becomes strongly involved in the nationalist struggle of 1920 (Wardi 1989). The result of the negotiations was a list of British demands which included both fines and arrests of participating individuals. Until the demands were met, the British were intent on keeping Najaf under siege. Following this, Percy Cox sent a letter to Yazdi in which he expressed that he had

no doubt that Yazdi would support the British authorities in putting down the insurrection. News of the letter and its contents angered Najafis.

5.3 The Siege of Najaf

The collective punishment imposed on the town, lasting over forty days, came as a surprise to some of its residents. Many residents, though resentful of the British, had not participated in the protest or the attack and felt unjustly targeted. To ride out the blockade, Najafis made appeals to nearby tribes in Shamiya to support them. The Islamic Renaissance Society sent messengers with letters to the tribes, but they were intercepted by the British. Although some of the tribes were able to enter Najaf and to aid the rebels, they mostly remained uninvolved, taking their cues from the disapproving religious establishment.

At this time, Najm al-Baqqal had escaped Najaf and went to Mosul, where he was in touch with the politically active cleric, Mahdi al-Khalisi, who shared the belief that the 1917 Revolt had been too hasty. In fact, many clerics who later became involved in the 1920 Revolution tried to calm down the events of 1917, which they felt were escalating outside of their control.

According to some scholars, their non-involvement was due to the fact that the leading clerics – Yazdi most notably – did not support the rebels. In addition, clerics who received money from the Oudh Bequest had incentives to remain un-involved, this included important clerics like Asfahani. Most beneficial to the British was the fact that Yazdi, the most elite cleric, "repeatedly told the British officials that he opposed rebellion and he showed his satisfaction at the crushing of the leaders of the quarters" (Atiyyah 1973: 232). During the uprising, he remained in his home and claimed non-intervention in politics. The British declared that this

behavior meant that "provided his name is never quoted officially, we can invariably count upon him for help" (Attiyah; 233).

Yazdi's motivation in his behavior was the protection of Najaf. When asked if he wanted to leave Najaf during the siege, he refused to do so without being accompanied by his family (Al-Hasani 2004, 159). He then clarified that all Najafis were considered his family and thus used his own position to mitigate the potential damage that could have been done to Najaf and to the Hawza.

Clerics and townspeople alike viewed the revolt as an elite-led movement instigated by local leaders seeking to reinstate their own authority, which had been dealt a blow by the British. Thus, the locals and the clerics had no incentives to support a movement whose best result was a return to the leadership of the four sheikhs, or otherwise, brutal punishment by the British. In fact, on March 27th, the elite clerics of Najaf met in the house of Yazdi and sent a letter to "the G.O.C.- in-Chief begging him to relive the innocent inhabitants of the town, especially the women and children, by granting a general amnesty." In turn, the commander sent a response reminding them of the previous times Britain had shown amnesty and declaring that they had no intention of harming the weak and innocent. In response, Yazdi and the other elite clerics pointed out that the siege of Najaf was harming and punishing the weak and innocent and that the holy places had suffered from attack as well.[76] A meeting to protest the siege was also held in Kerbala by Shirazi, Yazdi's successor and key protoganost of the 1920 Revolution (Atiyyah 1973: 231).

[76] For the full text of the letters exchanged between Yazdi and the English, see p.290-296 of Wardi Vol 6.

5.4 Analysis of Clerical Positions

Clerics were not supportive of the revolt for various reasons: elites like Yazdi sought to protect the city from harm and revolutionaries from the Islamic Renaissance society did not think the timing was right. In fact, Wardi lists only three clerics who played an active role in 1917. The first, Abbas al-Khalili, was twenty-two years old and had not completed his introductory Hawza lessons. Some accounts claim that he also happened to be the secretary of the Islamic Renaissance Society. The other two were Aziz Allah al-Istrabadi and Ibrahim Kashi, who were not elite clerics but who viewed the fight against the British as a jihad and tried to convince others of that as well. Mohammad Amin al-Imami al-Khoei's memoirs, by contrast, discuss Hawza students taking up arms and, in some instances, in opposition to Yazdi's stance. Based on various records, the clerics who fought the British in 1917 and 1918 were mostly very young. This included, for example, Ali al-Sharqi, who was twenty-five at the time. This also included Dhia al-Din Bahr al-Uloom, son of Muhammad Ali Bahr al-Uloom, who was a teenager at the time. In addition to being young, many of these clerics were also Arab nationalists. Fouad Kadhem describes Ali al-Sharqi as "a religious preacher, writer and a poet, al-Sharqi thoroughly expressed his ideas, insisting more on the Arab origin of Iraqis and making frequent references to those historical figures who originated from Iraq rather than other Arab parts" (F. J. Kadhem 2012, 113).

Yazdi's cautious position meant that the families of those arrested and executed resented him and accused him of being pro-British, an accusation that still holds in Iraqi writings today (Wardi 1989c). But Yazdi's position was not unique.[77] In a protest that had no hopes of success

[77] Very few scholars of this time period read Yazdi's behavior this way and most see him as being pro-British. To understand both arguments, see: (Al-Hasani 2004).

even the most politically active clerics in Najaf (al-Jazairi and al-Jawahiri) and elsewhere in Iraq (al-Khalisi) did not support it. Moreover, other elite clerics from the Hawza, including figures who later became politically active such as Asfahani , followed Yazdi's lead. Other elite clerics were noticeably absent from the story. At the time, Yazdi's high-ranking colleagues in the Hawza – including figures like Muhammad Hussein al-Naini and Dhia al-Din al-Iraqi – were notably absent from historical accounts of the events.[78] The Islamic Renaissance Society was preparing for a revolt but it is clear that this was not the revolt that they had envisioned. Otherwise, their founder would not have joined the committee to negotiate with the British and some of their members would not have secretly gone to the political office in Kufa to attempt to negotiate.

The 1917 case demonstrates that even in the presence of a foreign non-Muslim occupier and with the pressures of the Islamic Renaissance Party, clerics of various ranks refused to become involved in the revolt. They accepted various mediation roles when asked but were neither instigators nor participants. The elite clerics took on mediation roles in order to protect the city, its inhabitants and the Hawza from the ensuing violence.

The theory proposed in this dissertation hypothesizes that elite clerics are unlikely to get involved in anti-government protest. Indeed, this episode of Iraqi history has demonstrated that elite clerics of various ideological proclivities remained un-involved in the 1917 Revolt. In addition, the theory suggests that the most elite clerics – feeling a heightened sense of responsibility for the protection of the Hawza – will get involved in a mediatory capacity if protests hit a tipping point, usually a violent one. Indeed, as the siege of Najaf began to

[78] According to the biographical dictionaries, Yazdi's advanced students were also students of Naini and Dhia al-Din al-Iraqi, even though they were slightly younger clerics.

negatively impact the townspeople and the holy sites, Yazdi and his successors – Shirazi and Asfahani – all attempted to convince the British to end the siege. Yazdi and Asfahani, being in Najaf, attempted to mediate between the rebels and the British.

In addition, clerics who are low-ranking and are thus in positions of little authority and little responsibility for the religious establishment are hypothesized to join protest movements opportunistically if they appear to be successful. There were very few actively rebellious low-ranking clerics, presumably because most of them did not agree that the timing was right. In other words, there was no revolt to seize opportunistically. By contrast, the 1920 Revolution is one in which the movement appeared poised for success, inviting more opportunistic behavior from those lower in the hierarchy. In the next sections, I discuss clerical behavior in the 1920 Revolution.

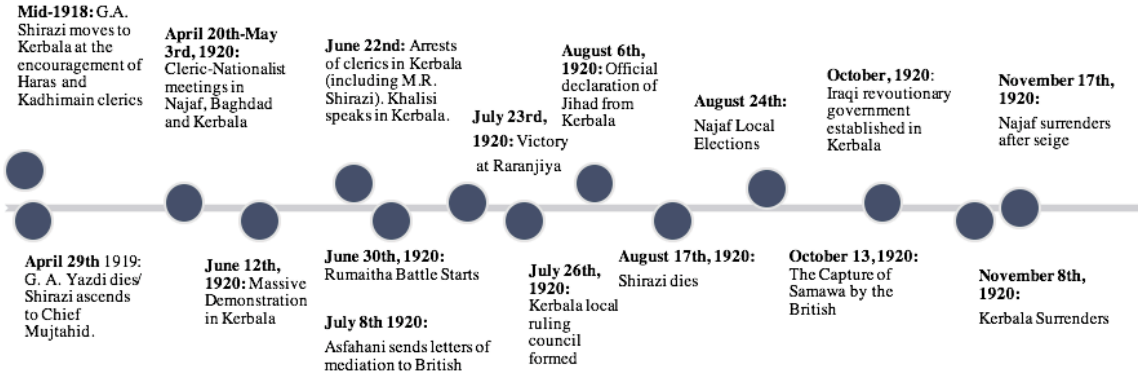
6 The 1920 Revolution

The 1917 revolt was contained to Najaf. By contrast, the 1920 Revolution is considered one of the first manifestations of Iraqi nationalism. The Revolution unfolded in several phases: the buildup of socioeconomic and political frustrations, the spark of conflict in the town of Rumaitha (in al-Muthanna governorate), the spread to the Middle Euphrates, the peak of governance in Kerbala, and the recapture by British forces. The details of 1920 have been studied extensively by other scholars, some of whom were participants in it.[79] Given space limitations and the availability of scholarship, this chapter is limited to assessing clerical behavior during critical junctures. These are the points in which clerical participation is likely to occur or

[79] See Al-Wardi's two volumes. In English see Ghassan Attiyah's excellent work, Rutledge and Abbas Kadhim. For scholars who participated in it see Bazirkan and Al-Faroun.

shift. The timeline below is a representation of the most important points in the uprising as well as key clerical actions:

Figure 14:
Timeline of the Events of 1920



6.1 The Plebiscite and the Roots of 1920

The structural causes of the uprising are similar to those of 1917: frustrations with the British for their failure to keep their promises as well as resentment of the oppressive taxing practices. In addition to these economic grievances, British rule upset the tribal systems by shifting the balance of power away from certain sheikhs as well as disturbing inter-tribal hierarchies. In addition, British officers lacked cultural sensitivity and sometimes insulted tribal leaders.[80]

One example of the British failure to keep their promises is that of the Iraqi plebiscite of 1918. Iraqis were asked to vote on several key issues. First, on whether they wanted a single Arab state stretching from Mosul to Basra. Secondly, whether that state should have an Arab emir presiding over it under British guidance. And, finally, their preference as to the identity of

[80] See Ali Al-Wardi's Lamahat Volume 4 p. 27-28 for examples of how British officers insulted tribal leaders.

the emir (Rutledge 2015). Both the questions posed in the plebiscite and the people who were asked to vote (mainly, the wealth) reflected the desires of the British.

The process of the plebiscite unfolded differently in each city. In the shrine cities, clerics had a large role to play. In Najaf, for example, Yazdi encouraged a popular consensus based response to the plebiscite. He stressed that it was a matter that concerned all Iraqis and that the notables should hold a public meeting to assess public opinion. When the meeting proved inconclusive (with locals unsure of whether to support British rule, an Arab emir, a union with Iran, a constitutional government, or a non-Arab emir), they approached Yazdi again to mediate between them. His response was: "I am a man who does not know politics…" and, when pressed further, he urged to them to "choose what is in the best interest of the Muslims" (al-Imami al-Khoei 2009, 64; Wardi 1989b). His uninvolved stance ended up empowering the pro-British camp, who sent a resolution in favor of continued British rule to Baghdad. A counter-resolution, with less signatories, was sent calling for an Arab emir.

In Kerbala, the situation was reversed where the majority called for an Arab emir and a minority sent a counter-resolution in favor of continued British rule. Unlike Najaf, they were supported in this by a fatwa issued by Shirazi in December 1918, who stated that: "No Muslim may choose and elect any other than a Muslim to an emirate or sultanate over Muslims" (Atiyyah 1973; Rutledge 2015: 152).

The situation in Kadhimiyya mirrored Kerbala wherein the majority asked for an Arab emir with a constitution and a parliament. The first signatories of the Kadhimiyya resolution were clerics: Khalisi, Hasan al-Sadr and, his nephew (and son of the Marja"a Ismail al-Sadr) Mohammad Mahdi al-Sadr, Abd al-Hussain al-Yasin, and Ahmed al-Haydari (Al-Hasani 2004, 234; Wardi 1989b, 78). Their position was directly in opposition to that of Yazdi's non-

involvement in Najaf, a non-involvement that empowered the pro-British camp. Asfahani, also in Najaf, was in support of Arab rule but his support was not as strongly vocalized, perhaps due to Yazdi's overwhelming presence.

In general, most Iraqis were in favor of an Arab emir. The British's response to the plebiscite – essentially to ignore it and instate a British high commissioner in Iraq – aggravated them and empowered the nationalists, who had strong alliances with many factions in society, including with clerics like Khalisi, Mohammad al-Sadr, and Shirazi.

The experience of the plebiscite demonstrates several things for the purposes of this dissertation. First, it sets a baseline of sorts for Yazdi's and other clerics' political behavior, particularly with regards to the British. As demonstrated above, Yazdi's stance towards the British through the plebiscite did differ slightly from his elite contemporaries such as Shirazi, al-Khalisi, and Asfahani. However, this could be attributed to the fact that Najaf had just emerged from an exhausting siege where he was the main point of contact for mediation. Secondly, and relatedly, this experience reveals the degree to which the public seeks out clerical opinions on important political issues and the weight of those opinions from the state's perspective.

6.2 Assessing the Importance of Shirazi

In addition to the historical record, most scholarship dealing with this time period, in both English and Arabic, frequently makes the claim that the death of Yazdi in 1919, and the subsequent ascension of Shirazi to the position of chief marja', is a cause for the 1920 Revolution's relative success. This claim starts undoubtedly with Mahdi al-Khalisi's statement that Yazdi's death was "an assistance to the independence movement" (Nadhmi 1974: 347). Other lower ranking clerics in Najaf and Kadhimiyya shared this sentiment. It has since been

repeated by generations of Iraqi scholars who have provided similar explanations for why Shirazi's ascension is critical.[81] To them, Shirazi was a revolutionary cleric, unlike Yazdi.

Shirazi had moved to Kerbala from Samarra in 1918 at the urging of several clerics in Kadhimiyya who were rivals of Yazdi (Wardi 1989: 62). In 1919, the Haras al-Istiqlal party (an Iraqi independence party led by former officers) approached Mohammad Ali Bahr al-Uloom (of the Islamic Renaissance Society) for advice. Bahr al-Uloom said that they could not rely on the mid-Euphrates region for a revolution because Yazdi, who holds a position of authority in the region, would oppose it (ibid).

The nationalists' only recourse was to approach Mohammad Ridha al-Shirazi, the son of Shirazi. In Kadhimiyya, Mohammad Ridha met with some revolutionary nationalists along with Sadr and Khalisi. The group decided that if Shirazi were to leave Samarra and relocate to Najaf or to Kerbala, it would challenge Yazdi's monopoly on authority and aid the nationalist movement. Mohammad Ridha encouraged his father to move to Kerbala. He also maintained strong ties with the the nationalists. Mohammad Ridha was so visibly active that the British arrested and exiled him a few months later. In late 1918, in fact, he established the Islamic Society in Kerbala, a party which included clerical and non-clerical members such as Mohammad Ali Hibat al-Din al-Shahristani, Hussein al-Qazwini, Abdel Wahab al-Wahab, Abu al-Mahasin, Abd al-Karim Awad, Umar al-Hajj Alwan and Abd al-Hadi al-Qanbar (Al-Hasani 2004, 238). The party's work included turning public opinion against the British as well as forging alliances with the Middle-Euphrates tribesmen (ibid.).

[81] See Ali Al-Wardi Volume 5 p. 62 "al-Shirazi yakhlif al-Yazdi" and see (Nadhmi 1974) p.346 "The Death of al Yazdi and the rise of al Shirazi."

Thus, scholars who argue that Yazdi stood in the way of the nationalist movement are making this argument based on the opinion of the nationalists. At the same time, many of these scholars themselves argue that clerical authority is limited by public demands. The clerical establishment's vacillating stance over the Ottomans is indicative of this. Thus, the statement that Yazdi was ideologically predisposed to quietism or that he maintained a pro-British stance could be factually correct but it does not necessarily mean that Yazdi would have been opposed to the 1920 Revolution or that he would have provided less support than Shirazi. If anything, his position – which Shirazi later inherits – simply means that no matter what his own opinions or pressures are, he has to adopt a position that preserves the institutional integrity of the Hawza of Najaf first and foremost. It was fears of retribution by the British that had led him to oppose the 1917 Revolt, after all.

Scholars suggest that Yazdi was pro-British because the British considered him useful to them. His usefulness, however, was not because he supported the British but because he did not actively oppose them. When Shirazi became the chief marja', the British also attempted to co-opt him in several ways. First, they sent him a letter of mourning that outlined Yazdi's role as a mediator and as a force of wisdom and goodness, suggesting that he take up the mantle. Wilson also visited Shirazi in Kerbala and tried to appeal to him by asking him for his advice for a Shi'a candidate for the kiidar (caretaker of the shrine) position in Samarra. Shirazi's response was that Sunnis and Shi'a were equal to him and that the current Sunni caretaker was a good man (Wardi 1989: 65). Shirazi and Yazdi both faced attempts at co-optation by the British, due to their visible positions of authority.

6.3 The Nationalist-Clerical-Tribal Alliance

Yazdi's death provided a chance for the visible and public manifestation of Shi'a-Sunni unity wherein Sunni clerics paid their respects to their Shi'a counterparts by attending the funeral. This practice then evolved into the clerics attending one another's public functions – including the Shi'a ta'aziya (mourning ceremonies) and the Sunni mawlud (celebrations of the Prophet's birthday). The joint religious commemorations alarmed the British, who had not been prepared for a Shi'a-Sunni clerical alliance. Oftentimes, these events turned into protests because nationalists used them as opportunities to stir public anti-British sentiment. By August 12th, 1920 the British started to ban the mawlud in Baghdad because of their mobilization capacity.

This is considered to be a time period of anti-sectarianism in Iraq, though some scholars point out that it was both short-lived and demonstrative, rather than transformative or genuine (Sluglett 2012b). The British were unprepared for the other societal alliances that emerged, including those between the nationalists and the Shi'a clerics. More so than Shirazi, his son – Muhammad Ridha – was an active nationalist. In fact, a report from the political officer in Kerbala describes Shirazi as a as being "over 90 years old" and a "tool in his [son's] hand" (Nadhmi 1974: 349).

Following the plebiscite, he established the Jamiyya Islamiya, a secret group in Kerbala with ties to the Haras al-Istiqlal and which contained clerical and non-clerical members alike. Kerbala's nationalist groups differed from those in Najaf and in Kadhimiyya because the lines between the clerics and the nationalists were much more blurred. No character exemplified this blurred line between clericism and nationalism more so than Muhammad Ridha Shirazi.

From April to May 1920, a series of meetings took place between clerics and nationalists. The first was held on April 20th in Najaf and included clerics like Bahr al-Uloom, al-Jazairi, and

al-Jawahiri. There was a second meeting held in Baghdad on April 22nd and a final meeting on May 3rd in Kerbala, which included Shirazi. During that meeting, the nationalists explained their goals to Shirazi and he gave his approval on the condition that the nationalist struggle was carried thorough nonviolent means (Nadhmi 1974: 372). Nadhmi describes the meeting "as the official ratification of the nationalist Shi'i tribal alliance" (ibid.). Shirazi's priorities and concerns were on display at this meeting. Shirazi insisted on non-violent means and when pressed he said that "the British are strong, Iraqi lives are dear and law and order are important". Finally, and when further pressed and met with promises of unity and order, he relented: "if those are your intensions and promises, then may God be on your side" (Nadhmi 1974: 372).

The organized process of the revolution involved nationalists in each city electing representatives to present the government officials with their demands for an Arab ruler. The gatherings for the election of these representatives often turned into nationalist rallies with poetry and speeches. The government had refused to meet with the elected representatives on more than one occasion. And, as these mass movements increased in size and scope, arrests began on June 21st in al-Hillah and carried into Kerbala on the next day. When the assistant political officer went to Kerbala he contacted Shirazi who reminded him that the government and its representatives had refused to meet with them and that if he used force he would "bear the responsibility of bloodshed" (Nadhmi 1974: 375). The officer ignored Shirazi and arrested a handful of clerics and nationalists in Kerbala, amongst them Mohammad Ridha al-Shirazi.

The arrest of the clerics worked in the nationalists' interests: it was evidence of the government's transgressions and a way to ensure Shirazi's support. News of this arrest spread throughout Iraq and further stoked nationalist sentiment.

Shirazi was by no means an instigator nor an avid proponent of revolution. In fact, his word choice and his hesitations are similar to Yazdi's in many ways. What has changed is the persistence of the rebels and the fact that his son is amongst them. In short, this chapter of Iraqi history – and subsequent chapters as well – show that you would be hard pressed to find a chief marjaʿ that is eager to start or support a revolution. Hesitant support, couched in terms of non-violence and focusing on issues of order and peace and security – are the typical repertoires of clerics. This was Yazdi's behavior with the Ottomans as well as Muhsin al-Hakim's, Abu al-Qassim al-Khoei's and Ali al-Sistani's in later chapters of Iraqi history.

6.4 The Revolution turns violent: Rumaitha and Raranjiyaa

Shortly after these events unfolded in Kerbala, an armed struggle between the British and Iraqi tribes erupted in the southern town of Rumaitha. In the scholarship on the Revolution, the battle between the British and the tribes in Rumaitha is usually cited as the start of the Revolution. Prior to this, there had been demonstrations amongst nationalists in Baghdad and other urban areas, but the armed struggle against the British began in Rumaitha.

The story of Rumaitha starts on June 30,1920 when an important tribal sheikh was arrested by the British and thrown into prison. His men broke him out *and* attacked the garrison in which he was kept in as well as the railroad. When the British tried to counter the attack, the tribes overpowered them and the struggle ensued for two weeks. Other Iraqi tribes were holding meetings and discussing their possible course of action. The lack of aid to Rumaitha was upsetting to Shirazi.

By July 8th, there were several attempts at mediation. For one, Asfahani sent a letter to both the tribes and to Wilson from Najaf. In his letter to the tribes, he asked them to stop

fighting. His letter to Wilson asked for leniency towards the nationalists and the rebels as well as the return of the exiles, including Shirazi's son. Both the British and the tribes ignored Asfahani's letters and continued to battle. Days later, Asfahani was asked to send emissaries to negotiate a ceasefire with the British in Kufa, adjacent to Najaf. He sent two clerics: al-Jazairi and al-Jawahiri, who despite being strongly anti-British in the first World War genuinely attempted to encourage the rebelling tribes to negotiate with the British and to reach an agreement. This mediation attempt was also short lived.

On July 23rd, the revolution hit a tipping point with the defeat of the British forces in the town of Raranjiya. As a result, the British withdrew from Diwyaniya to al-Hillah. The uprisings then spread north to Baqubah, Kifri and Kirkuk. In Samarra, the political officer complained about the interference of Yusuf al-Suwaidi and Mohammad al-Sadr (Nadhmi 1974).

It is only after this defeat that Kerbala, led by Shirazi, officially joins the rebellion. On July 26th, Kerbalai notables met at the house of Shirazi to form two local councils: a clerical advisory and adjudication council and an administrative council composed of notables. The advisory council included both elite clerics (Hibat al-Din al-Shahristani and Mustafa al- Kashani) and the sons and grandsons of elite clerics (Ahmed Khurassani, Hussein Qazwini, and Abd al-Hussein al-Shirazi). Then, on August 6th, an official jihad fatwa emerged from Kerbala. The defeat of the British at Raranjiya is an important tipping point in the story of the 1920 Revolution, it signaled the strength of the nationalists and rebels and the true potential for government change and the potential for a new status quo.

6.5 The 1920 Revolution under Asfahani's Leadership

The local council fell apart shortly after Shirazi's death in August 17th,1920. Shirazi was succeeded by Asfahani in Najaf who, despite previous mediation attempts, picked up from where Shirazi had left off. Following Shirazi's death, Asfahani was brought into the Imam Ali Shrine and in the company of a few other clerics he delivered a speech accepting his position and reinforcing clerical approval of the jihad against the British. As evidence of his commitment to Shirazi's endorsement of the Revolution, he sent his own son and a group of clerics as his representatives on the battle front.

A few days later, the British attempted to negotiate with Asfahani (even though they rejected his prior negotiation attempts when he was not chief marja'). In the letter, they lay the blame on Shirazi and try to signal that they believe that the two clerics are similar. Asfahani's response is based on a consultation with some of his students and some notables. Among those he consulted with are Jazairi and Jawahiri, who once more pushed for negotiation. The majority of Asfahani's advisors, however, pushed for rejection of negotiation. Asfahani wrote back to Wilson expressing his disappointment with Wilson for trying to lay the blame for the violence on Shirazi whom he describes as a seeker of peace. He further states that the insult to Shirazi has insulted the Muslims and he repeats the call for Iraqi independence. Asfahani decided his letter would not be sent privately to Wilson but rather he had it posted publically for all to see. In this way, Asfahani not only inherited Shirazi's position as the head of the Hawza, but he also publically endorsed Shirazi's position as the spiritual head of the Iraqi Revolution. In response, the British complained about the "active preaching of Jehad by emissaries from Najaf and Karbala backed by letters of new Chief Mujtahid al Asfahani [which] has at last roused tribesmen" (Nadhmi 1974: 386).

Similarly, Bell writes:

> There are two favourable considerations: one is that the failure of the rising, which as far as the tribes are concerned, was all due directly to Mujtahid incitement, may considerably discredit those worthies as temporal guides; and the second that the present premier Mujtahid is tottering into his grave - we most regrettably prevented him from falling into it a year ago when he was saved by our medical officer at Najaf [Najaf, An] - and he may be succeeded by someone more enlightened. There are such, even among Mujtahids.

Thus, the state believed that the clerics were instigating the 1920 Revolution (though Bell makes no attempt to discern which ones). The chief marja' that Bell is discussing in this instance is Asfahani.

Both Najaf and Kerbala joined the revolt quite late, despite the fact that the latter would become the center of the revolution. Najaf, having experienced punishment for its previous attempt to revolt, was hesitant to join. The stirrings of revolution there began after the victory of Raranjiyaa and was furthered by the British dropping pamphlets on Najaf on August 12th warning the Najafis from joining the nearby tribes in revolt. No doubt, the ascendancy of Asfahani to the position of chief marja' – given his location in Najaf – finalized Najaf's decision to join the Iraqi Revolution because he immediately inherited Shirazi's responsibilities. On August 24th, elections were held to elect an executive council of representatives from each of the four quarters.

In addition to local governance, nationalists established an Iraqi revolutionary government – headed by Muhsin Abu Tabikh – in Kerbala in October, 1920. Arguably, this can be considered Iraq's first elected, organic national government but it lasted only a few short days before a series of British victories forced some of the nationalists – like Abu Tabikh and Mahdi al-Khalisi – to escape. On October 12th, the British took the town of Twareej which lies between

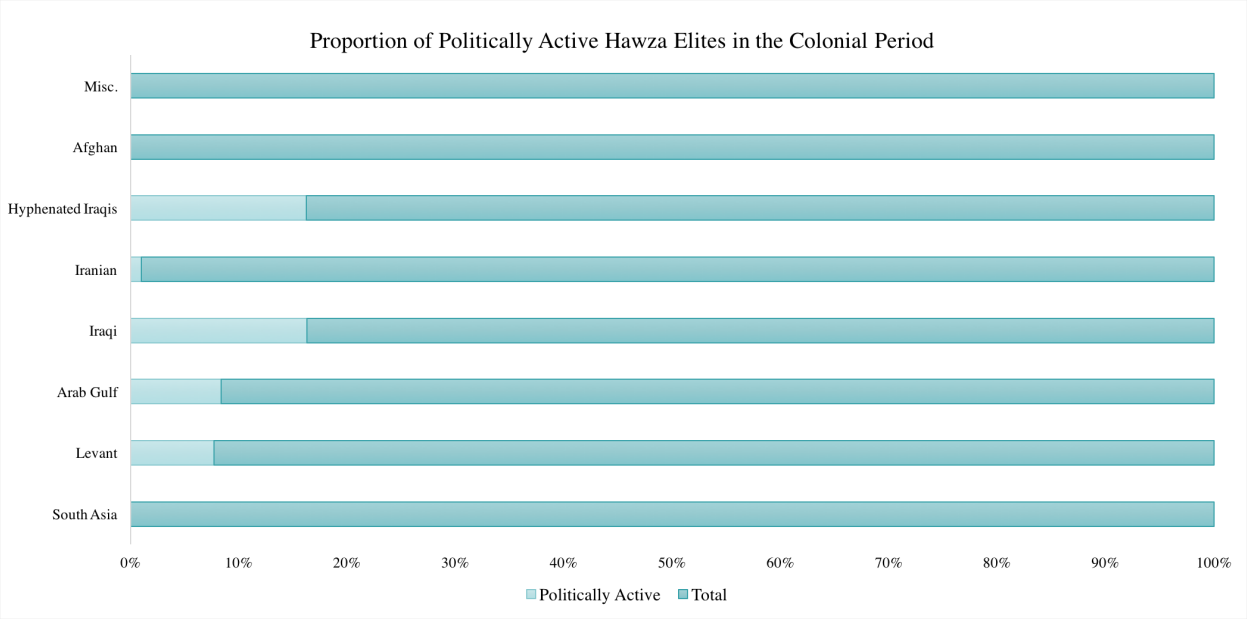
al-Hillah and Kerbala and on October 13th, the defeat of the rebels in Samawa spelled the end of the revolution. By early November, Kerbala and Najaf were both under siege and without supplies. By November 8th, Kerbala's notables (the Kamuna family led by Fakhri Kamuna) acquiesced to British demands and paid fines in surrender. The nationalists fled to Najaf which surrendered a week later on November 16th.

6 Conclusion

The case studies discussed in this chapter have raised and addressed four questions: first, what explains variation in elite clerical behavior? Secondly, why did clerics support the 1920 Revolution but not the 1917 Revolt? Thirdly, to what extent was Grand Ayatollah Yazdi uniquely apolitical? Finally, who were the instigating clerics and how could they afford to be politically active?

The evidence presented in this chapter suggests that political participation in politics is not a rare occurrence. Indeed, the figure below demonstrates that – particularly amongst Iraqi clerics – political activity was not uncommon, though it was by no means the norm. The definition of political activism that informs this table is a very broad definition, extending far beyond protest activity. The qualitative evidence presented earlier, which focuses on participation in protest, suggests that there are patterns for *types* of involvement, particularly amongst Hawza elites.

Figure 15: Political Activism of Hawza Clerics



Iraqi clerics have displayed a range of political behavior including involvement in anti-colonial movements and stances on the national plebiscite. In addition, clerical behavior has ranged from leadership of these movements to co-optation by nationalists to mediation between rebels and the state.

What explains this variation? I argue that the highly un-institutionalized structure of the Hawza has placed the burden of preserving the institution in the hands of high-ranking elites, like the chief marja's. The high degree of non-bureaucratization and the competition for clerical authority simultaneously led enterprising rebels to seek to co-opt lower ranking elites. The lack of bureaucratization also empowered lower ranking clerics to act autonomously without a sense of responsibility towards preserving the system itself.

Thus, the need to protect the institution – from which elites derive authority – led the chief marja' in 1917 to take on a mediation role in order to protect Najaf from violence and

retribution. The immediately apparent failure of the movement prevented lower ranking activist clerics from taking on leadership roles and from supporting the movement in general. By 1920, these political clerics – along with their nationalistic allies – sought to capture clerical legitimacy by co-opting second-tier elites who could challenge the monopoly of the chief marjaʿ. Many of these nationalistic clerics were the sons and nephews of elites – they possessed the legitimacy of a clerical name sans the responsibility of the position itself. In that sense, they were perfect allies for the nationalists. As the revolution expanded, the chief marjaʿ became strongly involved and issued numerous fatwas in favor of the rebels. They did so because power had shifted towards the rebels and maintaining their own clerical authority and that of the Hawza's depended on maintaining the support of the public. The defeat of the British at Raranjiya was no small feat.

Yazdi's non-participation in 1917 remains a huge controversy amongst historians who claim that Shirazi's ascendancy (and Yazdi's death) had been critical for the success of 1920. In reality, claiming that Yazdi was apolitical overlooks the institutional constraints that he faced in his tenure as chief marjaʿ and his previous political behaviors, including his decision to support the rebels against the Ottomans in 1915. It also overlooks the fact that most other clerics – including Asfahani and Shirazi – did not actively support the 1917 Revolt. Perhaps the most charitable and accurate representation of Yazdi was that of an elite cleric who often served as a mediator between the rebels and government and who reluctantly followed, rather than led, popular movements.

Immediately subordinate to Yazdi were a handful of Marjaʿ who were competing for adherents and for successorship. These Marjaʿ simultaneously had incentives to preserve the institution and to gain public approval. Clerical ties of dependency to the local community makes taking political positions, even grudgingly, unavoidable at times of popular anti-

government sentiment. As Nadhmi states "they had to face a mounting and persistent pressure to take sides over political issues and they were quite unable to resist such demands" (Nadhmi 1974: 98). Even if the Shi'a clerical elite were ideologically disinclined to participate in protest – the structure of the Hawza itself, particularly its dependency on the local community to maintain autonomy prevailed.

Moreover, their high degree of authority made these elite clerics ideal allies for nationalist rebels who needed clerical legitimacy. This explains why the nationalists encouraged Shirazi to move from Samarra to Kerbala, placing him in a geographic position to challenge Yazdi and to succeed him after his death. The mid-level clerics who suggested and formed these alliances were nationalist clerics who had no ambitions of succession to the position of chief marja'. They were able to engage actively in this behavior because they had the legitimacy of the clerical establishment – having familial ties to the institution being the most common route – without the associated responsibilities of a potential successor.

Similarly, to Muhammad Ridha al-Shirazi, the sons of al-Akhwand al-Khurasani were also highly active in political life in Iraq and Iran. Al-Akhwand al-Khurasani, mentioned in section 3, is perhaps one of the most well-known clerics of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Meir 2002). He is particularly remembered for his strongly pro-constitutional stance in the Iranian Constitutional Revolution.[82] One of his sons, Mahdi al-Akhwand (d.1945), traveled to Kadhimiyya after his father's death and became involved in the clerical leadership of Jihad against the Russians (Ali 2011, 441). He was also involved in organization elections in Najaf in August 1920. Another son, Ahmed al-Akhwand, was active in the 1920 Revolution and had to

[82] For more information about the Iranian Constitutional Revolution and the role of clerics in it, see: (Farzaneh 2015; Stephanie Cronin 1997).

flee to Saudi Arabia upon its failure (ibid, 445). His other two sons – Hussein al-Akhwand and Hasan Kafai – were involved in community social affairs and in elections (ibid, 446-447). The career trajectories of the sons of one of the most elite clerics, al-Akhwand al-Khurasani, are very similar to the typical careers taken on by the children of the maraj 'throughout history. They occupy unique positions: well-trained though lower-ranking than their fathers, not responsible for the religious establishment but able to wield much of its power.

The clerics who could afford to espouse costly revolutionary ideas were like the likes of Mohammad al-Sadr, Mahdi al-Khalisi, Mohammad Kashif al-Ghita, Abd Al-Kareem al-Jazairi and Jawad al-Jawahiri: they were elites but had no chances of ascendancy to chief marjaʿ (for various reasons, including internal Hawza politics). The chief marja"s responsibility is the maintenance of the religious institution and its legacy, which means that he cannot act in ways that undermine his position or challenge his suitability to it. Thus, the chief marjaʿ can never really become a revolutionary.

Appendix to the Chapter

Notable Clerical Actors of the Mujtahid / Ayatollah level and higher (as of 1917):

Muhammad Kadhim al-Yazdi (d.1919) – the chief marjaʿ in Iraq from 1911 to 1919, based in Najaf. Took an anti-constitutionalist stance in Iranian politics. Mediated between protestors and the British on numerous occasions. Iraqi-Iranian.

Muhammad Taqi al-Shirazi (d.1920)- the chief marjaʿ in Iraq in 1919. Lived mainly in Samarra before moving to Kerbala shortly before the 1920 Revolution.

Fathallah al-Asfahani (d.1920) – otherwise known by the title "sheikh al-Sharia al-Asfahani." The chief marjaʿ from 1919 to 1920. Took a constitutionalist stance on Iranian politics. Has a history of supporting resistance to British colonialism.

Ismail al-Sadr (d.1920) – a marjaʿ based in Kadhimiyya (having lived previously in Samarra and Kerbala). Was known to have met with nationalists.

Hasan al-Sadr (d.1924) – succeeded Ismail al-Sadr, his cousin, as a marjaʿ in Kadhimiyya. A signatory of the Kadhimiyya declaration for Arab Rule.

Mohammad Mahdi al-Khalisi (d.1925) – mujtahid based in Kadhimiyya. Had strong ties with the nationalists, with the Haras al-Istiqlal party, and was extremely anti-British. One of the few Arab mujtahids at the time.

Muhammad Hussein Kashif al-Ghita (d.1954) – marj'a, and signatory of the Kadhimiyya declaration for Arab rule.

Dhia al-Din al-Iraqi (d.1942) - marj'a and well known teacher in the Hawza.

Mohammad Hussein al-Naini (d.1936) – marj'a and well-known constitutionalist.

Notable clerics of a lower level (as of 1917):

Abd al-Rasool Kemal al-Din: imam of the Kufa mosque who preached Jihad against the British in 1920.

Hadi Kashif al-Ghita: mujtahid who participated in the 1920 Revolution, in the capacity as a mediator.

Muhammad Ridha al-Shirazi – the son of Muhammad Taqi al-Shirazi, the chief marjaʿ of Iraq in 1920. Had strong ties to the nationalist movement and established a political party in Kerbala.

Muhammad Jawad al-Jazairi (d.1959) – Brother of Abd al-Karim al-Jazairi.

Abd al-Karim al-Jazairi – one of the founders of the Islamic Renaissance Society. Nationalist and opposed to British rule.

Mohammad Ali Bahr al-Uloom (d.1936) – supported Ottomans against the British and was active in the 1920 Revolution.

Jafar Abd al-Hussein Radhi (d.1926) – one of those selected to be a representative to speak with the British.

Baqir al-Shibibi – a lower-ranking cleric and one of the founders of the Iraqi nationalist party, Haras al-Istiqlal.

Muhi al-Din al-Qazwini – a lower-ranking, anti-British cleric who was known for his role as a mediator with the tribes.

Ali Sharqi – A highly nationalist cleric who later becomes a minister and a judge.

Latif Shaban – caretaker of the Imam Ali Shrine and participant in the 1920 Revolution.

Abbas al-Khalili – seminary student and secretary of the Islamic Renaissance Society.

Mahdi al-Haydari- cleric, participated in the 1920 Revolution.

Mustafa al-Kashani- cleric, participated in the 1920 Revolution.

Hadi Zuwain – leader of the 1920 Revolution and a link between the nationalists in Baghdad and the clerics in Najaf.

Kathem Al-Ghuraifi – cleric, participated in the 1920 Revolution.

Abd Ali al-Majidi – cleric, participated in the 1920 Revolution.

Ali al-Turaihi - cleric, participated in the 1920 Revolution.

Mahdi al-Akhwand (d.1945) – cleric and son of the former Marjaʿ Akhwand Khurasani. Was involved in the Jihad against Russians and in organizing elections in Najaf in August 1920.

Ahmed al-Akhwand- cleric and son of the former Marjaʿ Akhwand Khurasani. Was active in the 1920 Revolution.

Chapter Six

Protests in the Baʿathist era

1. Introduction

In this chapter, I examine the role of elite Shiʿa clerics in two instances of anti-government protest in Baʿathist Iraq (1968-2003): the 1977 Safar Uprising and the 1979 Rajab Uprising. Both protest movements originated in the city of Najaf, home of the Iraqi Hawza. Given the location, it comes as no surprise that both uprisings carried religious undertones. The Safar Uprising of 1977 started as an annual procession from Najaf to Kerbala during the Arbaʿeen holiday. However, because the state attempted to ban the procession it turned into an anti-government protest culminating in violent clashes with security forces. In 1979, protests were organized by the Islamic Daʿwa Party in collaboration with some junior Hawza clerics in order to protest the arrest of Grand Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr (hereafter: al-Sadr).

Although there were other protests during the Baʿathist era, I selected these particular cases because they involve the same cast of clerical elites operating under rapidly changing external and ideological conditions. Therefore, the case selection serves two purposes. First, it tests alternative explanations, including the impact of ideological beliefs as well as changing political context on participation in protest. Second, it is a means of uncovering mechanisms.

I find that in both 1977 and 1979, despite varying ideologies towards political activism and the propinquity of the Iranian Revolution, Hawza elites did not instigate protest movements. The highest degree of political activism exhibited by an elite was when al-Sadr, in collaboration with the Daʿwa Party (a party he had partially founded), initiated a "movement of allegiance" in 1979. Rather than incite a protest, al-Sadr invited his followers and adherents from

various Iraqi provinces to flock to his house in a public display of loyalty to him as their marjaʿ taqlīd or "source of emulation." As a result, he was arrested and the Daʿwa party and some of his students launched the 1979 protest in response. In both uprisings, other elite clerics remained peripheral.

In this chapter, I explore the specific mechanisms that constrained these clerics from political activism. I argue that because of the hierarchical and minimally bureaucratized nature of the Hawza, elite clerics were personally responsible for the survival of the institution. Therefore, while the increasing repression of the state led Islamist opposition groups and the public towards protest, it had the opposite effect on elite clerics whose concerns with institutional survival only multiplied under repression. The opposition, who did not feel any institutional responsibility and did not understand the motivations of clerical elites attempted to co-opt clerical legitimacy, thus perpetuating a cycle of state repression that continued into the 1990s.

Furthermore, the authoritative nature of the hierarchy oftentimes allowed elites to direct the behavior of certain junior clerics towards non-involvement. However, when these elites were unable to direct behavior (when they were imprisoned, for example), the lack of bureaucratization meant that junior clerics had space to behave more autonomously and to become more politically active. In some cases, these junior clerics started protests. This contributed to both public and state confusion surrounding the role of the Hawza in protest movements. To arrive at these conclusions, I rely on the triangulation of evidence from three points of view: clerical, protestor, and government. In section 2, I discuss the sources of this data and the types of analyses I conducted.

This chapter proceeds as follows. Section 3 provides contextual information on the Hawza during the Baʿathist era. It reviews the theory as laid out in the previous chapters and its

applicability to the case at hand. It also provides evidence that the Hawza in the 1970s was a hierarchical and minimally bureaucratized entity, as well as a description of the relationship of the Hawza to the state. Sections 4 and 5 respectively address the 1977 and 1979 protests, providing a detailed account of the events. Section 5 also provides contextual information on the impact of the Iranian Revolution on the Shiʿa of Iraq. Section 6 critically assesses the argument of this dissertation in light of these cases and in consideration of rival strategic and ideological explanations. Section 7 concludes by connecting this set of case studies to the broader dissertation project.

3 Data and Methods

To arrive at these conclusions, I rely on the triangulation of evidence from three points of view: clerical, opposition, and government. The clerical point of view is important in order to understand how the internal dynamics of the Hawza, including with regard to ideology, impacted clerical decisions. The opposition and government points of view clarify the external conditions facing the Hawza as well as any co-optation pressures that they may have exerted upon it. The goal of the book project is to understand what motivates certain clerics to also inhabit the position of "protestor" or "opposition" and what prohibits other clerics from doing so.

In addition, the networks of clerics, government officials, and opposition oftentimes overlapped in specific and meaningful ways. For example, some clerics were concurrently members of the Daʿwa Party[83] and thus can be categorized as both "opposition" and "clerics".

[83] Hizb al-Daʿwa al-Islamiya is the Shiʿa Islamist party established in the late 1950s by a handful of clerics and laymen, including al-Sadr. For more information on the party, see these English sources: (Al-Ruhaimi 2002; Dai 2008; Jabar 2003). In Arabic, see: (Ali 2004).

Clerics can be involved in politics formally, such as through opposition parties like the Daʿwa, and they can also display informal political involvement through participation in protest. In this case, I demonstrate that the conditions under which clerics become politically active in *both* senses, formally and informally, stem from structural conditions. Less prominently, there were a number of clerics who had ties to the government though many did so discreetly. Usually, these clerics could not attain high positions within the religious system due to the strong and informal familial networks at the top.

In order to assess these points of view, I rely on four types of primary data: semi-structured interviews, government archives, clerical archives, biographies and biographical dictionaries.[84] I use these sources to first construct a story of each uprising, highlighting key actors, critical moments and the overall background conditions. Then, I analyze the behavior of clerics within these settings, focusing on both their behaviors and the motivations behind these behaviors.

First, I conducted semi-structured interviews with clerics who were present during this time period. This included clerics who were protest participants, students of elite clerics (e.g. al-Sadr and Khoei) and members of the Daʿwa party. I asked questions that fell into four broad categories: Hawza background, doctrinal views, broad political participation and political participation specifically in the 1977 and 1979 cases.

Second, I interviewed lay members of the Daʿwa party who were members during the 1970s. The purpose of these interviews was to gain an understanding of the overall context of the protests as well as an understanding of the relationship between the political opposition and

[84] Biographical dictionaries are multi-volume books in which historians record the names, dates, and biographies of important figures, in this case the elites of the city of Najaf. See (Litvak 1991, 1998) for an example of their use in a study of clerics in 19th century Iraq.

the Hawza. In order to accomplish this, I interviewed members from various ranks ranging from one of the secretary generals (former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki) to province-level members. I included both those who left the party and those who remained members to this day. I did so to balance between contradictory accounts of the party's historical activism. In these interviews, I asked about their motivations to join the party, their relationship with religion and the Hawza, and whether they participated in previous protest movements.

I also interviewed non-Daʿwa laymen who had participated in the protest movements. In general, finding interview subjects for this particular case was extremely difficult due to the fact that participants had either been executed or had passed away in the last four decades. To account for this, I relied on the biographies and written accounts of the protest movements found in various archives in Najaf.[85] I recognize the biases that have gone into producing historical work and have tried to validate information through multiple sources. These biases include the post-hoc attribution of certain behaviors to members of the present-day ruling elite as well as the instinct to paint religious leaders, particularly deceased ones, in a positive light. I highlight the points in the protest narratives in which there is disagreement. Where this disagreement concerns clerical participation, I have consulted multiple sources including the families, students and even critics of the clerics themselves. In my fieldwork, I also visited the key locations of the uprisings in order to better understand their physical proximity to clerical spaces.

Finally, in order to assess the government's point of view, I rely on records from the Baʿathist archives at the Hoover Institute at Stanford University. The governmental point of

[85] I am particularly grateful to the Kashif al-Ghita Foundation and the Al-Alamain Institute for their help in identifying and procuring historical materials and books. Many of the accounts of events in this era were published outside of Iraq for political reasons, particularly in Qum, Damascus, and Beirut.

view provides further evidence of the structure of the religious system and the pressures that the system faced and survived. The archives also provide descriptions of clerics who were "friendly" to the government and those who were not. I also interviewed one cleric in Najaf who had clear ties to the government. Later in the chapter, I discuss the degree to which the government had infiltrated the Hawza.

Although I used a typical snowball sampling method to access these various interviewees, I used five different leads: a Kerbala-based cleric, a Najaf-based cleric, a London-based Iraqi journalist with ties to Islamist parties, a U.S.-based Iraqi diplomat and member of the Daʿwa party, and an Iraq-based former provincial-level (non-elite) member of the Daʿwa party. I used these different leads in order to ensure a more representative sample. With regard to clerics, I did not want to have a sample that was overly representative of Najafi clerics or clerics with international links. This is particularly important for this time period because there were opposing Islamist groups established in both Kerbala and Najaf. As for the Daʿwa party, I wanted an equal representation of current *and* former members, elite and non-elite members as well as exiles and those who remained in the country. Although I was successful in getting an even sample of the first two, I was unable to find any Daʿwa member who had not been in exile. Interestingly, the networks of my two clerical leads (the Kerbala based cleric and Najaf based cleric) ultimately converged, resulting in the recommendation of introduction to the same cleric. The same happened with my elite-level Daʿwa party leads.

I consider this convergence a positive signal of comprehensiveness of interview subjects, despite the scarcity of respondents who were present at the time. To account for this scarcity and the gaps in the pool of respondents, I rely on both biographical dictionaries as well as

secondary scholarship, including recorded television and newspaper interviews as well as memoirs and autobiographies of Iraqi clerical and oppositional elites.

Both cases suffer from a data scarcity problem given their historical obscurity and the lengths to which the Baʿathist government strove to erase oppositional voices and events from history. Pierre-Jean Luizard writes of his similar experience researching Shiʿism in Iraq under Baʿathism:

> The problem lies in the lack of Iraqi sources. These were often difficult to obtain, being more often kept in the private libraries of great religious families in the Shii holy cities. Now these have been destroyed by the present Iraqi regime, which thereby revealed its intention of erasing the Shia memory. (Luizard 2001, 223).

However, scholarship that focuses solely on data-rich contexts results in a skewed analysis based on a skewed universe of cases. This data collection contributes to the preservation of Iraqi history by documenting two largely unstudied protest movements. The interviews that I conducted methodically document the experiences of the last remaining participants of an important chapter of Iraqi history.

4. The Structure of the Hawza

In this section, I introduce the Iraqi Hawza and demonstrate that it was a minimally bureaucratized and highly hierarchical structure during the Baʿathist era. Consequently, both authority and responsibility were concentrated at the top, with an elite class of clerics collectively known as the marjaʿiyya.

4.1 The Marjaʿiyya and Hierarchy

The marjaʿiyya generally refers to the top two tiers of clerics which constitute the chief marjaʿ and the various maraji' taqlīd (pl. "sources of emulation"). Adherents of Twelver Shiʿa Islam are expected to select an elite cleric, a marjaʿ taqlīd, to follow in all religious and social matters and to direct their religious taxes to.[86] Academically, a cleric must first be qualified in ijtihad (the inference of religious norms) in order to be a candidate for marjaʿiyya. In practice, ijtihad means that a cleric is able to issue a ruling. To reach the level of ijtihad a cleric must first pass through three levels of academic training: introductory (muqadīmāt), intermediate (sutūh), and advance (bāhth khārij).

The final and most advance level does not end until a cleric becomes a mujtahid. During this time period, mujtahid could be declared through a formal certificate called an ījāza that is issued by a senior marjaʿ (usually, his teacher). However, students normally wait until their teacher pass away before they declare their candidacy for marjaʿiyya.[87] To declare their candidacy, clerics publish a code of religious practice called āl-rīsala āl-ʿilmiyya.[88]

[86] This practice was instituted in the mid-nineteenth century with Grand Ayatollah Murtada Ansari. See: (Litvak 1998, 78–90).
[87] Interview with Hossein al-Qazwini. Kerbala, Iraq. December 2017.
[88] For an example, see Sistani's code of religious conduct.

Figure 16: The Religious Hierarchy

Therefore, in this time period, the Hawza can be characterized as a very hierarchical system. A hierarchical system is characterized by the presence of a clearly identifiable central leadership with ranked positions of subordinate authority, as well as titles associated with limited positions. As demonstrated by the figure above, the Hawza in the Baʿathist era satisfies these criteria.

The very tip of the pyramid is discernible and the chasm between the most elite (marjaʿ taqlīd) and those beneath them (the mujtahids) was built upon informal standards, including the support of teachers and followers. Moreover, while it is hierarchical – there is no clear limitation

on how many people can achieve each rank. As Louer describes, "while the emulation of a single marjʿi' by the entire community of believers has remained an ideal horizon, there has almost always been several maraj'i at the same time", which results in there being several clerics who make claims to the position of chief marjaʿ (Louer 2008: 77). Despite the multiple claims, there have been times – including the contemporary era and the Baʿathist era – in which a chief marjaʿ has obviously emerged. In fact, Grand Ayatollah Khoei (the head of the religious establishment from 1970 until 1992) was the only chief marjaʿ in the history of the Hawza who acquired the title of head of "al-zaʿeem" or "the leader" suggesting that these are times of high centralization.

The positions in the rest of the hierarchy – particularly the academic standards for students at the lower levels – are more formalized and standardized, indicating a structure that is bureaucratic and rigid amongst the lesser ranks and increasingly malleable at the top. At the top, honorifics designate academic accomplishments and range from ayatollah āl-ʿudhma (referred to in this work as "grand ayatollah"), ayatollah, hujjat āl-Islam, and Shaikh (ibid). Perhaps the reason that honorifics are not used in the lower level is because there really is not an admission process. The fact that anyone can wear clerical garb at any point in their seminary education, caused reformist clerics – like al-Sadr and Morteza Motahhari – much consternation. Motahhari writes:

> One of the problems of the clerical establishment is the freedom with which people wear the clerical robe. The clerics wear a distinctive kind of clothing, as do military personnel and other groups in society. However, in the case of the clerical establishment, anyone can wear such a uniform without being censured. As a result, certain individuals, lacking both knowledge and faith, opportunistically wear this uniform and become a source of embarrassment. (Motahhari 2001, 168).

This is one of the minor points that Motahhari makes. He also reflects on how difficult it is for any elite cleric to pass through reforms within the Hawza, no matter how much they wish

to do so. Others in Iraq – including al-Sadr, Mohammad Taqi al-Hakim, and Muhammad Ridha al-Mudaffar[89] all expressed attempts to reform the Hawza as well. The latter, along with Yusuf al-Hakim[90] (a son of Grand Ayatollah Muhsin al-Hakim) was responsible for the establishment of Kuliyat al-Fiqh in 1958, a seminary-inspired university which was supported by Grand Ayatollah Muhsin al-Hakim. As is typical of most attempts at Hawza reform, Kuliyyat āl-Fiqh was sidelined by the religious establishment after a while.[91]

1.2. Bureaucracy in the Hawza

A bureaucratized system is characterized by standardization, demarcation of jurisdiction, professionalization of staff, meritocracy and an emphasis on rational-legal order.[92] The Hawza of the 1970s exhibited meritocracy, some demarcation of jurisdiction, and a small degree of standardization as well, resulting in it being minimally bureaucratized.

Of all these indicators, meritocracy is the one most clearly displayed by the Hawza. Consider the process of learning within the Hawza: in order to advance a student has to distinguish himself from amongst his peers. The student is not assigned mentors or given a course schedule to facilitate this advancement. Rather, he is expected to actively seek classes that are relevant to their own stage of learning, to set his own schedule, and to manage his own learning. In order to impress his teachers, he takes detailed notes of their lectures and sometimes presents them to the teacher for feedback. Excellent reports of lectures are oftentimes turned into books. In fact, the biographical dictionaries show that it is common for elite clerics to have

[89] (al-Marzouk 2013, Volume 3, 634).
[90] (al-Marzouk 2013, Volume 3, 908).
[91] See: (al-Haydari 2017).
[92] The measurements of bureaucratization have been inspired by (Weber 1993).

published the lectures of their own teachers. Those in the Hawza greatly value the style of learning and take pride in it:

> The objective of the seminarians is not to obtain a certificate. Nor do grades denote the status of the students. The manner in which the student debates, the problems and criticisms he presents in his teacher's class, the way in which he conducts his own classes and sustains the attention of junior seminarians are the best indicators of his achievement and virtue. (Motahhari 2001, 168).

Thus, he can rise through the ranks at his own pace. That being said, it takes anywhere from a decade to two, to reach the advanced level. In fact, as one seminary teacher explained to me, "to become a 'alim (scholar) in the Hawza, the Hawza's formula is fourteen hours multiplied by 365 days multiplied by twenty years."[93] In the contemporary Iraqi Hawza, at each of these levels students are required to take a set of annual exams to maintain their official status as *talaba* (seminary students). In the past, these exams were non-existent and in fact, many reformist clerics, including al-Sadr, deplored the lack of well-defined academic standards and the proliferation of unmonitored students. Indeed, writing in 1962, Motahhari explains the drawbacks of this lack of academic standardization:

> Because there is no entrance exam for the seminarians, it is possible for an unqualified student to enter this sacred institution. Moreover, because there are no examinations, seminarians are free to advance to lower texts to more advance texts. It often happens that certain individuals advance to higher levels without having completed the lower levels. As a result, they end up losing interest and dropping out. (Motahhari 2001, 168).

Some of the other suggestions made by reformists include requiring the completion of high school before joining the Hawza, establishing a one-year program to prepare students to join the Hawza, as well as adding coursework on other Islamic schools of thought and comparative religion (al-Haydari 2017).

[93] Author interview with anonymized mujtahid-level cleric. December 2018. Najaf, Iraq.

Advanced students, those at the third level, were singled out to become representatives of elite clerics. The practice of having representatives was widespread in the Baʿathist era – as evidenced by both the high number of representatives from this time period in the biographical dictionaries as well as by the Baʿathist government internal documents, which recorded the names and political leanings of representatives (discussed in more detail in the next section). Representatives are sent to particular communities and are empowered to perform specific duties ranging from the resolution of minor disputes to the collection of taxes.[94] The existence of these representatives and their centrality to local communities suggests a demarcation of jurisdiction of sorts.

In addition to sometimes serving as representatives, advance students are also able to teach introductory classes, though they are not always appointed to these positions:

> The seminarians themselves, by a process of trial and error, select the best teacher. In this respect there is a kind of freedom and democracy in the seminaries that is absent from other places, a tendency to choose the best teacher among the seminarians. (Ibid, 167).

In this respect, the process of becoming a teacher is also meritocratic. However, although advancement is meritocratic, one can argue that the sons of clerical families are advantaged in that they are more familiar with the process than those who come from non-clerical families. While this confers benefits to them in some ways, it does not punish outsiders. In fact, students are supported in their academic studies through modest stipends provided by the offices of the marjaʿ's. Frequently, they are also housed in the dormitories of the seminaries that are devoted to international students.

[94] Author interview with Jawad al-Khoei. Najaf, Iraq. December 2018.

The stipends *are* modest, however. Many of the clerics whom I interviewed who were students in the Hawza in the 1960s and 1970s reported having additional sources of funding. For example, Ayatollah Murtada al-Qazwini explained that his talents as a preacher allowed him to supplant his stipend with additional income, particularly in the holy months and in months of religious pilgrimage.[95] Some seminary students, however, had to rely on regular jobs to supplement their stipends. The experience of these students suggests that the Hawza, although arguably meritocratic, severely lacked standardization in the 1960s and 1970s. Some clerics recognized this lack of standardization but few were willing to risk being ostracized for addressing it.

The Hawza has become increasingly bureaucratized over time, a process I address at length in chapter seven. Its academic structure has become more standardized. However, in the 1970s and in the Baʿathist era generally, it lacked many of the basic features of a bureaucracy – particularly the rational-legal order. As such, I describe it as minimally bureaucratic. Because bureaucracies distribute responsibility throughout a religious system, I argue that the responsibility of preserving the entity of the Hawza is not distributed among all its clerics, but rather, is concentrated at the top.

[95] Author interview with Murtada al-Qazwini. Kerbala, Iraq. December 2017.

2. The Hawza and the Baʿath

The Hawza's strong relationship to society, the massive number of adherents and their devotion to the marjaʿiyya alarmed the Baʿathist state. This resulted in an antagonistic relationship between the state and the Hawza that began in the 1960s and was exacerbated by the Iranian Revolution. The Iranian Revolution, which replaced the secular regime of the Shah with a Shiʿa theocracy, greatly alarmed the Iraqi state. The potential for revolutionary overspill was great, given the significant and repressed Shiʿa population of Iraq. This antagonistic relationship continued through the 1990s when the "faith campaign" was launched by the government as a way to shore up religious legitimacy.[96] Although the nature of state policies and tactics changed, the fear of Shiʿa mobilization remained constant.

It is important to note that the source of the state's alarm was not a primordial an anti-Shiʿa sectarianism *so long as* the Shiʿa were not Iranians. In fact, the Baʿathists were opposed to the language (albeit not necessarily the practice) of sectarianism. Scholars have documented the specifically anti-sectarian rhetoric displayed by the Baʿathists and their fixation on the Arabization of the Hawza (Helfont 2018; Kadhim 2013). Rather, the state recognized the social capital of the Hawza and wanted to capture it. In a 1988 report directed to Saddam Hussein's office, a committee formed to study the relationship with the Hawza suggested the following:

> [Do] not antagonize the sons of Khoei or the religious Hawza in the present time because alienating him [Khoei] means the movement of the Hawza from Iraq to Iran and this is what the spiteful Persian enemy is striving for, and as soon as we can prepare an alternative [Marjaʿ] from Arab roots then he will take the Hawza and he will have his own followers and supporters.[97]

[96] For more information on the faith campaign, see: (Blaydes 2018; Helfont 2018).
[97] BRCC Doc No. 023-4-7-0089. [Directed to Saddam Hussein from Regional Command with title: "Religious Schools"] Hiẓb al-Ba'th al-'Arabī al-Ishtirākī records, Hoover Institution Archives.

The capacity for Shiʿa mobilization depended on the institution of the Hawza which imbued elite clerics with a divine influence that they could call upon. The state recognized this and also recognized that the Hawza was able to maintain its autonomy because of its financial independence from the state. The financial independence stemmed from the collection of hefty religious tithes (known as Khums).[98]

A former member of the Daʿwa party who was active in the 1970s explained that the financial independence of the Hawza put it out of the state's control and allowed it to pursue its obligations towards the community. At the same time, he stressed that the community had a duty to provide the marjaʿiyya with the Khums.[99] In fact, Jabar (2003) likens the direction of taxes as "tantamount to a popular vote." This sentiment of equating the religious tax to a democratic procedure that determined clerical authority was echoed to various degrees in my interviews. For example, Ayatollah Hadi al-Modaressi and Mahdi al-Modaressi described it as a popular vote and agreed that it was equivalent to the concept of "voting with your feet"[100].

At the same time, the centralization of the Khums with elite clerics created funding problems for lower-ranking clerics, who, prior to the formalization of this practice by Grand Ayatollah Hasan al-Shirazi in the mid-nineteenth century, had been able to access these funds (Motahhari 2001). Thus, hierarchy, in this sense, is linked to the authority of clerics.

When questioned about the importance of Khums specifically during the Baʿathist era, other elite clerics that I interviewed, such as Grand Ayatollah Mortada al-Qazwini and Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Taqi al-Modaressi, stressed that it allowed them to act autonomously and

[98] For more information about the specifics of Khums, see: https://www.sistani.org/english/book/48/2277/.
[99] Interview with London-based former Daʿwa member. London, UK. October 2017.
[100] Interview with Mohammad Hadi al-Modarresi and with Mahdi al-Modaressi. London, UK. October 2017.

not have to rely on the regime, as their Sunni counterparts did within and outside of Iraq. The fact that some of the money came from outside of Iraq (including from Iran and the Shiʿa Gulf States and, later, the Shiʿa diaspora in the West) explains why clerics were able to ride out some of the economic crises within Iraq. The institution of Khums allowed clerics to survive both outside and inside of Iraq and allowed for the incubation of marjaʿiyya-associated organizations in exile which supported the marjaʿiyya during times of crises (Corboz 2015).

That the state was aware of and in fear of the channeling of foreign money into the Hawza is made clear by internal Baʿathist documents. In a report written by the "Department of Shiʿa Monitoring" the writer recommends several policies aimed at "putting the Hawza in the same path as the state."[101] In other words, the state sought to co-opt the Hawza and foster an understanding, if not an alliance, with its leadership. Amongst those recommendations is that the state provide "financial and non-material support in order to cut off its [the Hawza's] connection with foreign entities and Iran in particular."[102]

Baʿathist records provide further evidence of monitoring of the Hawza. The government kept extensive records and evaluations of Shiʿa and non-Shiʿa clerics (Blaydes 2018). The government also kept records of Shiʿa seminaries in Kerbala and Najaf in addition to lists of Khoei's agents and adherents in various Iraqi provinces. The list of "Khoei Agents who are Sympathetic to the Party and Revolution" includes 67 clerics from Baghdad, Thi Qar, Basra, Maysan, Salahaldin, Wasit, Nineveh, Khaniqin and Baquba. "Positive" clerics are described as

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[101] BRCC Doc No. 023-4-7-0003 [Titled: "*Dirasa Muqadama li āl-hizb hawl āl-Shiʿa wa madarisahum wa 'Ulama'hum*"" or "Study presented about the Shiʿa and their schools and their scholars"]. Hizb al-Ba'th al-'Arabī al-Ishtirākī records, Hoover Institution Archives.

[102] BRCC Doc No. 023-4-7-0003 [Titled: "*Dirasa Muqadama li āl-hizb hawl āl-Shiʿa wa madarisahum wa 'Ulama'hum*" or "Study presented about the Shiʿa and their schools and their scholars"]. Hizb al-Ba'th al-'Arabī al-Ishtirākī records, Hoover Institution Archives.

having Baʿathist family members and are "praying for the leader" during prayers. In addition, the list of these "sympathetic" clerics also focuses on whether they can be reliably co-opted. One particular cleric is described as being willing to send messages to Khomeini's agents.[103] The list of "Khoei Agents who are Spiteful and whose Loyalties are Doubted" includes sixteen clerics from Baghdad, Diyala, Basra, and Salahaldin who are frequently described as having ties to the Daʿwa Party, being "unclear" and not praying for the party and the leader during religious services.[104]

The government also conducted an investigation into whether Khoei was providing stipends to seminary students who avoided military service and withholding financial support to those who joined the military (Kadhim 2013). Having found no direct evidence to implicate him, they conclude by stating that "despite all this, his conduct comprises a clear position – unfriendly position at best" (Kadhim 2013: 23). Khoei's ability to pay his students stems from the popular support expressed in Khums which, in turn, allowed him to not succumb to the state's wishes.

This adversarial relationship is further exacerbated by the Hawza's formal and informal ties to Iran. As previously demonstrated, the Baʿathist state fixated on Khoei's identity as an Iranian and was, for a long time, intent on finding an Arab substitute that they could co-opt. In one report, they complained that "the language he [Khoei] uses to speak to his sons is Farsi" (Kadhim 2013: 18).

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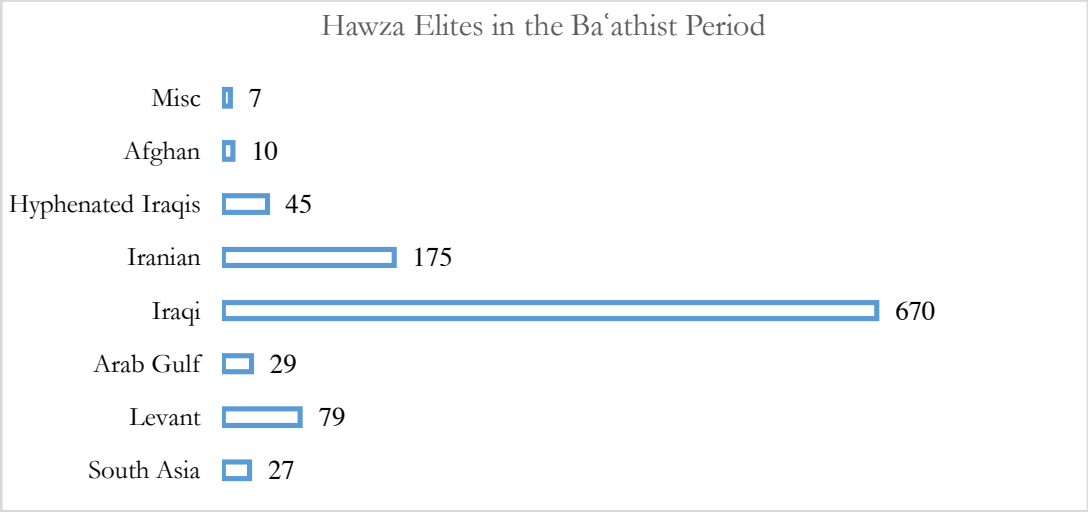
103 BRCC Doc No. 0064-7-4-023 [Titled: "*Qa'imat Wikalā' āl-Khoei āl -mutatafīn maʿa āl -thawra wāl--Hiẓb*" or "List of Khoei agents who are cooperative with the revolution and the party"] Hiẓb al-Ba'th al-'Arabī al-Ishtirākī records, Hoover Institution Archives.

104 BRCC Doc No. 023-4-7-0070 [Titled: "*Qa'imat Wikalā' āl-Khoei āl-haqidīn wāl -mashkūk bi wala'ihum*" or "List of Khoei agents who are spiteful and whose loyalties are doubted"] Hiẓb al-Ba'th al-'Arabī al-Ishtirākī records, Hoover Institution Archives.

Figure 17: Hawza Elites in the Baʿathist era



In government reports about the Hawza, they categorized the leading clerics in Iraq by their nationality, though their fixation was always on the chief marjaʿ.[105] So it is not only the large number of ties between the clerics and the local community that frustrated the state but also their transnational links to Iran. These fears were worsened by the success of the Iranian Revolution which, in Najaf and in other Shiʿa provinces,[106] was met with a sense of celebration ("it was festive…there was happiness, passing out of sweets, small chants."[107]) The centrality of the Iranian Revolution to Baʿathist fears was understood by clerics:

> The Iranian Revolution took root in Iraq so the Baʿathist regime tried to stop it through every means, to stop this expansion…. This repression that the regime used had different faces and types including arrests, executions, mass annihilation, and from it the Iran-Iraq war… one of its most important goals was the suppression of the popular resistance in Iraq so that it doesn't tilt to the side of Iran and so that there is blood between the Iranian and Iraqi people. This was the [Baʿathist] project.[108]

[105] BRCC Doc No. 023-4-7-0003. Hiẓb al-Ba'th al-'Arabī al-Ishtirākī records, Hoover Institution Archives.
[106] Phone Interview with provincial level Daʿwa Member. October 2018.
[107] Interview with Sheikh Abdel-Haleem al-Zuhairi. Baghdad, Iraq. January 2018
[108] Interview with Izz Al-Din al-Hakim. Najaf, Iraq. December 2019.

The state was also actively engaged in an attempt to reduce the number of religious schools in Najaf and Kerbala. Where it could not do so, it attempted to at least remove them from under the control of specific clerics and to introduce a state-approved curriculum for any schools that remained.[109] Thus, the Hawza was "under siege" as Kadhim describes in his titular study of the Baʿathist archives.

Hawza students from the late 1970s and early 1980s recall a great infiltration of "Baʿathist agents" in the institution, which led them to be more cautious in their interactions and to rely on informal networks.[110] The attempts of infiltrating the Hawza were endless but were largely unsuccessful, particularly those that were aimed at grooming a pro-Baʿath marjaʿ. This was unsurprising given the energy, dedication and familial ties required to become an elite cleric.

The sense of government antagonism towards the Hawza was palpable even prior to the uprisings. Sheikh al-Zuhairi who was both a student of al-Sadr and a member of the Daʿwa party recalls that in 1976:

> The government was afraid of the *hizbiyyīn* - and by *hizbiyyīn* I mean the Islamists – and they were worried that they would seize an opportunity of an Islamic, activist environment like the [Arbaʿeen] procession and there would be anti-government chants.[111]

Al-Zuhairi's claim is confirmed by Najafis who described the situation from 1970 to 1977 as one in which the state continuously attempted to clamp down on Shiʿa rites, viewing them as particularly conducive to mobilization. For example, in the lunar month of Muharram 1970,

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[109][BRCC Doc No. 023-4-7-0003 [Titled: "*Dirasa Muqadama li āl-hizb hawl āl-Shiʿa wa madarisahum wa ʿUlama'hum*"" or "Study presented about the Shiʿa and their schools and their scholars"]. Hiẓb al-Ba'th al-'Arabī al-Ishtirākī records, Hoover Institution Archives.

[110] Interview with Sheikh Nazih Muhi Al-Din. Najaf, Iraq. December 2018.

[111] Interview with Sheikh Abdel-Haleem al-Zuhairi. Baghdad, Iraq. January 2018.

which is a month of mourning for the Shiʿa, one Najafi resident recalls that the government banned certain mourning practices:

> They said [that] we were only allowed to radūdiyya, razakhūniyya and latum. No Mashaʿil – don't do that. The government also closed the doors of the shrine and organized where the 'aza' went and came from - this was unprecedented for us - we had freedom in our Hussaini rites.[112]

Another Najafi describes Baʿathist encroachment on Shiʿa rites as "gradual" and "clever" because they began instating rules that were "acceptable to some people in the community, like prohibiting women from entering the shrine."[113]

But it was not just the Islamists and Shiʿa religious rites that the government targeted, but clerics as well. One resident recalls that:

> "In this time, the Hawza weakened because of the heavy pressures on it…They [the Baʿathists] attacked the Hawza with the forced deportation of all students and clerics they accused of not having an Iraqi citizenship or legal residency."[114]

The al-Hakim family, a prominent clerical family whose patriarch was the chief marjaʿ up until his death in 1970, was particularly targeted. One member – Mahdi al-Hakim – was accused of being a foreign agent and later assassinated by Iraqi government agents during a trip to Sudan. Other prominent clerical families were also targeted and most clerics I interviewed named numerous family members who were arrested, executed, or forced into exile during this time period.[115]

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[112] Interview with Hussain Mohammad Jawad al-Hajjar. Najaf, Iraq. January 2018.
[113] Interview with 1977 Participant (5). Najaf, Iraq. January 2018.
[114] Interview with Hussain Mohammad Jawad Al-Hajjar. Najaf, Iraq. January 2018
[115] Interview with Abbas Kashif al-Ghita. Najaf, Iraq. December 2018. Interview with Mohammad al-Qubanchi. Najaf, Iraq. December 2018.

It is important to note, however, that while there was always an antagonistic relationship between the state and the Hawza, the state became less subtle about it over time and particularly *after* the Iranian Revolution. Thus, by 1977, the Najafis who protested had caught on that if they did not stand up to the regime, there was no going back.[116] In hindsight, some clerics express regret at letting the Iranian Revolution create this vicious cycle:

> We should have started a dialogue with the regime in order to convince them that we were not under the guardianship of the Islamic Republic. This dereliction of duty includes Sayed al-Sadr, we all made a mistake. Khomeini led Iran and we paid the tax.[117]

When the faith campaign[118] was rolled out in the 1990s and the regime became more open to allowing Arab clerics to join the Hawza, younger clerics found themselves at first being cautioned against joining the Hawza by family members who had lived through the late 1970s and early 1980s.[119] Baʿathist oppression has remained a central narrative among Shiʿa clerics who lived through this period, even as other Iraqis began to forget about it in the post-2003 era.[120]

3. The 1977 Safar Uprising

At the heart of this uprising were the Shiʿa holidays of Ashura and Arbaʿeen, which were used to commemorate the martyrdom of Imam Hussain, a historical figure in Shiʿism who is buried in the city of Kerbala. For a period of nearly two months, the Shiʿa traditionally engage in a series of religious rites that commemorate this occasion. These rites include walking processions from

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[116] Interviews with 1977 Participants (#5 & #6). Najaf, Iraq. January 2018.
[117] Interview with anonymized student and representative of al-Sadr. United States. September 2018.
[118] For an account of the Faith Campaign in Iraq, see: (Helfont 2018).
[119] Interviews with younger clerics including: Ali al-Taleqani. Kerbala, Iraq. December 2018; Zaid Bahraluloom, Najaf, Iraq. December 2018; and Ahmed Kashif al-Ghita. Najaf, Iraq. January 2019.
[120] For more on how the Baʿathist era is perceived by post-2003 Iraqi youth, see: (Alshamary 2018).

Najaf to the shrine of Imam Hussain in Kerbala. When the Baʿathists came to power in 1968, they engaged in a massive, though subtle, campaign to curtail Shiʿa religious rites. They banned activities where they could, attempted to co-opt elite clerics, like Khoei, into issuing fatwas prohibiting practices like self-flagellation[121] and exploited the education system to spread ideas about the backwardness of religious rites amongst youth.[122]

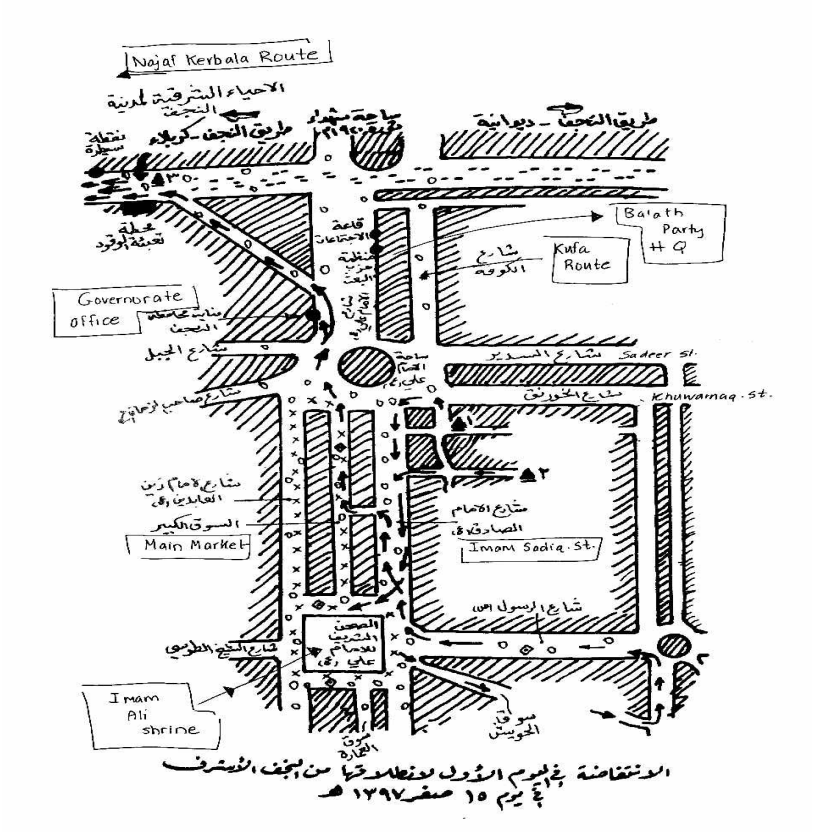
In 1977, the Baʿathists went a step further and banned the procession to Kerbala. They enforced the ban through an increase in security forces and outright threats against the leaders of the mawakib (the pilgrimage volunteer groups). Nevertheless, a group of youth attempted to lead a procession on the night of Ashura (Friday, December 31st 1976). Before the procession started, however, the regime arrested dozens of youth. Undeterred, they decided to try again later and posted flyers throughout the city encouraging people to participate in the upcoming procession.

The regime again sought to prevent the procession from occurring. Some of the Baʿathists in Najaf, including the governor (Jassim al-Rikabi) and the head of the local Baʿathist branch, invited some of the notables, mawakib leaders, and the caretakers of the shrine (known as the kilidar) to a meeting. The notables included members of prominent clerical families, heads of tribes, and community leaders. In this meeting, the governor warned the mawakib leaders against holding a procession to Kerbala that year. One of those present at this meeting recalls that at the time Iraq was experiencing a conflict with Syria. The governor warned that the Syrians might use the procession as an opportunity to harm Iraq by attacking them.[123] However,

[121] Interview with Yousif al-Khoei. London, UK. October 2017.
[122] Interview with 1977 participants (#5 & #6) Najaf, Iraq. January 2018. Interview with 1977 participant (#7). Kufa, Iraq. January 2018.
[123] Interview with 1977 participant (4). Baghdad, Iraq. January 2018.

the notables and mawakib leaders were not dissuaded from what they felt to be a religious obligation. Many of them were aware of the state's increasing encroachment into religious life and feared that such a concession would set a dangerous precedent of acquiescence to state demands.

Figure 18: Annotated Drawing of Central Najaf (āl-Mūsawi 1983)



The procession participants met on the morning of Safar 15th (a Friday) outside of the gates of the Imam Ali Shrine, facing the marketplace and carrying a large banner with the Qur'anic verse: "The Hand of Allah is over their hands."[124] They also carried smaller flags with

[124] The Holy Quran (48:10) Author's Translation of " يَدُ اللَّهِ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمْ".

another verse: "victory from Allah and an imminent conquest."[125] Shopkeepers also joined the procession and when they reached the governor's office they were, as one participant described, "a mass of humans."[126] The hand-drawn illustration above provides a representation of the early process of the procession.[127]

A critical turning point here is that at the governor's office, a man was hoisted by the crowd and started shouting: "Oh Jassim [the governor] tell Bakir [the president] that the memory of Hussain cannot be suppressed." Two sources identify this man as Sahib Dakhil who, according to Faleh Jabar was a "known leader and figure in the Al-Daʿwa party" (Jabar 2003: 142). Jabar, however, does not identify Dakhil as a protest participant. It is widely known that the Baʿathists suspected that the Daʿwa party was behind the uprising, although scholars, participants, and Daʿwa members alike insist that the party had nothing to do with it. Daʿwa members participated as individuals, but the party itself played no organizational role. Internal party documents suggest that membership doubled with new recruits but make no mention of organization (Khurasan 1999: 224). In reality, and as many participants and observers describe, the 1977 uprising was a spontaneous movement that was not intended to be a protest: "It wasn't an uprising in the sense of having political demands. People just wanted to practice their religious rites and the state wanted to destroy these rites. This was a struggle between the people and the state."[128]

[125] The Holy Quran (61:13) Author's Translation of "نصر من الله وفتح قريب**".**

[126] Interview with 1977 participant (6). Najaf, Iraq. January 2018.

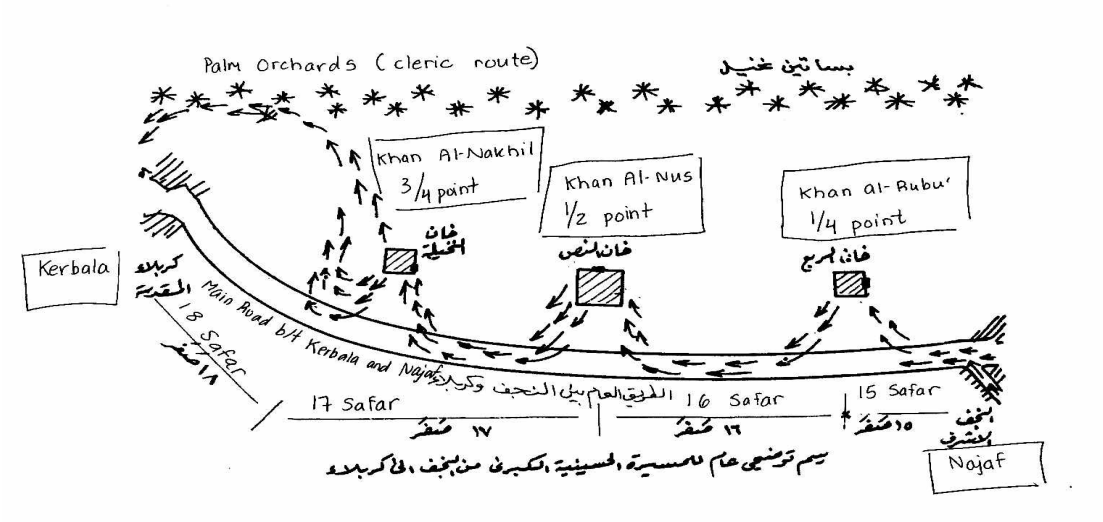
[127] This hand-drawn map as well as the one featured below were taken from the book: (āl-Mūsawi 1983). The author added English annotations.

[128] Interview with Izzaldin al-Hakim. Najaf, Iraq. December 2018

Following this, the procession flooded into the Wadi al-Salam cemetery, in the outskirts of Najaf, and towards Kerbala. The road between Kerbala and Najaf is around 75 kilometers long and is marked by stops at the one-fourth, one-half, and three-fourths points (known as Khan al-Rubuʿ, Khan al-Nus and Khan al-Nakhīl respectively). At the time, the road was "a frightening area" that was like a "vast desert with wild animals," which forced the mawakib and the protestors to stay together.[129] At Khan al-Rubuʿ, the protestors stopped to rest and were attacked by security forces, though they managed to fight back and push forward. When they reached Khan al-Nus, the uprising hit a tipping point. The protestors split into two groups and the security forces met with the group lagging behind. At this point the security forces accidentally shot and killed a teenaged boy, estimated to be around fourteen years old. The security forces "collapsed" in panic because "they didn't have the order to kill."[130] In response, the protestors attacked the police station where they freed the prisoners, removed the Iraqi flag and replaced it with a green flag, symbolic of Imam Hussain. It was at this point that Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim was sent to the protestors as a representative of the marjaʿiyya and of al-Sadr specifically.

[129] Interview with Mohammad Hussein al-Hakim. Najaf, Iraq. December 2018.
[130] Interview with 1977 participant (7). Kufa, Iraq. January 2018.

Figure 19: Drawing of Pilgrimage Route (āl-Mūsawi 1983)



There were two roads that pilgrims took in the annual procession from Najaf to Kerbala. The protestors walked on the main road and, parallel to it, through the date orchards and farms in the area was the "Tarīq al-may" ("the water way"), which is sometimes known as "Tarīq al-talaba" or "Tarīq al-Hawza" ("the way of the seminary students" or "the way of the Hawza") because it was usually non-elite clerics and seminary students who travelled to Kerbala via that road. The clerics preferred the second road because it allowed them to stop at various houses and towns to provide religious services to mark the holiday.[131] It was a more welcoming road because "it was an agricultural area and there are villages. There are houses everywhere. Whenever you're tired, you stop in a house or in a guest house."[132] News of what was happening on the main road reached the clerics unevenly: "when we arrived on the last day, we felt that the situation was nervous. Why? Because there was a movement of airplanes. There was a movement of security forces. The security forces were coming and going. We felt that the

[131] Interview with Sheikh Abdel-Haleem al-Zuhairi. Baghdad, Iraq. January 2018.
[132] Interview with Mohammad Hussein al-Hakim. Najaf, Iraq. December 2018.

situation was ominous. Then the news hit us that there were clashes in Khan al-Nus then in Khan al- Nakhīl."[133]

Thus, low-ranking clerics were aware of what was happening on the main road, but *did not* join the protests.[134] They communicated with the marjaʿiyya and with more elite clerics but the violent turn of the procession had taken both the state and the marjaʿiyya by surprise.[135] When they heard of the events in Najaf "there were mediation talks about this situation," which resulted in the state asking al-Sadr to get involved in "cooling it down."[136] Al-Sadr sent Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim as his emissary.

Al-Hakim came with a group of clerics, announced that he was sent by al-Sadr and conveyed a message on his behalf (Jabar 2003: 213): "He [al-Hakim] relayed the greetings of the Sayed [al-Sadr] and his blessings said his [own] greetings and blessings and said that this action that you are doing will bring you closer to Allah and it pleases Allah and his Prophet and may Allah bless you."[137]

His purpose was to lend a clerical seal of approval to the procession for its *religious* purposes. That approval, however, came at a price. He asked the participants to keep their intentions for the procession religious and to not get involved in political affairs. In response, one of the leaders of the protest said: "We are resolved [to go to Kerbala] and we have promised Imam Hussain" (Al-Hajjar 2013: 115). In retrospect, some participants believed that the state co-opted al-Sadr and al-Hakim, but others viewed al-Hakim's presence as providing support and

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[133] Ibid.
[134] Phone Interview with Sheikh Talib al-Sinjari. September 2018. Interview with anonymized Daʿwa cleric. Baghdad, Iraq. December 2018.
[135] Interview with 1977 participant (#5 & #6). Najaf, Iraq. January 2018.
[136] Interview with Mohammad Hussein al-Hakim. Najaf, Iraq. December 2018.
[137] Interview with 1977 participant (#7). Kufa, Iraq. January 2018.

legitimacy. Either way, it was a thankless job that had the al-Hakim family going into hiding in Najaf in order to avoid arrest. No interviews or secondary sources indicate that Khoei made any statement or acted in response to this event.

Al-Hakim was not the only cleric to have reached the protestors, but he was the only emissary sent by an elite. Other clerics, particularly seminary students who were on the parallel road, joined the protestors when the two roads converged near the end of the route before arrival to Kerbala. When asked why they had not joined earlier, these students explained that the more elite clerics did not tell them to and that they had responsibilities to provide religious services along the alternative route. When the protestors reached Khan al-Nakhīl (three fourths of the way to Kerbala), the protest became even more violent and government tanks and airplanes were dispatched to encircle and terrorize the protestors. At the same time, the protest became even more politicized and the slogans participants were shouting were clearly anti-government: "Saddam take your hands off [of us], neither our army nor our people want you."[138] Although Saddam Hussein was the vice president at the time, Iraqis – including the protestors - identified him as the de facto head of the government.[139]

It was then that they received a delegation from Kerbala composed of Kerbalaī notables as well as people who appeared to be caretakers of the shrines.[140] One of the participants recalls that his father, who had family in Kerbala and knew the Kerbalaī notables, could tell that some

[138] Interviews with various 1977 participants. Also see: (Jabar 2003; Khurasan 1999).
In Arabic: "يا صدام شيل ايدك الجيش والشعب ما يريدك"
[139] For contemporary scholarship on Ba'athist Iraq, relying on the archives, see: (Blaydes 2018; Faust 2015; Khoury 2013; Sassoon 2011). For scholarship produced in the 1990s and before, see: (Makiya 1993, 1998; Marr 1985).
[140] The caretakers of the shrine (known as sadana or kilidar) dress in a different manner than Hawza clerics and are easily identified.

of those dressed as caretakers and religious men were actually Baʿathist agents.[141] Moreover, he knew that the Kerbalaī notables who had come had been pressured by the regime.

Interestingly, no elite clerics from the Kerbala seminary were with them. Rather, the only clerics present were the kilidar (of the Imam Hussain and Imam Abbas shrines) who occupied a unique position in religious life as the hereditary caretakers of shrines (employed by the government) but not as clerical members of the Hawza. Thus, they present an interesting class of clerical actors who inhabit a different, much smaller religious system than the Hawza and one that has frequently been either allied with or co-opted by the state. Regardless, the delegation of notables and kilidar announced that they had come because they heard that the Najafis were invading Kerbala. The Najafis denied the rumor and reminded the delegation that this was not the first time that they had walked to Kerbala for the Arbaʿeen.

In the end, when the uprising reached Kerbala they were disappointed because the Kerbalaīs did not join them. Kerbalaīs were dissuaded from joining because the government preemptively filled the city with soldiers and because they felt that although the procession had rebellious undertones, it did not have a clear political goal. Indeed, once they reached Imam Hussain's shrine, the procession dispersed and the banner was hidden in a house in Kerbala. This sentiment was echoed by the seminary students who were on the adjacent road. The students were further dissuaded by the fact that Hawza elites had not been particularly supportive of the protest.

The government failed to stop the procession because many of the security forces in these areas were Shiʿi themselves and therefore sympathetic to the people who had gone on

[141] Interview with 1977 participant (7). Kufa, Iraq. January 2018.

pilgrimage. Nevertheless, nearly sixteen people were killed and two thousand arrested, including many clerics. Al-Hakim and al-Sadr were among those arrested, although they were later released. The leaders of the revolt were not clerics, they were mostly lay Najafi youth. Seminary students joined the uprising at the very end, having spent most of their time on the parallel road and elite clerics – with the exception of al-Sadr and his emissary, al-Hakim, were uninvolved. The seminary students who joined did not do so until the roads met up near Kerbala. When asked why they did not join earlier – despite receiving news of the protests throughout the time – they typically pointed to lack of permission from the marjaʿiyya.

In sum, the Chief Marjaʿ– Khoei – and the other grand ayatollahs remained uninvolved. The elite cleric who displayed the most involvement was al-Sadr. He sent an emissary – al-Hakim – to discourage people from participating in the anti-government protest. Lower level clerics, despite being on the adjacent road, remained uninvolved in the uprising. These clerics noted that there was no end goal for the protest and that they had been worried about the well-being of the community in a time of state repression.

4. The 1979 Rajab Uprising

In contrast to the Safar uprising, clerics were clearly involved in the Rajab Uprising of 1979. Moreover, the Hawza had not changed: it was still hierarchical, centralized, and minimally bureaucratized with Khoei as the chief marjaʿ and al-Sadr playing a prominent, secondary role. Although al-Sadr was the more junior cleric, he was immensely popular. When asked if he perceived a difference between al-Sadr and the rest of the Hawza, one member of the Daʿwa Party extolled al-Sadr's virtues, his charisma, and his approachability:

> Naturally, the difference between the sky and the earth…When we used to go to Najaf, no door was open except the door of Sayed Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr. There was no you could see with your eyes, face to face, you can talk to and discuss with and debate. Except for al-Sadr and some others… but if you went to the house of Khoei, you live in an uncomfortable environment. First of all, you don't talk to the sayed directly… you go in, you kiss his hand, and you leave. But Sayed al-Sadr would sit with you and ask 'where are you from? What are you studying? Which university? What are your courses?' he encourages you to talk to him, he is unbelievably modest.[142]

The value of comparing the 1977 and 1979 cases rests in the fact that the external conditions had shifted monumentally. The Iranian Revolution recalibrated the external conditions for the Hawza. First, it worsened the Hawza's relationship with an already adversarial Iraqi government. Second, it introduced an element of foreign intervention. Third, it represented an ideological revolution within Shiʿism. For these reasons, the 1979 protest represented the ideal conditions for clerical participation in protest. Despite this, Iraqi clerics did not all rally behind an Iraqi Islamic Revolution. The effect of the revolution was mostly on the Shiʿa Iraqi public, as one cleric describes:

> [The Iranian Revolution] had a huge impact on the whole Shiʿa world in moving the political side of the Shiʿa and in directing the religious dimension generally, we believe that after the revolution, the characteristics of the Shiʿa public in Iraq changed… people directed themselves towards religion, towards religious clerics, towards the Marjaʿiyya.[143]

I argue that although the Iranian Revolution created conditions conducive to clerical protest participation, these conditions were mediated by the structural constraints of the Hawza. Khomeini had lived in Najaf for thirteen years and had ties to some clerics there. However, even

[142] Interview with member of the Daʿwa Party. Baghdad, Iraq. November 2018.
[143] Interview with Mohammad Hussein al-Hakim. Najaf, Iraq. December 2018.

non-clerical observers could see that he was "not digested by Najaf" suggesting that he never fully integrated into the clerical community of Iraq.[144] His attempts to unite the Iraqi and Iranian fronts had been rebuffed by Grand Ayatollah Muhsin al-Hakim, the chief marjaʿ who preceded Khoei.[145] The disapproval of many elite clerics "limited Khomeini's ability to lead at the Hawza [of Najaf]" (Stewart 2001, 223).[146]

In that first week after the revolution, two marches in support of Khomeini and the Iranian revolution were organized from the Khadra mosque. The marches were organized by al-Sadr's seminary students and his emulators who were encouraged by their leader's congratulatory letter to Khomeini. The significance of the Khadra mosque was that Khoei led prayers there and his presence granted it some legitimacy (Jabar 2003, 228). Khoei's circle, however, distanced themselves from the mosque. The regime quickly found out about these plans and suppressed the march. A message that Khoemini sent to al-Sadr, urging him to remain in Iraq, only served to reinforce the regime's suspicions that al-Sadr was trying to challenge them. Al-Zuhairi explains the situation at the time:

> Sayyid Khomeini, when he sent a message to Sayyid al-Sadr, he said to him "I heard that you were being harassed [by the government] and I heard that you planned on leaving Iraq but I hope you remain so that you preserve the religious structure of Najaf." This letter was akin to Sayyid al-Khomeini telling him [al-Sadr] "you are the Khomeini of Iraq." This is how the government understood it. When the government understood this, the pressures built up on Sayyid al-Sadr. To alleviate this pressure on Sayyid al-Sadr – we [Hizb al-Daʿwa], in agreement with him, said we would bring him delegations to pledge loyalty to him so that we can send a message to the government that this is not only external support but Sayyid al-Sadr has internal support and he has reach.[147]

[144] Interview with Sami al-Askari. Baghdad, Iraq. November 2018. Also see (Jabar 2003) and (Stewart 2001).
[145] Interview with anonymous cleric. Kufa, Iraq. January 2019.
[146] For more information about Khomeini's time in Najaf, see: (Stewart 2001).
[147] Interview with Sheikh Abdel-Haleem al-Zuhairi. Baghdad, Iraq. January 2018.

Khomeini's purpose for the message was to protect al-Sadr by showing his support for him.[148] Al-Sadr himself was surprised by the letter because he had no intention of leaving Iraq at the time and he had no private ties of correspondence with Khomeini. The government, of course, interpreted the letter as Khomeini's interference in Iraq and made al-Sadr their target. Sheikh Talib al-Sinjari, who was later arrested with al-Sadr, described the relationship between Khomeini and al-Sadr as "the relationship of one marjaʿ to another marjaʿ, of one revolutionary to another revolutionary." [149]

The Mūbayaʿa Movement

According to Daʿwa sources, after receiving Khomeini's message, al-Sadr held a meeting with his agents and students to study the situation in Iraq. In this meeting, they decided to have representatives from all over Iraq come to al-Sadr to pledge their allegiance to him in what will later be known as the Mūbayaʿa (allegiance) movement.

Sadr was one of the founders of the Daʿwa Party but had removed himself a decade prior because the chief marjaʿ at the time, Grand Ayatollah Muhsin al-Hakim, had pressured junior clerics to abandon politics.[150] Despite his formal exit from the party, al-Sadr maintained strong ties with the group and continued to be their spiritual founding father. Moreover, cross-pollination between the Daʿwa and seminary students continued. Some of his students describe his exit as "superficial" and others stress that Muhsin al-Hakim was operating under fears of

[148] Interview with Sheikh Abdel-Haleem al-Zuhairi. Baghdad, Iraq. January 2018.
[149] Phone Interview with Sheikh Talib al-Sinjari. September 2018.
[150] Interview with Saleh al-Hakim. Kerbala, Iraq. January 2018. Saleh al-Hakim attended the meeting in which Grand Ayatollah Muhsin al-Hakim announced this.

Baʿathist reprisals.[151] In fact, Muhsin al-Hakim's behavior could very well be explained by the theory of institutional responsibility:

> It is known that he [Muhsin al-Hakim] was opposed to the Iraqi government, yet he intervened when the political activities of Daʿwa, with Baqir al-Sadr as its spiritual leader, placed the Shiʿi community in danger of governmental retaliation. His aim seems to have been to strengthen the Shiʿi community and prepare it for a leadership role in the country. (Walbridge 2001, 232).

Hizb al-Daʿwa's records and later retellings of this movement indicate that al-Sadr was responsible for launching the Mūbayaʿa movement (Jabar 2003; Khurasan 1999). Some students of al-Sadr corroborate this account. One of them goes as far as to say that al-Sadr would have proceeded with the movement regardless of the Daʿwa Party's support.[152] Other students insist that it was the party's idea and that they had appealed to al-Sadr because he was the only elite who would be willing to collaborate with them:

> What can he do, Sayid al-Sadr? What can he do when the people are like a flood in society? The scholar cannot abandon the people, he can fall from people's eyes [esteem] and he cannot lose respect, so Sayed al-Sadr was obligated to react to these events and to the masses so there were events of what is called – what – the Bayʿaa events, the wufood al-bayʿaa where people came in with the purpose of pledging allegiance to Sayed al-Sadr and urging him to stay and to lead the revolution and so on and so on.[153]

Although members of the Daʿwa Party and former students of al-Sadr describe the movement as momentous, others who were present at the time describe it differently:

[151] Phone Interview with Sheikh Talib al-Sinjari. September 2018.
[152] Interview with Daʿwa affiliated cleric. Baghdad, Iraq. November 2018.
[153] Interview with Interview with Sheikh Hussein Baraka al-Shami. Baghdad, Iraq. January 2018.

> We used to see that delegations were coming from the provinces but it wasn't huge numbers. It wasn't the kind of movement that would impact a country. Sometimes it was two cars. Yes, some of them were big like the delegation from Basra. I remember we were praying in the Holy Shrine and after prayer, delegations would come to visit Amir Al-Mu'mineen [the tomb of Ali Ibn Abi Talib in the Holy Shrine] and then they would head to the Sayed [al-Sadr]. But these were small simple delegations. The Basra delegation was big.[154]

Both the Daʿwa Party and al-Sadr's agents were involved in inciting people to participate in the movement, though al-Sadr shut it down nine days later. Al-Sadr's students say that he feared for the people, given that the regime was taking videos and recording names of participants. Students of al-Sadr who were in the Daʿwa party claim that dispersing the protests was an attempt to show the Baʿathist government that the marjaʿiyya could both start and end these mass movements with its decrees. Either way, "the Baʿathist regime went crazy"[155] and the Mūbayaʿa movement led to a series of arrests and executions, including al-Sadr's arrest on June 13th (the 17th of Rajab in the lunar calendar).

His arrest prompted mass protests throughout Iraq – from Baghdad; including Sadr City – then known as al-Thawra - and al-Kadhimiyyah, to al-Samawa, Basra, Kerbala, and Najaf. Al-Sadr himself had not left any instructions to instigate protest, despite some rumors to the contrary.[156] The idea came from his students who were worried that if they did not immediately start uprisings, their teacher would be executed. The attempts at orchestrating these protest

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154 Interview with Muhammad Hussein Al-Hakim. Najaf, Iraq. December 2018.

155 Interview with Daʿwa affiliated cleric. Najaf, Iraq. January 2019.

156 Interview with Sheikh Hussein Baraka al-Shami.. Baghdad, Iraq. January 2018. According to the Daʿwa Party Iraq branch source (Hajji Mahdi Abd al-Mahdi in Kharsan 1999; 281), al-Sadr left a letter with his secretary that spoke of his suspicions of his imminent arrest and instructed his followers to organize protests should that happen. However, in interviews, al-Sadr's students deny this.

movements were so badly planned in Najaf that two groups emerged: one at ten in the morning and one at two in the afternoon.[157]

Sadr's sister, Amina al-Sadr, went to the Imam Ali Shrine and delivered a speech encouraging protest. This encouraged al-Sadr's students and Daʿwa agents to meet and discuss a plan of action. The next morning, a protest started at the Imam Ali Shrine in Najaf when a cleric, Ali Akbar al-Haeri, recited a prayer and chanted: "Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar, victory from Allah, may al-Sadr live, live, live!" (Kharsan 1999, 284). Throughout Iraq, al-Sadr's agents and Daʿwa members carried this message and uprisings spread outside of Najaf. Al-Sadr's students – particularly those who had membership in Daʿwa – confirmed that *they intentionally instigated the protests:*

> We were surprised by the arrest of sayed al-Sadr. It was a surprise. We did not have the time for long-term planning however, rather, it was a reaction. The uprising was a reaction. The uprising, the demonstrations, and the opposition actions. There was no period called "planning" and a period called "implementing", it was a rapid reaction. We woke up and were told the sayed al-Sadr was arrested. What do we do? We had no choice.[158]

Al-Sadr was released, but the regime began to attack his clerical and al-Daʿwa networks. Al-Sadr was surprised that he was not executed especially given the line of questioning that he faced at the hands of the head of the security services in Baghdad. They were interested in his relationship with Khomeini, why he had sent an emissary to Iran, his fatwa against the Baʿath and the Mūbayaʿa movement. Their tone softened when they heard of the protests.[159]

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[157] Ibid.
[158] Interview with Hussein Baraka al-Shami. Baghdad, Iraq. January 2018.
[159] Ibid.

However, shortly after they released him, they began a campaign to cripple him by cutting off his support. They arrested thousands of members of the Daʿwa party and executed over two hundred. They also arrested and executed al-Sadr's agents. The Rajab uprisings prompted the regime to keep extensive lists of clerics and their positions vis-à-vis the state. His network crippled, al-Sadr was placed under house arrest and asked to make the following concessions: denounce Khomeini and his revolution, put out a statement in support of any one of the government's initiatives (e.g. nationalization of oil), agree to an interview with a foreign newspaper during which only religious affairs were discussed, and remove the ban on Baʿath membership and replace it with a ban on Daʿwa membership. Al-Sadr refused to make any concessions and was consumed with the idea of martyrdom.

The two statements that he wrote during this time period both attest to his increasing acceptance of the idea of martyrdom for the sake of change, though whether or not these documents were circulated among the Iraqi people continues to be contested. In a second statement (July 1979), he spoke of being prepared for martyrdom. In his previous statement he was more vociferous about the Baʿathists crimes against the Iraqi people. He noted that he knew this statement would cost him his life. He and his sister were both arrested on April 5th, 1980. They were executed on April 9th and returned the next day to Wadi al-Salam cemetery.

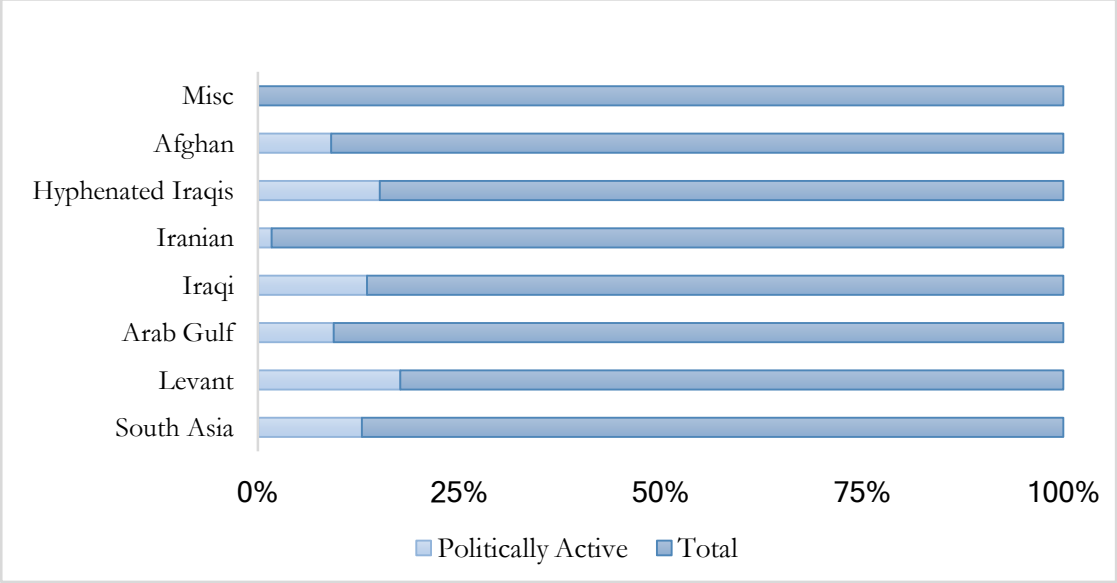
5. Comparative Analysis

Compared to the protests in 1977, the anti-government movement in 1979 is much more conducive to clerical participation. In 1979, the protests enjoyed transnational support, were rooted in an ideological innovation, had a clear political objective, and were orchestrated in a top-down fashion in collaboration with an opposition party. By contrast, the 1977 protests were

a grassroots phenomenon, lacked a political objective, and occurred without transnational or opposition support. Despite these differences in ideological and strategic factors, there remains an interesting constancy in clerical participation. At the most elite level, Khoei and the other grand ayatollahs remained uninvolved in both protest movements, and, even more interestingly, were not opportunists.

The lack of political involvement at the elite level during the Ba'athist era is also evidenced by the database created from biographical dictionaries. The figure below shows the breakdown of political activism by nationality amongst Hawza clerics born before 1950. It shows that amongst Iraqis and hyphenated Iraqis, politically active clerics – very broadly defined – constituted less than a quarter of total Hawza elites and is not very different from the colonial era.

Figure 20: Proportion of Politically Active Hawza Elites in the Baʿathist Period



Al-Sadr sent an emissary as a mediator in 1977 and was co-opted into the allegiance movement that led to the protests in 1979. However, he quickly shut down the allegiance movement. What explains Khoei's persistent non-involvement? And, what explains the hesitance of al-Sadr, a known revolutionary thinker?

These cases demonstrate that despite monumental shifts in external conditions, clerical behavior remained constrained by structural factors. For example, despite al-Sadr's ideological leanings and despite being approached by the opposition and having Daʿwa contacts and immense popular support, al-Sadr did not seize the opportunity to stage an uprising in 1977. Rather, he intervened by sending a mediator when the protests turned violent. Furthermore, the mediator, al-Hakim, did not stay with the protestors but departed to Najaf after conveying his message.[160] Similarly, his other students – who were fourth, fifth, and sixth tier clerics – remained on the path adjacent to the protests and did not join, despite being in contact with the protestors. Some of these students – like Sheikh al-Zuhairi and Sheikh al-Sinjari – were politically active and members of the Daʿwa Party. Despite this, they described their decision to not join the protestors as stemming from not having received any senior clerical direction to do so, indicating that the nature of authority within the Hawza shaped the behaviors of non-elites. In addition, the lack of bureaucratization also meant that many of these clerics were not from Najaf and did not feel strong ties of kinship to the protestors, who were from the old families of Najaf.

Later in 1979, these very same students were able to incite protests *not only* in Najaf but also in some of their hometowns in the south. Al-Sadr's arrest meant that their leader was absent

[160] Interview with Muhammad Hussein al-Hakim. Najaf, Iraq. December 2018.

and that a vacuum of authority had opened up. By contrast, students of other clerics and those who had no affiliation with the Daʿwa party were more cautious in imitating the behavior of Khoei and the other grand ayatollahs: "only the line of Sayed al-Sadr took on this issue. We didn't get involved at the time"[161].

The 1979 Uprising was colored by the Iranian Revolution, which recalibrated the external and ideological conditions for protest. Although al-Sadr shared some of Khomeini's views, he did not push for the allegiance movement or the subsequent protests until Khomeini and others put him in a position where he had no choice but to collaborate with the Daʿwa party. The structure of the Hawza – his ability to mobilize resources and followers – aided him and outweighed his responsibilities. Having been singled out as the "Khomeini of Iraq," he knew that no degree of non-participation would save him or his students from state reprisals. His students, most of whom fled the country after 1980, recall that he was resigned to his position and urged his students "to invest in [his] blood" if and when he was arrested.

Khoei, on the other hand, believed that if his network was destroyed, the Hawza as an institution would not live on. Having received the unprecedented title of "zaʿeem" (leader), Khoei possessed the largest patronage network and was responsible for protecting the Hawza as a scholarly institution. Although Khoei's position is frequently described as "quietist," many of his students disagree and argue that his ability to join the opposition was curtailed by several factors: his own beliefs about the role of clerics in politics, the government pressures he endured as the leader of the Hawza and as an Iranian, and his own fears about the security of the Hawza. As al-Sadr, his likely successor, became more visible to the state, his own responsibility to

[161] Interview with former student of Khoei and Muhammad Saʿeed al-Hakim. Najaf, Iraq. December 2018.

protect the institution only grew. If both he and al-Sadr were visibly anti-government, then the Najafi Hawza could very easily be destroyed and left with no leadership. This was apparent even to Khomeini who urged al-Sadr to stay in Iraq to preserve the "scholarly entity" of the Hawza.

As some clerics and students of his emphasize, Khoei, and his successor Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, could be described as activists within their realm of constraints:

> Now, many say why doesn't Sistani[162] become like Khomeini? Why should he? Iraq isn't Iran. Every mujtahid and marjaʿ *sees his position and his responsibilities as different*, Sistani sees himself as speaking and giving advice… People who divide in this way [quietist/activist] do not understand history. Sayed Sistani is the student of Sayed Khoei. They characterize Khoei as the silent Hawza[163]…this division [quietest/activist] is not a correct division.[164]

Khoei would not sanction government intervention in religious life and particularly not in the Hawza. His refusal to allow government intervention in religious life also explains his cool stance towards Khomeini. In a famous letter, Khoei addressed Khomeini as "Hujjat al-Islam" (an honorific reserved for low ranking student) rather than "Imam" or "Grand Ayatollah" as al-Sadr addressed him (Jabar 2003:228). Moreover, the Baʿathist archives document Saddam Hussein referring to Khoei's position as being "unfriendly at best" (Kadhim 2013: 23). Khoei was not a quietist, but he was unwilling to risk the Hawza: "Khoei lived in the time of Saddam and the Baʿath party… What did Saddam want from him? He wanted from him a word in support of Iraq over Iran. A word to support the war against Kuwait. The Sayed didn't give him

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[162] Grand Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani, the successor of Grand Ayatollah Khoei, is the current chief marjaʿ of Iraq and features prominently in the next chapter on the post-2003 era.

[163] The characterization of the "silent" Hawza is also in reference to the accusations that Grand Ayatollah Muhammad Sadeq al-Sadr lobbied against the Najaf elite in the 1990s as being silent in the face of oppression. This differs from the scholarly notion of "quietism" taken on by researchers and observers of the religious establishment. Regardless, both notions stem from a belief in the intentional and persistent non-involvement of Iraqi Shiʿa clerics in politics.

[164] Interview with Mohammad Ali Bahr al-Uloom. Najaf, Iraq. December 2017.

that. Would that be called silence? Movement and talking in every time period has to be suited to the time."[165]

That Khoei was motivated by a desire to preserve the Hawza was something that even his harshest clerical critics admitted to: "Sayed Khoei was a traditional, classical and not reactive to political events and he saw that the Hawza should not be immersed in political events in order to preserve its scholarly entity and its historical reality."[166] Even his later intervention in 1991 – during which he issued to fatwas to preserve the peace – was described as: "Clerics were forced to enter the uprising because the state had fallen… [they intervened to] maintain order in the street and they did not have the intention of ruling."[167] This stemmed, one elite cleric explained to me, from "one of Khoei's Fiqh opinions [which] was 'maintaining order is one of the duties of a Muslim'."[168] This is exactly the description of the duties of a cleric that many contemporary Hawza elites have cited to me, a commitment to "overseeing the affairs of the community and ensuring its stability."[169]

Doubtlessly, the repression of the authoritarian state plays a huge role in how responsibility motivates individual clerical behavior. The well-being of the Hawza is threatened by political instability, but it is also threatened by other factors including state reprisals. What this overall dissertation shows is that elite clerics, with a high sense of institutional responsibility, will neither instigate nor behave opportunistically because their highest priority is protecting the religious establishment. Therefore, their individual decision to remain un-involved can have

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[165] Ibid.
[166] Interview with anonymous Da'wa cleric and former representative of al-Sadr. Baghdad, Iraq. January 2018.
[167] Interview with Nazih Muhi al-Din. Najaf, Iraq. December 2018.
[168] Ibid.
[169] Interview with Bahth al-Kharij student from a clerical family. Kufa, Iraq. January 2019. These words word repeated, almost word-by-word, by various other clerics of various rankings.

many motivating factors, but are all directed at maintaining the religious establishment's survival, whether that survival is threatened by state reprisals or by political instability overall. One of the major contributions of this dissertation is that it demonstrates how political instability is a genuine fear – even if it promises more pro-clerical governance – and that clerics will sacrifice personal self-interest (such as the approval of their constituents) to avoid chaos.

6. Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated that the internal structure of the Hawza remained essential in determining clerical behavior despite rapidly changing political and ideological contexts. Elites in the Hawza were constrained from participation by their institutional responsibilities: the need to preserve the "scholarly entity" of the Hawza. In other words: "all we [the clerics] wanted to do was to protect the house of the Hawza and the marjaʿiyya and Khoei, no more."[170]

Moreover, the minimally bureaucratized nature of the Hawza meant that authority and responsibility were personalistic and did not stem from a rational-legal order. When there were vacuums of authority, lower-level clerics capitalized on the legitimacy of the religious institution to incite protest without having to worry about the responsibility of the Hawza's survival.

Specifically, even in conditions conducive to protest (1979), the institutional responsibilities of the Chief Marjaʿ, Khoei, outweighed his logistical and material advantages. They also outweighed the pressures of the antagonistic state, the Iranian Revolution and the increasing prevalence of political ideology in Shiʿa institutions. The second most elite cleric, al-Sadr, faced similar institutional responsibilities that – under pressure – resulted in his co-

[170] Ibid.

optation and collaboration with the Daʿwa party in 1979. Lower ranking clerics, like third tier mujtahids, responded to their clerical superiors. Thus, al-Hakim served as a mediator in 1977. Similarly, seminary students who possessed ideological inclinations for political activism were prevented from participating in 1977 because of the precedents set by their elites in the hierarchy. In 1979, al-Sadr's students who had ties to the Daʿwa party were the only ones who could incite protest because of their leader's absence. These clerics were able to use the party's relationship with al-Sadr to increase their own influence without the associated responsibility of allegiance to the Hawza.

This chapter has also contributed to the larger discussion on Shiʿa quietism by showing that although Khoei was not as politically active as al-Sadr, he was by no means entirely apolitical. Other chapters in the book project that focus on clerical policies during Ottoman and British colonialism have also challenged this myth of Shiʿa quietism. At the same time, this chapter demonstrates that revolutionary ideological changes had surprisingly little impact on clerical behavior overall.

Chapter Seven

Protests and Politics in the Contemporary Era

1 Introduction

In previous chapters, I have proposed a theory of institutional responsibility which argues that high-ranking clerics in the Iraqi Hawza have a sense of responsibility for the maintenance of the religious establishment. And, although their high rank frequently imbues them with extraordinary mobilization capacity, this sense of responsibility precludes them from participating or supporting any activity that may destabilize the status quo, including anti-government protests.

These countervailing forces of authority and responsibility stem from the structure of the religious establishment itself. Historically, the structure has been extremely hierarchical and minimally bureaucratized, as I have demonstrated in chapters five and six. In this chapter, I describe how the structure has changed in post-Baʿathist Iraq and demonstrate how these subtle changes will have an impact on clerical behavior today and in the future.

I rely on various forms of clerical output – including interviews conducted in Najaf and Kerbala between 2015 and 2019 and content analysis of Friday sermons – to advance two arguments about the role of the contemporary religious establishment in politics and protest.

First, the purpose of this chapter is to examine clerical behavior in a time period in which the Hawza is enjoying a historically unprecedented degree of freedom and good relations with the Iraqi state. My research shows that although the relationship with the current government is a relatively positive one, it continues to be colored by the ghosts of the authoritarian past. However, there is a reason to believe that this impact will wear off. The Hawza's leadership is

comprised of a population that is significantly older than the Iraqi population.[171] Over time, the impact of the Ba'ath era will wear off as new generations, who have lived under the faith campaign of Saddam Hussein rather than the deportations of the 1980s, rise to positions of leadership.

Secondly, the opening up of the political space has impacted the internal structure of the religious establishment. Critically, it has made it tangibly more bureaucratized. This bureaucratization, however, is tempered by the fear of turning into a state-controlled entity, like the Hawza of Qom or Al-Azhar University in Egypt. A more bureaucratized institution will disperse the sense of responsibility throughout the ranks of the religious establishment, rather than centralize them at the top. In the long-run, this should result in a dilution of responsibility at the top and a lower degree of protest involvement for lower-ranking clerics. At the same time, it suggests that the personalistic nature of the Hawza may also wear off and may recalibrate the calculations of elites in the future towards a lower sense of personal responsibility for the institution.

To make these arguments, this chapter proceeds as follows: first, I discuss the data and research design. Then, I describe the general relationship between the religious establishment and the state during the transition from the Baʿathist to the post-Baʿathist era. I describe this relationship from the perspective of clerics, politicians, and everyday citizens. I demonstrate that there is an incongruity between each of their perceptions of this relationship and that this incongruity has political repercussions. I then proceed to describe the structure of the contemporary Hawza and how it has changed over time. I describe the spaces of learning and

[171] According to the UN, Iraq is one of the most youthful nations in the world. See: http://www.uniraq.com/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=941:country-profile&lang=en

the disinclination of clerics to formalize and institutionalize the system. Then, I describe key instances of protest that occurred in post-Baʿathist Iraq, focusing on the 2018 Summer Protests and the 2019-2020 October Revolution. I provide a birds-eye view of the reaction of three sets of clerics: the Marjaʿiyya, the Ayatollahs who will inherit the Hawza, and the advanced students who are considered to be its future.

2 Methodology

The overall structure of the dissertation is designed to compare clerical behavior in protest across time, while controlling for other factors like ideological predisposition and political climate. In order to do so, I examine behaviors of different elite clerics across a set of widely different and important time periods: colonialism (chapter five), authoritarianism (chapter six), and democratization (this chapter).[172] In addition to this study across time, I examine clerical behavior within-case. In other words, sets of individual clerics operating in the same historical era across multiple cases of protest movements.

[172] The term "democratization" in its use is not intended to connote that post-2003 Iraq is a consolidated democracy. Rather, it is meant to suggest that it was a transitional period in which there was a multiplicity of political parties, elections accompanied by campaigning, and a degree of freedom of press and association. The degree to which the attributes of democracy were exhibited changed significantly over time and with different figures occupying the premiership, as explained by a Freedom House report: "Iraq holds regular, competitive elections, and the country's various partisan, religious, and ethnic groups enjoy some representation in the political system. However, democratic governance is impeded in practice by corruption and security threats." (Iraq n.d.). For an examination of what democracy and governance mean in post-2003 Iraq see: (Hadad 2016). For a visual representation of the differences between governance under Saddam Hussein and post-2003 governance, see: https://www.systemicpeace.org/polity/irq2.htm.

For this particular time period – the post-Baʿathist era (2003 - present) – I provide an overview of the general trends in clerical reaction to protest in the 2017 to 2020 time period, focusing on the Summer 2018 Basra protests and the 2019-2020 October Revolution.[173]

I focus on these particular movements because they satisfy the selection criteria employed with previous cases: first, that they are anti-government and secondly, that they strongly feature the Shiʿa population, the natural audience of the Hawza.[174] In section 5, I present an overview of the reaction of clerics to the 2018 Summer Protests and the 2019 October Revolution. To do so, I rely on several sets of primary data and secondary materials:

2.1 Interview Analysis

First, a series of interviews I conducted with current Iraqi clerics. Through these interviews, I examine general views towards the relationship with politics and with the state. I also examine more detailed responses about their attitudes towards the 2018 protests in Basra.

The interviews include clerics ranking from the position of Marjaʿ tāqlīd to students of muqadīmāt. These interviews primarily took place in Najaf and secondarily in Kerbala and Baghdad. They range from figures who define themselves as entirely uninvolved in politics – like Jawad al-Khoei (grandson of Grand Ayatollah Khoei) – to those who are heavily involved in politics, like Ammar al-Hakim (grandson of Grand Ayatollah Muhsin al-Hakim). In section 3.3, I

[173] While the term "revolution" as applied to the Oct 2019-March 2020 protest is contested by scholars, I intentionally choose to use the term in honor of the wishes of the Iraqi protestors who continue to call their movement the October Revolution.

[174] That is not to say that the Hawza is not reactive to non-Shiʿa protests. However, in order to not introduce more confounding variables – I examine Shiʿa clerics reaction to protests from within their community of adherents. Otherwise, factors like "authority" to move and mobilize are conceptualized differently with other communities.

present a framework through which to understand the political views of Iraqi clerics in post-2003 Iraq.

I account for the most elite clerics of the religious establishment (Grand Ayatollahs Sistani, Hakim, Fayadh, and Najafi)[175] through a large body of publically available materials including religious edicts, press releases, texts, statements, and sermons of representatives.[176] In addition, and particularly in the case of Sistani and al-Hakim, I speak to some of their students and representatives.

The interview guide consists of fourteen questions covering a wide-array of topics: personal experience in the Hawza, views towards domestic politics, views towards foreign affairs, and questions concerning political participation broadly defined. The full interview guide is available in the appendix. In addition, the questions used to inform the findings of this chapter are presented in detail as they arise in the discussion. There were minor alterations to the interview guide based on each cleric's rank and position. The interviews were semi-structured in the sense that they oftentimes included follow-up and clarification questions that developed into conversations. The identities of most participants have been withheld although prominent clerics – with their consent – have been named. The interviews for this chapter were primarily conducted during two fieldwork trips: November 2018 – January 2019 and June 2019.[177]

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[175] My analysis predominantly focuses on the Sistani and Hakim schools, rather than Fayadh and Najafi for several reasons including that the former are considered "Iraqi" while the latter are considered as primarily responsive to their non-Iraqi followers. For an overview of their roles in Iraq, see (Sayej 2018). This is not to suggest that they are less credentialed or important, but that their audience of adherents is not the Iraqi protestors.

[176] I decided not to even attempt interviewing extremely high-ranking clerics like Sistani and Hakim because their points of view are well-documented by waves of scholars and journalists. Moreover, I have spoken to some of their representatives and students.

[177] Several follow-up phone conversations, concerning the events of October 2019, took place in Fall 2019. These were not formal interviews and are not cited in the paper. However, they do inform the analysis particularly in the section on the 2019 October Revolution.

2.2 Friday Sermon Analysis

As a compliment to the interviews, whose questions are designed to measure the key variables in this dissertation, I also analyze both qualitatively and statistically, several sets of Friday sermons.

First, I use text-analysis methods to examine the Friday sermon rhetoric of Sistani's representatives in Kerbala, Sheikh Abdel Mahdi al-Kerbalai and Sayyid Ahmed al-Safi, during protest times and during non-protest times. In order to do so, I've scraped the website of the Imam Hussain Holy Shrine (www.imamhussain.org), where these Friday sermons are delivered. The types of text I've collected are mainly news reports and the transcripts of Friday sermons. In this chapter, I present analysis of the *second* Friday sermons. The second sermon of Friday prayers is traditionally – though not necessarily doctrinally - one that deals with social and political affairs.[178]

Most recently, for example, it was used to discuss the COVID-19 outbreak and the proper social protocol for mitigating its spread.[179] During the second sermon, the pulpit has also been used to discuss Iraqi sovereignty[180], elections[181], and corruption[182]. It represents a space in which elite clerics can respond to ongoing social and political events if they so choose. Thus, if

[178] In a compilation of religious edicts, Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah, a prominent Lebanese cleric, describes the second sermon as needing to include: "A call for justice, beneficence, unity, and reform between people and to touch upon general and critical social issues concerning political and economic affairs… because Friday prayer represents a worshipful, social, political prayer in Islamic thought and law." Translated by the author. In consultation with Fiqh experts, it appears that there is no mentioning of "political speech" or "religious speech" as a point of differentiation in primary sources. This practice has entered later.
[179] See Sheikh Abdul Mahdi al-Kerbalai's sermon transcript available at: https://www.imamhussain.org/fridaysermon/28302. The sermon is dated 2/28/2020.
[180] See Sheikh Abdul Mahdi al-Kerbalai's Friday sermon transcript here: https://www.imamhussain.org/news/27744. Dated January 3rd, 2020.
[181] See Sayyid Ahmed al-Safi's Friday sermon transcript here https://www.imamhussain.org/fridaysermon/5906. Dated February 25, 2014.
[182] See Sayyid Ahmed Al-Safi's Friday sermon https://www.imamhussain.org/fridaysermon/5981. Dated September 4, 2015.

they choose not to acknowledge a protest movement or to not comment on an important social phenomenon, it is not for lack of a space or opportunity to do so.

I collected second Friday sermons from 2017 to March 2020 and used them to compare the rhetoric on Fridays following a week during which large protests occur. I consider a protest to be "large" when it is at least in the hundreds. This event data is limited to the southern provinces[183] and includes: Basra, Maysan, Dhi Qar, and Muthanna.[184] They are considered to be the Shi'a heartland and reflect the general grievances of the Shi'a of Iraq.

I demonstrate through qualitative and quantitative analysis of rhetoric - both public-oriented and subtly conveyed through interviews – the institutional structure of Najaf and why it is important in shaping attitudes and behaviors towards politics and protest.

2.3 Additional Data Sources and Analysis

As mentioned in previous chapters, I also rely on observation of the seminary system and classes within it. I hesitate to label this "participant observation" simply because unobtrusive participation and observation is nearly impossible for women in men's religious spaces. The least obtrusive form of observation of the Hawza was my visit to a women's seminary in Najaf. Nevertheless, I have kept extensive notes of my experiences in different religious sites, including the various seminaries where I conducted interviews.

To represent Iraqi public opinion, I rely on survey data from the Arab Barometer. Specifically, I compare answers from waves three and five, which were conducted in 2013 and

[183] This analysis excludes Baghdad as well as the holy cities of Najaf and Kerbala, home to the religious establishment.
[184] The data was collected and generously shared by Benedict Robin, a version of it is available on his website: https://www.iraqafteroccupation.com/

2018 respectively. These two waves utilize fairly similar survey instruments, particularly on issues of religiosity and governance, which are central to this research. Wave five expands the number of Iraqi governorates surveyed, but both waves cover critical Shiʿa-majority nodes, such as Basra, Babylon, and al-Diywaniya governorates.

In the initial conceptualization of this chapter – it was intended to compare the 2011 Arab Spring protests to the 2018 anti-establishment protests. However, as protest events in Iraq unfolded and the religious establishment responded to them through its Friday sermons, I decided that it was an opportunity for a live testing of the theory of institutional responsibility. Luckily, I had finished interviewing clerics about hypothetical protest situations only a few months before the start of the October Revolution and, in some instances, I could examine their pre-protest response to their post-protest behavior.

3 The Hawza in the Post-Baʿathist era

Much of the literature on clerical participation in opposition and protest focuses on the relationship between the religious establishment and the state. This line of scholarship argues that a strong and positive relationship with the state precludes the religious establishment from participation in protest, while an adversarial relationship with the state encourages participation (Gill 2001). While this argument is intuitive and operative in certain contexts, it fails to explain the behavior of Iraqi Shiʿa Clerics in post-2003 Iraq.

On one hand, an adversarial relationship with the state has not produced a large set of dissident clerics in the Baʿathist and colonial eras, particularly not at the elite level. And, on the other hand, the behavior of elite clerics in the post-Baʿathist era is not markedly different from

their behavior in the colonial and Baʿathist eras. These time periods, particularly in terms of state-religious establishment relations, are markedly different.

In this section, I will make four claims. First, I will demonstrate how clerics in post-2003 Iraq are operating in an era of unprecedented freedom. Secondly, I will show how despite this freedom, their view of politics continues to be colored by the ghosts of the authoritarian past. Thirdly, Iraqi political elites – even Shiʿa Islamist ones – perceive the religious establishment as having undue influence on the state. Numerous Iraqi politicians referred to the "veto power" of the Najafi Marjaʿiyya.[185] Finally, I will show that the Iraqi public's views of the religious establishment and the role of religion in politics has altered over time. Although they had once supported Islamist parties, they have now shifted towards the secularization of the state.

3.1 The Legacy of Baʿathism

The degree of freedom for Hawza and non-Hawza clerics was not a constant in the Baʿathist era. While the late 1970s and 1980s was a period of marked repression of religious elites, the 1990s was the period of the "faith campaign" which was launched by Saddam Hussein in 1993. The stated goal of the faith campaign was to spread Islam. In other words, to instrumentalize and organize religion through the state, which impacted Shiʿa clerics as well as Sunni ones.[186]

The Baʿathists sought to co-opt the Hawza rather than destroy it entirely. At the time, younger seminarians – who had previously feared re-entering the religious establishment – saw that the faith campaign allowed an opportunity for them to re-enter. In an interview with a

[185] Many Iraqi politicians refer to the "Najaf Veto" including in televised interviews with Bahaa al-Araji after the 2018 elections and most recently, with former prime minister-designate Muhammad Tawfiq Allawi after his failure to form a government in 2020.
[186] See (Helfont 2018) for the most thorough account of Ba'ath-religion relations in Iraq.

young cleric in Najaf, he explained that prior to the faith campaign even prominent clerical families, like his own, were hesitant about letting their sons pursue a clerical career in the Hawza. The faith campaign, he said, encouraged particularly those who had recently completed their secondary school education to join the Hawza. There is an entire generation of clerics in their thirties and forties, from clerical families and from lay families, who reflected on the "opening up of space" for religious studies.[187] This view was shared by female seminary students as well, who prior to the Hakim and Khoei offices opening up women's seminaries, were confined to the study spaces in the homes of their clerical fathers.[188] For those not from clerical families, which included some of the women I spoke with, there was simply no opportunity to join the religious establishment.[189]

Prior to this, and particularly in the 1980s and up to the early 1990s, potential seminary students were dissuaded by the "unknown-ness of Najaf. There was a desire [to join the Hawza] but we were afraid. We didn't know what to do."[190] The cleric in this interview recalls that when he finally gathered the courage to go to Najaf – despite his family's concerns – he was in his mid-twenties and had dreamt about joining the Hawza since he was a seventeen year-old high school student. When he reached Najaf, the head of the religious establishment at the time – Grand Ayatollah Sabzawari (Khoei's predecessor)– told him "go finish your military requirement and then come."[191] The aspiring young cleric went back to his home in Suq al-Shuyookh, in Nasriya Governorate, and immediately signed up for military service. After he finished his

[187] Author Interviews with younger clerics including: Ali al-Taleqani (Kerbala, December 2018), Zaid Bahraluloom (Najaf, December 2018), Ahmed Kashif al-Ghita (Najaf, January 2019), bāhth khārij student from non-clerical family in Southern Iraq. Kufa, Iraq. January 2018 and sutooh student from clerical family. Najaf, Iraq. December 2018.
[188] Author's interview with three bāhth khārij female students. Najaf, Iraq. June 2019.
[189] Ibid.
[190] Author Interview with bāhth khārij student from Nasriya. Najaf, Iraq. January 2019.
[191] Ibid.

military service, he then was able to join the Hawza. His experience is completely different from the generation younger than him and complicated by the fact that he was not a Najafi or from a clerical family.

This marks both a departure in how the Baʿathists viewed religion and the religious establishment. The fact that they hoped to groom an Arab marjaʿ is a reflection of that shift in strategy. In his study of the Baʿathist archives, Samuel Helfont notes that state's policy towards clerics (Shiʿa and non-Shiʿa alike) changed by the 1990s:

> Whereas previously the regime was distrustful and therefore cautious when employing the religious landscape to achieve political goals, by the 1990s, the regime felt much more comfortable with its level of control over Iraqi religious leaders and therefore it was much less restrained in instrumentalizing religion in its public policies. (Helfont 2018, Ch.9, 2).

Revisionist scholars of religion in Iraq, like Helfont, are distinguishing between the relationship between religion and the state in the 1970s-1980s and the 1990s. They point out that it is the state's actions – and the state's decision to co-opt clerics – that opens up space for clerics. However, some seminarians who joined the Hawza in the early 1990s discuss another source of motivation: the experience of the 1991 uprising. In describing his decision to join the Hawza in the 1990s, one bāhth khārij student told me:

> I used to study in the college of [redacted], in the department of [redacted]. I saw that my studies in this department would lead me, in the future, to become a teacher. In public schools, you would have to praise the tyrant. I saw that the best path to take is to go to the Hawza in Najaf to serve the faith so that my circle becomes wider. The Hawza at that time, under Sayyid Khoei, was not very big but after the Shabaniya [1991] uprising, it began to grow anew. We became cadres for the Hawza.[192]

[192] Interview with bāhth khārij student from a non-clerical family in Baghdad. Najaf, Iraq. January 2019.

The Baʿathist era was not uniformly repressive of clerics and this had an impact on clerics in the post-Baʿathist era. Iraqi Shiʿa clerics in post-Baʿathist Iraq can be divided into the categories of those who stayed behind and those who were exiled and returned. Furthermore, their age groups are also different. Patel (2018) argues that "cohort effects" shape the demands of the Iraqi population: for different generations there were different defining political periods. For the Iraqi population, Patel identifies different points of salience: the Iran-Iraq War, the sanctions (for those who remained), and the 1991 Uprising (for the exiles). Clerics display similar cohort effects. Those who were young in the late 1970s and 1980s – students of prominent clerics like Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, Muhsin al-Hakim, and Abu Qassim al-Khoei – are defined by the extreme brutality of the Baʿathist era. In interviews, clerics of this generation insisted that "We should be grateful for Iraq now. It is so much better than before. Better than Saddam's era…. The Baʿathists were criminals."[193]

Indeed, most clerics view the current state of affairs as a positive development towards democratization, noting that Iraq still suffers from major issues like corruption. On one extreme, some clerics like Mohammad Taqi al-Modaressi, railed against the description of Iraq as non-democratic:

> Whose dictatorship? [Prime Minister Nuri al-] Maliki is a dictator? [Prime Minister] Hayder al-Abadi is a dictator? Who is the dictator in Iraq I want to understand? People are building, people are writing, there are magazines, what is the meaning of democracy other than this? There is no democracy in Iraq - there is something worse - there is chaos. Not democracy, more than democracy, we have a state of freedom that is close to chaos.[194]

[193] Interview with Mohammad al-Qubanchi. Najaf, Iraq. December 2018.
[194] Interview with Mohammad Taqi al-Modaressi. Kerbala, Iraq. December 2017.

On the other extreme, a small minority suggested that "The Hawza and the clerics are living with this current government in the same way they were living under Saddam but with a little bit more freedom of speech."[195] Granted, the cleric who said this was also one who explained how he had strategically managed his relationship with lower-ranking Baʿathists in order to protect himself.

Although some of those who stayed in Iraq had similar grievances, some of my interviews revealed a tendency to complicate the relationship with the state in ways that those who had left frequently avoided doing. This suggests that those who had stayed behind had to develop means of co-existing with the state that those who had left had no need to. Having figured out how to exist within the state, they had no reason to put the Hawza at risk by engaging in opposition political behavior. This is the main argument that underpins my claim that elite clerics have a preference for the maintenance of the status quo and, under circumstances of repression and authoritarianism, their motivations for opposing the state are vastly outweighed by their need to preserve the religious establishment, which – as demonstrated – found a way by the 1990s to co-exist with the state.

What this means, however, is that the Baʿathist experience: both that of extreme oppression and of managing warily a relationship with the state continues to color the behavior of clerics today. The Hawza is comprised mainly of older individuals and those who had lived their defining eras in the late 1970s and early 1980s are the inheritors of the religious establishment. They are the generation that will succeed Sistani's successor and their understanding of religion and the state is deeply shaped by their own experiences with

[195] Interview with anonymized elite cleric. Najaf, Iraq. December 2018.

authoritarianism. Their relationship with Saddam Hussein's government is much more complicated than our current narratives allow. Despite the fact that many scholars – myself included – make the claim that Saddam Hussein's sectarianism was less primordial and more strategic, it remains that it played out in deeply racist ways (Blaydes 2018; Helfont 2018; Patel forthcoming). One need not look beyond the mass deportations of the 1980s in which Iraqis of Iranian origins were accused of being "tabaʿiyya" or "followers" of Iran. Moreover, simply because Saddam Hussein instrumentalized religion doesn't mean that he allowed for the opening of *all* religious space. Rther, the practices of the 1970s and 1980s so weakened the Hawza that by the slight opening up in the 1990s, the Hawza was a shadow of its former self, its numbers dwindling from the thousands under Muhsin al-Hakim's leadership to mere hundreds by the end of Khoei's era.[196] The great irony is that Muhsin al-Hakim, who himself was Iraqi Arab, had made a concerted effort at bringing in more Iraqi clerics.[197]

Perhaps the best representation of the complexities of clerical relations with the state and with Saddam Hussein's faith campaign can be explained by a representative of Grand Ayatollah Sistani's:

> What Saddam Hussein wanted - a time period you [Marsin] didn't live in – school students, when you rise [you have to say] "May the leader Saddam live" when you sit [you have to say] "May the Majūs[198] Persians fall" … the "Majūs Persians"

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[196] Interview with Ali al-Shukri. Najaf, Iraq. December 2018. Al-Shukri's numbers are from a book written by Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim.

[197] Ibid.

[198] A derogatory term employed by Baʿathist propaganda to refer to Iranians during the Iran-Iraq war and after. See: (Al-Marashi 2003) who writes: "…the Iranians were subsequently referred to as al-ʿadu al-ajami. 'Adu is the word for 'enemy' in Arabic, while the word 'ajam has more nuanced connotations. The literal meaning of 'ajam is 'one who is illiterate in a language' and originally was used to refer to the non-Arab peoples residing within the early Arab Islamic Empires who could not speak Arabic. Centuries later the word 'ajam developed a derogatory meaning among Arabs when specifically referring to the Persians. Another racist term used by the security apparatus in the document set refers to Iranians as majus, which literally means 'fire worshippers'. Such a term is an attack on the Zoroastrian faith and their use of the fire temple as a focal point of worship. By referring to the Iranians in these documents as majus, the security apparatus implies that the Iranians are not sincere Muslims, but rather covertly practice their pre-Islamic beliefs. Thus, in their eyes, Iraq's war took on the dimensions of not only

> whom he - by the way - called the Shiʿa… this is the strategy he used, he called himself the "leader of the faith campaign" the "believing leader," the literacy campaign and the memorization of certain qur'anic verses, writing the Quran in blood, these are all ways in which he tried to give himself a religious halo. He appears on television before anything else, he will read a chapter from the Quran. His examples that he would give about the companions… he tried to give a religious flavor that was oppositional to the religious flavor of Iran. This idea was created in the war… he used poetry… he derided religious clerics … massive deportations occurred… they were considered tabaʿiyya … the situation we lived in, this is what we lived in… I was in [redacted]… the person who attacked me and imprisoned me… I saw him in the streets after I was released… many of the people who were in Saddam security services were of our people [Shiʿa]… terrorizing, incentivizing, here's money here's a car, here's an [army] rank, a house, authority… the greatest is the threats.[199]

What this interview illustrates is that sectarianism and racism were both felt by some Shiʿa clerics. At the same time, they didn't have a belief that all Shiʿa were opposed to Saddam or were not collaborating with his government: the fear of infiltrators, from within the townspeople themselves, was a genuine concern. The experience of the 1970s and 1980s meant that this particular population of clerics saw the Faith Campaign as a malignant tool to reframe the religious environment, nothing more.

3.2 Public Views Towards Clerical Involvement: The Retreating Red Lines

Younger generations of Iraqi clerics, who will not inherit the religious establishment anytime soon, have different conceptions marked by their connectedness to the outside world and by the proliferation of the rhetoric of secularism, civic-ness, and democracy that has permeated the Iraqi public sphere. This generation is much more in line with the Iraqi public. This of course

a struggle for Arab nationalism, but also a campaign in the name of Islam. The documents demonstrate the 'bureacratization' of such derogatory terms in the official correspondence of the security agencies."

[199] Author interview with a representative of Sistani, anonymized by interviewee's request. Najaf, Iraq. December 2018.

has implications for the future of the religious establishment and the degree to which it can attract followers and maintain its functionality. This is compounded by the Iraqi public's increased rejection of Islamist parties, which they see as being connected to the religious establishment.

In 2013, 19.5% of Iraqis surveyed preferred a non-religious party over a religious party. By 2018, 40.6% of surveyed Iraqis expressed a preference for a non-religious party over a religious party. These survey results, taken with the extremely low voter turnout in 2018, and the shift of political parties away from Islamist platforms to "civil" platforms suggests that there is indeed a general public trend towards non-religious or "civil" parties that Iraq's current political elite, including the Islamists, have picked up on.[200]

But why does the Iraqi public see the religious establishment as being associated with a political class that is falling out of favor? I argue that the post-2003 order came so suddenly to clerics that they themselves had a difficult time managing their reaction to it. A traditional institution accustomed to operating warily outside of the state's control was suddenly put into a position in which it was accorded a high degree of freedom and political authority. The behavior of various clerics is seen as contradictory and confusing precisely because the post-2003 political arena was uncharted territory for the religious establishment.

The first moment of political involvement of the religious establishment is immediately after the invasion. Sistani's silence as the Americans rolled in cannot be categorized as non-involvement and quietism. Rather, his language about the events of the 2003 is reflective of the general attitude of professionalized Iraqi clerics. In fact, amongst Sistani's first statements in April 2003 was one that celebrated the demise of the dictatorship for the Hawza, saying that

[200] For the Islamist-leftist alliances, see: (Robin 2018).

"After a difficult time period that Iraq has lived under – and the Scholarly Hawza in Najaf in particular – of pain and patience and struggle – it was God's will that the dictatorship regime has gone." [201] The rest of Sistani's statement is concerned with the survival of the Hawza and the well-being of its clerics.

If we were simply to follow the line of official statements released by Sistani's office, then there is a discernable trail of participation in politics in post-2003 Iraq. In her book on the role of the main Najafi Ayatollahs in post-2003 Iraq, Caroleen Sayej describes their behavior as "nationalistic" indeed, the title of the book is "Patriotic Ayatollahs". However, their patriotism and nationalism comes hand in hand with a fear of the demise of the religious establishment and their behavior can be seen, in this light, as needing to create a stable country in order for the Najafi Hawza to survive.

In his account of government formation in post-2003 Iraq, Ali Allawi recalls that an organization of Shiʿa politicians and intellectuals, "The Shiʿa House", was established with the goal of creating a unified Shiʿa stance on political issues in the early aftermath of the war. One of the things that The Shiʿa House focused on was being "a vital mechanism for relaying messages of the Najaf hierarchy to the gatherings, and vice versa" (Allawi 2007, 205). From the onset, the salience of Najaf as a political voice was never doubted. Najaf's relationship with Islamist parties and with Shiʿa politicians broadly, however, would change. For one, Sistani has become more selective of the politicians he is willing to meet with, although his office has kept back channels open.

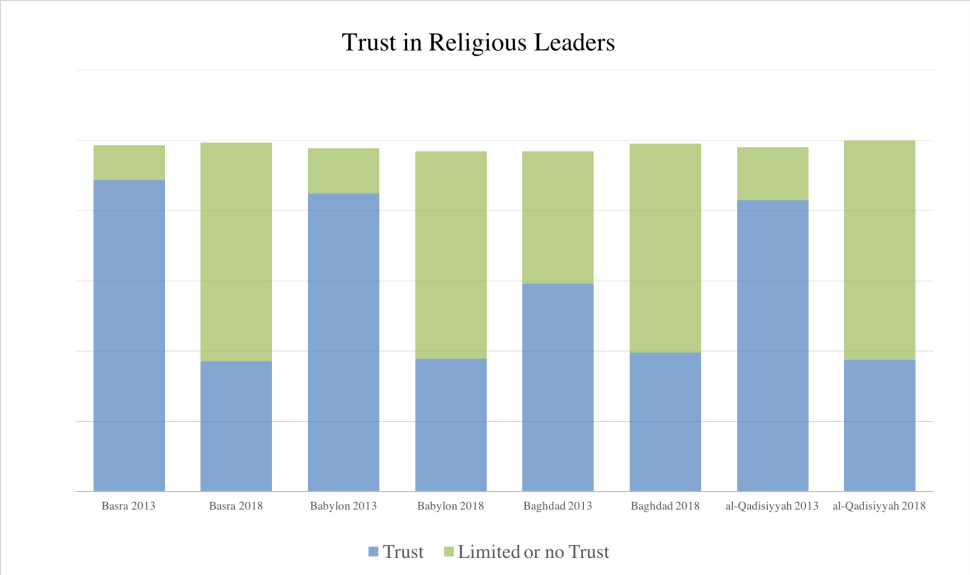
[201] https://www.sistani.org/arabic/archive/

Clerics have an entirely different perspective for their relationship with the state. Rather than the "veto" that politicians claim the religious establishment has, clerics feel that although their "greatest authority is the marjaʿ, God protect him, you see not all his words are listened to, in fact most of his words, and advice, and statements aren't listed to by the government, they [the politicians] only receive what they like".[202]

These developments explain why, from the perspective of ordinary citizens, the Hawza is intrinsically tied to the state. The table below represents the views of Iraqis towards religious leaders over time and in select provinces (Basra, Babylon, Baghdad, al-Diwaniyah). The general trend for Iraq overall is a decrease of trust in religious leaders from 63.7% in 2013 to 40.6% in 2018.[203] Correspondingly, the number of respondents who distrusted religious leaders rose from 31.9% to 57.6%.[204]

[202] Interview with cleric from Nasriya. Najaf, Iraq. January 2019.
[203] Trust corresponds to the following categories in the 2013 survey (Arab Barometer Wave 3): "I trust it to a great extent" and "I trust it to a medium extent." In the 2018 survey (Arab Barometer Wave 5), trust is taken to mean "a great deal of trust" and "quite a lot of trust."
[204] Limited or not trust corresponds to the following categories in the 2013 survey (Arab Barometer Wave 3): "I trust it to a limited extent" and "I absolutely do not trust it." In the 2018 survey (Arab Barometer Wave 5): "Not very much trust" and "No trust at all."

Figure 21: Trust in Religious Leaders



My interviews suggest that clerics are aware of this drop in popularity and are concerned about it. However, where they differ is the degree to which to they are willing to admit its existence. On one hand, a popular low-ranking preacher, like Ali al-Taleqani prides himself on being highly attuned to public opinion:

> When some religious organizations entered political activity, this reflected badly on religion and the street started to reject the turban, started to dislike the religious establishment. Why? Because they saw it as an authority and that it is responsible for 15 years [emphasis] of destruction and devastation that has befallen the country. This is how the street perceives the situation. [205]

Conversely, clerics who are more heavily involved in politics (those who are in political parties) are less willing to concede this point. By chance, I interviewed one such political cleric, Ammar al-Hakim, a few days after the BBC released a report on religiosity in the Middle East

[205] Interview with Ali al-Taleqani. Kerbala, Iraq. December 2018.

(relying on Arab Barometer data).[206] The takeaway of the report and the way it was received in Iraq was that religiosity was on the decline. Al-Hakim raised the report when I asked him about the public perception of clerics and he highlighted (accurately) that Iraq didn't fit the description, therefore, religious leaders were still sacred.[207]

His analysis is interesting. Indeed, Iraqis have a high degree of religiosity – it just doesn't correspond with a trust in religious leaders. In the 2018 Arab Barometer survey, whose results inform the BBC report, 49.6% of Iraqis described themselves as "religious." 44.5% described themselves as "somewhat religious" and only 5.5% described themselves as "not religious." The previous wave, conducted in 2013, found that 38.9% of respondents described themselves as "religious", 51.1% as "somewhat religious", and a similar 5.3% descried themselves as "not religious." Religiosity has been constant in Iraq. Trust in religious leaders, on the other hand, has been on a steep decline.

When asked whether religious clerics should have influence over the decisions of the government, Arab Barometer respondents were quite evenly torn with 22.6% strongly agreeing, 25.5% agreeing, 22.6% disagreeing and 27.2% strong disagreeing. This, when compared to responses concerning Islamist parties, suggests that people are not entirely unwilling to differentiate between clerics and Islamists. Interestingly enough, the strongest agreement was in Basra at 34.5% (by contrast, Kerbala was at 26% and Najaf at 28.5%). Respondents also strongly felt that religious leaders should not influence the decisions of voters in elections with 47.2% agreeing strongly, and numbers above 50% in the southern governorates of Basra, Diywaniya, and Wasit.

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[206] For the report, see: (The Arab world in seven charts: Are Arabs turning their backs on religion? - BBC News n.d.)
[207] Author interview with Ammar al-Hakim. Baghdad, Iraq. June 2019.

3.3 How Clerics view Politics

In interviews, I asked clerics two questions relating to their role in politics. [208] First: "Do you think a cleric should avoid politics entirely? What type of political activity can he engage in?" and secondly, "Did you participate in the previous Iraqi elections?"

The purpose of the first question is to uncover whether clerics view themselves as traditional political actors in the same way that Islamists or secular politicians do. Interview evidence suggests that they see themselves primarily as scholars and vary widely in the description of an appropriate political role.[209] In some instances, the political roles they ascribe to themselves are supervisory and paternalistic. In other instances, they extricate themselves entirely from politics. Although scholarship on Shi'i political activism has tended to dichotomize behavior into the "quietist" and "activist" camps, my interviews as well as more recent scholarship has highlighted that political activism is a spectrum and not a dichotomy (Corboz 2015; Jabar 2003; Walbridge 2001; Louer 2012; J. R. I. Cole 2006).

While the first question highlights the public leadership potential of clerics, the second highlights their role as citizens. It is an assessment of their demonstrated commitment to democracy as Iraqis. Moreover, because any clerics do not answer with a simple "yes" or "no", but elaborate on their motivations for voting, this question is also revealing of whether they voted because of a sense of citizenship, a conviction to democracy, or because they received instructions to do so from more elite clerics.

It is hard to measure the degree to which any individual, including clerics, believe in democracy itself or simply desire to display a belief in it. Either way, the interviews demonstrate

[208] The interview guide contained more questions about politics, for the full interview guide, see appendix.
[209] In the wider Islamic world, (Nielsen 2017), has also pointed out this tendency of Muslim clerics to view themselves as academics and scholars.

a general clerical buy-in of the democratic process. Other scholars have documented this buy-in at the level of the four highest religious authorities in Shiʿa Iraq (Sayej 2018). My work demonstrates that it extends throughout the religious hierarchy and, in some instances, is motivated by the leadership of these elites. Scholarship on clerics in post-2003 Iraq is limited. However, the handful of scholarly works and analytical articles tend to agree on a clerical support for democracy but disagree as to the motivations for that support. Some, like Sayej, view elite Shiʿa clerics as displaying behaviors that "show a deep democratic process at work" which is motivated by the fact that Iraqis increasingly turned to the ayatollahs for more than guidance and advice"(Sayej 2018, 166–67). Others, like Juan Cole, espouse more cynical viewpoints:

> The Shiite clerics were convinced of the compatibility of popular sovereignty with Islamic law at that point in Iraqi history, because they were sure that the Shiite masses in the South – constituting some 60 percent of the population – would vote for the Islamic parties and so ensure the triumph of sharia. Their vision of democracy therefore involved a conception of dual sovereignty, wherein clerical authority provided a bulwark against the possible irresponsibility of the enfranchised masses. (J. R. I. Cole 2006, 25).

My own argument falls between these two viewpoints. Clerics, including those who are lower-ranking, believe that the role of the religious establishment is to be a bulwark against the irresponsibility of the state, rather than the people. At the same time, as individuals, they are committed to the act of democracy – particularly, to voting.

Take, for example, the quote below. It was taken from the interview with Ali al-Taleqani- a few months after the April 2018 Iraqi elections. These elections were boycotted by much of

the Iraqi public and had a very low voter turnout.[210] He described his own decision to vote as stemming from a commitment to and a belief in democracy:

> Yes, I participated because I believe that democracy does not come easily and that the democratic system is not easily achieved… In Iraq, we believe that - not in a day and a night - we will be able to change the Iraqi public from a radical, one party, one leader with 99 names who compares himself to God, a dictator, who spills blood, who assaults his neighbors like Saddam Hussein to a society that believes in democratic climate…This doesn't come in a day and a night. We need years. I believe that it is my human right to vote and no one has the right to take away this right.[211]

Other clerics that I spoke with gave equally nuanced answers. Some pointed to the influence of elite clerics, saying: "I didn't want to participate but the marjaʿiyya encouraged us to do so"[212] or, adding the qualifier: "if elections resulted in something that was detrimental to the interests of religion than of course we would not participate."[213] Others, similarly to al-Taleqani, pointed out that democracy required patience and committed participation.

Clerical views towards elections reflect the hierarchical structure of the Hawza. For the most part, lower ranking clerics cited the role of Sistani and the other elite clerics in encouraging participation in elections. Thus, although they defined and exalted democracy as a concept, they couched it in the definitions provided by clerics (one respondent clarified "Elections let us practice democracy and give the individual the right to select who represents him, this meaning is built on the directions of the marjaʿiyya."[214]) Their answers lend credence to Cole's argument about the pragmatic reason behind support for democracy.

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[210] (Mansour and Van den Toorn 2018)
[211] Author Interview with Ali al-Taleqani. Kerbala, Iraq. December 2018.
[212] Interview with bāhth khārij student (from Basra, Iraq). Najaf, Iraq. June 2019.
[213] Interview with bāhth khārij student from Baghdad. Najaf, Iraq. January 2019.
[214] Ibid.

Based on the answers I received to this question as well as my observations about clerical activity, I argue that Shi'a clerics in post-2003 Iraq can be understood as falling into one of four ideal types where one axis measures their degree of involvement in politics (in their capacity as clerics). The other axis measures their degree of support for a religious state or, in other words, their views towards the separation of religion and the state. Clerics can profess a preference for non-involvement but become active in politics nevertheless - one need look no further than Grand Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani for an example of this. Thus, the first axis is a measure of their behavior. The second axis is a measure of their ideology.

Figure 22: A Typology of Clerics in Politics

	Involved in Politics	Not Involved in Politics
Supports a Religious State	Theocratic Political Cleric	Theocratic Apolitical Cleric
Supports a Secular State	Secular Political Cleric	Secular Apolitical Cleric

In the first box, a "Theocratic Political Cleric" is one who is both involved in politics and in support of religious involvement in the state. Outside of the Iraqi context, this ideal-type is typified by Ayatollah Khomeini himself as well as the generations of politician-clerics who followed him. An example of such a cleric is Abdulazziz al-Hakim, the head of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI). Al-Hakim was strongly involved in politics

and after 2003, he didn't advocate for an Iraqi theocracy but for a state in which religion played a prominent role (given the name of his political parties, his earlier inclinations are quite clear). He is most well-known for spearheading the campaign for Resolution 137 which would have sectarianized Iraq's secular personal status law (Sayej 2018, 166–67). After his death, his son – Ammar al-Hakim – lead and transformed the party into a civil party.[215] Ammar al-Hakim's professed views on the role of religion in the state fall into the secular camp, saying that "Religious institutions should focus on guidance and shouldn't get involved in politics."[216] At the same time, he describes the role of the cleric in a tone very similar to most other supporters of religious involvement in politics – a "doctor" who plays a "constructive" and not just "advisory" role in society.[217] Moreover, al-Hakim continues to don clerical garb and to attribute at least part of his popularity to his prominent clerical family.[218]

A more fully secular political cleric is exemplified by Iyad Jamal Al-Din, a turban-wearing former member of parliament who describes Islamists in Iraq and elsewhere as endorsing a "deadly duality of sharia and law."[219] He argues that "To make Islam a source of legislation is to tear apart [tamziq] Islam" which results in a "miserable mix."[220]

There are clerics who are un-involved in politics and reject a religious state. I had barely gotten through the first half of the first question (Do you think a cleric should avoid politics entirely?) when Jawad al-Khoei responded:

> With absolute certainty [he should avoid politics entirely]! With absolute certainty. The cleric - as I said - his relationship with the people is of the soul, of the heart, its emotional. The cleric is like any academic scholar who has a specialty…

[215] For more information about the transformation of this party, see: (Isakhan and Mulherin 2018)
[216] Author Interview with Ammar Al-Hakim. Baghdad, Iraq. June 2019.
[217] Ibid.
[218] Ibid.
[219] Television Interview with Ayad Jamal Al-Din. 2009. Al-Arabiya Channel. Youtube link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6TWTVNiKKbI
[220] Ibid

> Politics is a science and this [religious studies] is a science…These are two specialties that are at odds… However, it doesn't mean that a cleric doesn't have a political point of view. He can…opinion is different than action. We are against political action.[221]

Al-Khoei and others distinguish between their role as citizens and their role as clerics. As citizens they vote, but they are also aware that their clerical garb makes them stand out as they engage in acts of citizenship, which extends to voting as well as acts of civil disobedience.

There are clerics who choose to remain apolitical but support a religious state. These clerics tend to explain their decision to remain un-involved by identifying as a producer of knowledge and designating other clerics as those who are politically active. As mentioned, these are ideal types and clerics rarely fall perfectly into one box – particularly if we juxtapose their words against their actions.

The primary difference in voting behavior between the secular and theocratic leaning clerics is that the former describe voting as an act of citizenship. Despite the term "theocratic-leaning", the latter set of clerics are not opposed to democracy, but envision an entanglement of religion and the state. In forty-two interviews conducted in the second round of fieldwork, the two clerics who did not vote were both lower-ranking and were driven by a lack of faith in the Iraqi electoral system. This sentiment reflects a sense of citizenship, shared by other Iraqis who had also lost hope in the electoral system.[222] However, these clerics had participated – like the others – in previous elections at the parliamentary and local levels, an astonishing level of political participation.

[221] Author Interview with Jawad Al-Khoei. Najaf, Iraq. December 2018.
[222] For more information on turnout in the recent Iraqi elections, see: (Mansour and Van den Toorn 2018)

3 The Structure of the Contemporary Hawza

In this section, I discuss the contemporary structure of the Hawza. I focus particularly on the growth of the Najafi Hawza as embodied by its ability to support a large number of students. I also examine clerical views towards the institutionalization of the Hawza.

3.1 Stipends and Financial Support

Similarly, to previous time periods, the Khums and other religious taxes are used to support the religious establishment.[223] What distinguishes the contemporary period is that a lot of these interactions, particularly outside of Iraq, can take place online. The office of Sistani in North America has a website where emulators can pay their religious taxes online.[224] The website provides clarification as to whom can be a recipient of the taxes, on behalf of Sistani, and on the need of receiving a receipt.[225] This increasing formalization of the Khums reflects a broader institutionalization and internationalization of the Hawza. At the same time, there remains an informal aspect, particularly in its functions in Iraq. Emulators can also provide their Khums directly to the offices of clerics, in the form of cash payments, when they come to Kerbala or Najaf for religious pilgrimages.[226] This process, too, however has started to include the provision of a receipt.

In additions, seminary students receive monthly stipends from the offices of the Grand Ayatollahs and aren't confined to just one:

> We have here [in the Hawza] that salaries aren't confined to one side, not like the government. The different Marja'ʿs give stipends. Some are from the Marja'ʿs of Najaf and some are from the Marja'ʿs of Iran who give salaries to students in Najaf, like Sayyid Khamanei and Sheikh Wahid al-Khorasani, Sheikh Nasr

[223] For more information about the specifics of Khums, see: https://www.sistani.org/english/book/48/2277/
[224] See: https://imam-us.org/product-category/Khums/
[225] https://imam-us.org/agents-have-written-ijaza/
[226] Author's fieldwork observations.

> Makarim, Sayed Makarem al-Shirazi, in addition to our Marja'ʿs- especially the two [Sistani and Hakim].[227]

Interestingly, these include stipends from outside of Iraq as well as funds channeled from clerics within Najaf to students in other seminaries, like in Iran. This suggests that there is an increasing bureaucratic reach of the religious establishment. By some accounts, Grand Ayatollah Sistani is said to support more than 35,000 students across three hundred seminaries in Qom alone.[228] In fact, Sistani's office has an official committee for the distribution of stipends.[229] This is an increased standardization from previous eras as well as an increased transnational reach.

3.2 Teaching and Resistance to Institutionalization

The structure of learning in the Hawza – particularly the division into muqadīmāt, sutooh, and bāhth khārij – has not changed over time. What we see happening in the contemporary period, however, is slightly more standardization. For example, in the introductory level, there is a difference between the curriculum and years of education in Arabic required for Arab students and non-Arab students. There are also now standardized exams for seminary students that were created by the Hakim office, and adhered to by others.[230] The books and teaching materials, however, have largely stayed the same.

I conducted a set of interviews with seminary students in an international seminary and spoke with students from Iran, Indonesia, Senegal, and Pakistan. I also spoke to the head of the institution and one of the teachers. The director of the seminary compared the admissions

[227] Interview with Hawza bāhth khārij student from Nasriya. Najaf, Iraq. January 2019.
[228] See: https://www.sistani.org/arabic/data/7/
[229] ibid.
[230] Author's interview with Hossein al-Qazwini. Kerbala, Iraq. December 2017. Author's interview with bāhth khārij Student. Kufa, Iraq. November 2018.

process to that of a "western university" (perhaps for my own benefit), explaining that there are applications, recommendation letters[231], and different conditions for students coming from different backgrounds. For example, because of their developed seminary system, Pakistani and Indian students are expected to have finished the sutooh level in their home countries before coming to Najaf. By contrast, students from African countries – where the seminary system is less developed – only have to complete the muqadīmāt level. Despite these requirements, the director was adamant that all students repeat muqadīmāt when they come to Najaf.[232] The formula for becoming a scholar, according to him, was "four hours multiplied by 365 days multiplied by twenty years, all subject to God's will."[233] Of interest is that the Hawza also seeks out residency permits for its admitted students through its ties to the state.

The development of these international seminaries is a symbol of the further institutionalization of the Hawza. However, seminaries devoted to students from particular countries isn't a recent development. In 1958, for example, Madrasat al-ʿAmeliyyin was established for Lebanese students, many of whom were from the Jabal ʿAmel region of Southern Lebanon. In 1965, Madrasat al-Afghaniyyin was established for students from Afghanistan. What is truly interesting about contemporary developments is that while the nationality-based seminary has always been present, the establishment of seminaries for "international students" as one category is new. The very process of joining that seminary, as demonstrated in the above mentioned interview, is extremely standardized.

[231] The recommendation process is formalized and differs from the traditional word-of-mouth recommendation that is oftentimes relied on in informal settings.
[232] Author Interview with director of international seminary. Najaf, Iraq. December 2018.
[233] Ibid.

But does this seeming institutionalization of the Hawza reflect a desire of transforming it into an official academic entity, like a university? The answer to that – whether given by high-ranking Ayatollahs or introductory-level students – is a resounding no. In fact, one advanced student rephrased my question into "How do we kill the Hawza?"[234]

What this suggests is that although there are increasing demands for a formal education and a value to it, few clerics see the Hawza as being the place to provide that. Most clerics wax poetic about the virtues of the freeform style of learning of the Hawza:

> When I want to compare the school of Najaf to the rest of the world, the school of Najaf is incomparable….we [the Hawza] have exclusivity and uniqueness… its leadership comes from within it … its academic standards are self-monitored, not from the outside, there is no external monitor. The real monitor is my teacher… I monitor myself and my teacher monitors me… after my teacher, the Hawza street… so that when I say I am one of the students of Najaf, the other students of Najaf immediately start questioning: who is your teacher? who are your students? what class do you teach? what is your scholarly level? This framework gives each student in Najaf the right to object to me when I speak… 'you have no right to speak, this is not your level' Is this clear? There is no state that is in control. There is no Sultan except knowledge and the people of knowledge only. For that reason, Najaf as a Hawza cannot be compared to another.[235]

This poetic description of the Hawza is shared by both the international and Iraqi students I interviewed, who perhaps wanted to impress their teachers (who were coming in and out of the interview room). For example, a Pakistani student told me that he came to Najaf "because it is the oldest Hawza and the spring of knowledge. There are Hawzas in Kabul, Lahore, Karachi, Mashhad and all the teachers in these Hawzas have studied in Najaf."[236] An Indonesian student told me, "There are options for people to study in Lebanon, Bahrain and Qom but Najaf is the

[234] Interview with bāhth khārij student. Najaf, Iraq. January 2019.
[235] Interview with anonymized representative of Sistani. Najaf, Iraq. November 2018.
[236] Author interview with Pakistani sutooh student. Najaf, Iraq. December 2018.

oldest and most famous"[237] and finally, a Senegalese student told me that he chose "Najaf because it is the mother of the Hawzas." [238] It is remarkable that Najaf has not only maintained its structure but that it has used it as a means to signal legitimacy through tradition.

That being said, many of these international students aim to return to clerical careers in their home countries where they are expected to fill a gap and where there are "people awaiting us."[239] The options are scarcer for Iraqi clerics operating in a country oversaturated in clerics. Despite this, the representative of Sistani interviewed above explained that: "If you're from the Hawza and seek employment outside your [Hawza] salary is cut off… your direction is now different, I am no longer responsible for you."[240]

Analysis from the biographical dictionaries show that, in fact, of the 82 clerics born after 1950 that are included in the dictionaries, eighteen had a formal education in Islam. Whereas, the cohort above them – born between 1900 and 1949 – 36 of 651 clerics had a formal education in Islam, with Lebanese clerics tending towards that more than the others. This of course can be attributed to number of factors, including the lower number of formal Islamic universities in the early twentieth century. Indeed, there has been a rapid proliferation of private Islamic Universities in Iraq since 2003. It can also be attributed to the rise in number of clerics and the lack of adequate employment opportunities for them.

It remains quite telling of the inclinations of the Hawza that the most serious attempt at creating an institutionalized seminary was derailed by the religious establishment. When a group of respected Hawza clerics established Kuliyat al-Fiqh in 1958 and Madrasat al-ʿuloom al-

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[237] Author interview with Indonesian muqadīmāt student. Najaf, Iraq. December 2018.
[238] Author interview with Senegalese muqadīmāt student (#1). Najaf, Iraq. December 2018.
[239] Author interview with Senegalese muqadīmāt student (#2). Najaf, Iraq. December 2018. His exact words were: هناك أناس ينتظروننا
[240] Interview with anonymized representative of Sistani. Najaf, Iraq. November 2018.

Islamiyya, it was at first supported by Muhsin al-Hakim's office. However, soon enough, Kuliyat al-Fiqh was sidelined from the rest of the Hawza and Madrasat al-Uloom ceased to exist (al-Haydari 2017).

What it comes down to is a tension between fears of state control and the accumulating difficulties of having no formal education in Islam. With regards to the former, clerics almost universally equated Al-Azhar University with state co-optation and, many of them, un-prompted brought up the example of al-Mustafa College in Qom, Iran. Al-Mustafa College is a seminary-style university in Iran with satellite branches internationally. Clerics brought it up as a cautionary tale of how the state can come to control official universities.

That clerics feel pressure to make their credentials palatable outside of the Hawza can be assumed from the fact that many clerics with international connections – who participate in interfaith conferences, for example – have actively sought out higher education in Islam at official universities in Iraq as well as in Lebanon, Jordan, and elsewhere in the Middle East.[241] Second-generation clerics raised abroad have also sought out Western degrees in Islamic topics. In addition, some have suggested that there have been dialogues about how to equate Hawza degrees with official degrees – for instance, equating the bāhth khārij stage to the doctorate.[242]

What this all amounts to is an increased – though not complete - bureaucratization of the Hawza from previous time periods. In times of popular anti-government protest, this should translate into a continued role of un-involvement and mediation amongst high authority, high responsibility elites and a role of bandwagoning for a new class of low authority, high responsibility advanced students.

[241] For example, Jawad al-Khoei has a degree from a Jordanian University.
[242] Interview with bāhth khārij student from clerical family. Najaf, Iraq. June 2019.

4 Protests in Post-Baʿathist Iraq

There have been many prominent anti-government protest movements in post-2003 Iraq including, most notably the 2011 Arab Spring Protests and the 2015 anti-establishment protests.[243] There have also been significant protests in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq against the local government.[244] In this section, I focus on two particular instances of protest: first, the Summer 2018 protests that occurred mainly in southern Iraq and which were centered in the port-city of Basra and, secondly, the October Revolution[245] which started in October 2019 and was ended by the COVID-19 pandemic and which took place in Baghdad, the south, and the south-center.

Three reasons compel me to focus on these particular protest movements. First, these movements have been notable for being Shiʿa protests against a Shiʿa-dominated government.[246] This means that the protestors are the emulators of the Marjaʿiyya and that elite clerics are both aware of events and under pressure to respond in some way. Second, most of my interviews concerning the contemporary era occurred between these two protest movements, which allows me to assess the degree to which clerics' behavior changed (if at all) between the protest movements. Finally, the October Revolution is the largest protest event in contemporary Iraqi history and any account of clerical intervention in politics would be incomplete without its inclusion in the analysis.

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[243] While the previous protests in Iraq had much more discernable starting and finishing points, the protests in post-2003 Iraq are harder to firmly establish temporal and ideological boundaries for. For example, scholars (Jabar 2018) tend to distinguish between the demands of the 2011 Arab Spring movement in Iraq, the 2012-2013 protests, the 2015 era protests, and the 2018-2020 protests. For a typology of protest movements in Iraq, see: (al-Rikabi 2019) and see appendix for list of major protests in Iraqi history.

[244] See: (Human Rights Watch 2018a, 2018b)

[245] Many scholars dispute the term "revolution" to describe the events of October 2019- February 2020. However, I use this term in honor of the protestors' wishes and their definition of their movement, which has been the most prominent in post-2003 Iraq.

[246] For an explanation of the protesting population, see: (Badawi 2020)

In the next sections, I present an overview of the events of 2018 and 2019-2020, focusing on critical points. Then, I present evidence of clerical participation and reaction to these events. I particularly focus on the reaction of the Marjaʿiyya of Sistani, which has been viewed as a critical actor in these events.[247] I demonstrate, through various analyses of clerical output, that elite clerics seek to preserve the status quo and to, quite literally, avoid "fawdha" or "chaos." I also show that lower-ranking clerics in the religious establishment, particularly those at the bāhth khārij levels, who are committed to Hawza careers tend to bandwagon behind the marjaʿ's. They do so because the Hawza has become more institutionalized and, unlike their peers in previous time periods, they too feel a sense of institutional responsibility.

4.1 Summer 2018 Protests

In April 2018, protests broke out in Basra, a city in southern Iraq. Basra is responsible for most of Iraq's immense oil wealth, which amounts to ninety percent of government revenue, a fact that its impoverished and underserviced population is very aware of. Until July 2018, these protests remained small-scale. July and August are brutally hot months in southern Iraq – with temperatures rising to the high forties and low fifties Celsius – and worsened yet by the poor quality and minimal provision of electricity. To this already volatile set of grievances, a water pollution crisis poisoned over a hundred thousand residents.[248] This is, of course, in addition the

[247] As an example of how prominent news outlets interpreted Sistani's role throughout these events, see: (Iraq protesters look to al-Sistani ahead of Friday sermon n.d.; Iraq top cleric condemns use of force against protest camps, urges early election 2020; Iraq's top Shiʿa cleric gives support to protests 2019; Wilson 2020).
[248] For an overview of the water crisis, see: (Human Rights Watch 2019).

regular grievances of Iraqis including corruption and high unemployment. Basra's unemployment rate is higher than the Iraqi average.[249]

The protest movement was removed from political parties. Nevertheless, opportunistic political parties as well as tribal actors became involved. Soon enough, certain political actors attempted to use the cover of the protest movement to attack their rivals, including prominent civil society activists. Indeed, and as data shows[250], protest incidents in Basra escalated rapidly from thirteen incidents in April to an early peak of 61 in July and 92 in September. The July peak was accompanied by a high number of injuries (as reported by the fairly conservative Iraqi High Commission on Human Rights). The period from July to September 2018 can be regarded as the critical time period in this protest movement. Indeed, it was during this time period that Prime Minister Hayder al-Abadi visited Basra and pledged government jobs (El-Ghobashy 2018). This protest movement is also distinct because it occurred amidst government formation, which further incentivized its politicization. It was also during this time period that the religious establishment sent a highly publicized team to address the water crisis in Basra.[251] The team included Sistani's prominent representative in Kerbala and head of the Imam Abbas Shrine, Sayed Ahmed al-Safi.

This protest movement, like its predecessors in 2015, carried non-Islamist tones and some argue suggested a shift away from identity politics towards issue politics (Jabar 2018). Zahra Ali, an Iraqi sociologist, highlights the transition from Islamism to civic-ness as embodied by one of the slogans of 2015 (which continued to be raised in 2018 and onwards): "Bis mil-din

[249] For unemployment data, see Iraqi Central Organization for statistics http://cosit.gov.iq/ar/2013-01-31-08-48-55..
[250] www.iraqafteroccupation.com.
[251] see: (AlKafeel Network 2018).

baguna al-haramiya" ("in the name of religion we were robbed by looters") (Ali 2019). The evolution away from reform-minded to revolutionary movements is also embodied by other slogans that were raised in July 2018 in Basra, including "There is no homeland!" and "No, no, no to parties!" (ibid). Thus, this protest movement is particularly salient to this study because it is both anti-government and partially directed at religious authorities, particularly Islamist ones.

4.2 The October Revolution

Although protests continued to erupt nearly continuously between September 2018 and October 2019, the October Revolution should not be seen as a continuation of the Summer 2018 protest movement. These are distinct events, loosely connected by small protest events. However, both events could claim the same structural causes: high unemployment, massive corruption, and a dissatisfaction with the political elite. Even more so than 2018, the anti-government nature of the protest movement was highlighted by such slogans as "we want a homeland", "I am going down to get my rights", and the Arab Spring classic "the people want to topple the regime." That it coincided with regional movements – particularly the nearly concurrent Lebanese one – seemed to strengthen the protestors' resolve (and introduced slogans like "From Baghdad to Beirut, one revolution that will not die.")

Remarkably, the protest movement remained peaceful – with protestors insisting on peacefulness in the wake of government brutality and international intervention, including the assassination of Iranian commander – Qassim Soleimaini and Iraqi paramilitary commander, Abu Mahdi al-Mohandes – on Iraqi soil, which nearly plunged Iraq into a wave of Iranian-American violence. As of January 2020, over six hundred people are reported to have been

killed by security forces in the protest (Amnesty International 2020). This is in addition to thousands of injuries and instances of arrest, kidnapping, and torture.

The October Revolution was also significant because it succeeded at forcing Prime Minister Adil Abd al-Mahdi to resign. It articulated the need for government change by rejecting premiership candidates that were nominated by existing political parties as well as by making demands for early, free, and fair elections.

The critical junctures of this protest movement are arguably the time period from October 25th to October 31st, when massive protests extended beyond Tahrir Square in Baghdad. October 25th was in fact the agreed-upon date for reigniting the protest movement that the protestors had agreed upon, in order to avoid the timing of the Arbaʿeen pilgrimage (October 20). This time period saw much violence in the south-center: the burning of the Iranian consulate in Kerbala on the 25th and the attack on protestors in Kerbala on the 28th. By the end of the month, Adil Abd al-Mahdi would be forced to resign. In Najaf, violence escalated in late November with the burning down of the Iranian consulate and the attack on the offices of several political parties, ushering in a time period of extreme brutality against protestors throughout the south. Arguably, another critical juncture of this time period was the assassination of Qassem Soleiminai on the 3rd of January. These actions both endangered protestors – particularly because American diplomats were using anti-Iranian sentiment in Iraq to justify their actions –and forced the religious establishment to take a position on American aggression. A final critical point occurred in February, when Muqtada al-Sadr's followers – known as the "blue hats" – turned against and attacked demonstrators in Najaf. Following this, new distractions arose for both the protestors and the religious establishment: the attempts at

government formation, the possibility of escalating violence between Shiʿa militias and the United States, and most recently – the COVID-19 pandemic.

4.3 Clerical Responses

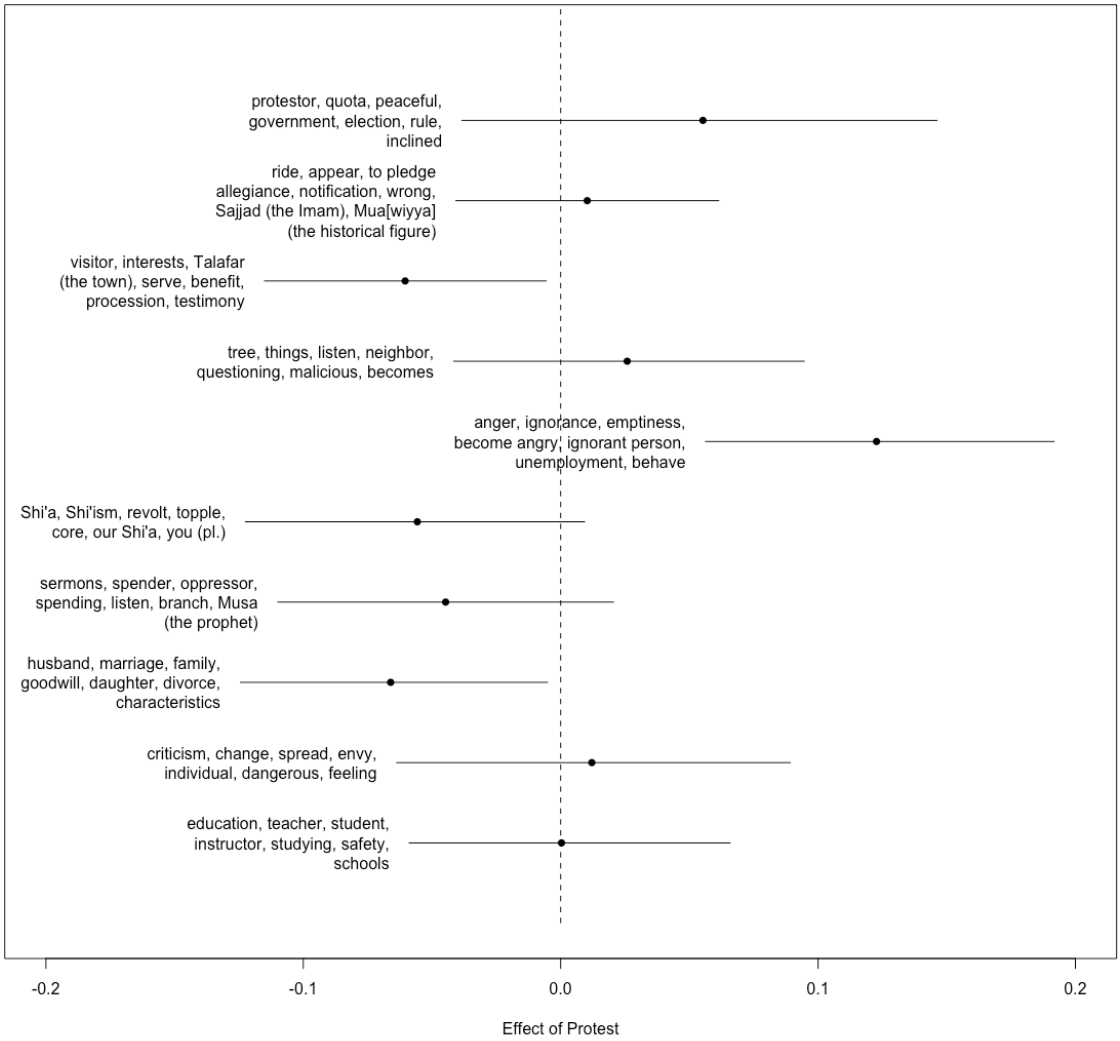
In the sections below, I analyze the behavior of three sets of clerics during these protest movements. First, the highest ranking religious authority: the office of Grand Ayatollah Sistani and his representatives in Kerbala, Sheikh Abdel Mahdi al-Karbalai and Sayyid Ahmed al-Safi. Their Friday sermons, in response to protest events, were closely followed by everyone within Iraq as well as those interested in Iraqi politics externally. Second, the reactions and points of view of the potential successors of the current four Grand Ayatollahs of Najaf. Thirdly, the reactions of the advanced students in the Hawza.

4.3.1 The Response of the Marjaʿiyya

The figure below represents an analysis of all the second Friday sermons conducted by Sistani's representatives in Kerbala. There are certain categories of words that are positively correlated with the occurrence of a protest movement. In other words, certain sets of words are more likely to appear in a Friday sermon when there has been a protest during the week preceding the sermon. These words include "anger" and "unemployment" thus suggesting an acknowledgements of the religious establishment of some of the causes of the protest movement. They also include words like "ignorance" and "ignorant person" which tentatively suggests a chastising tone that a closer reading of the sermons also highlights, one that warns of certain anti-social behaviors, conducted by ignorant individuals, during protest movements.

Other positive, though statistically insignificant, correlations also suggest that the clerical establishment brings up the government and electoral mechanisms more often during protest times. This was particularly demonstrated during the October Revolution when Sistani's representatives called for the resignation of the Prime Minister and the formation of a new government through existing governmental procedures. In other words, they called for reform *and not* for revolution.

Figure 23: Impact of Protests on Friday Sermon Rhetoric



Friday sermons from protest weeks are less likely to include words about marriage and family as well as about pilgrimages. Unsurprisingly, these topics are important social issues only when there is political stability. Interestingly, words relating to Shi'ism, to revolts and to the "rhetoric of oppression" overall are not raised during protest times. This suggests that there is no instigation or leadership of these protests at play. Indeed, words like "oppressor", "revolt", and "topple" are both negatively and insignificantly correlated with protest. The opposite finding would suggest that elite Shi'a clerics are using the "rhetoric of oppression" to incite protest movements.

In both the October Revolution and the Summer 2018 protests, and despite the popular analysis of the behavior of the religious establishment as supportive of protests, the behavior of the most elite clerics in the religious establishment – Sistani as embodied by his representatives – suggests that their ultimate aim was to avoid "fawdha" or "chaos." Indeed, from the earliest tipping points of the protest movement, the sermon of Sheikh Abdel Mahdi al-Kerbalai on October 25th (the declared day of rage) sent a message to the protestors that the religious establishment "urges the participants in these demonstrations to avoid contact with security forces and attacking them in any way. We also ask them to protect the sanctity of public and private property and to not attack government property or the property of citizens or any other sides."[252] The other representative of Sistani, Ahmed al-Safi, urged protestors to avoid "slipping into the whirlpool of violence, chaos, and destruction."[253] The appeal to "avoid chaos" is repeated throughout this time period. Moreover, clerics were problem-solvers attempting to resolve the issue of the water crisis in Basra themselves in addition to seeking reforms through

[252] Second Friday Sermon. Abdel Mahdi al-Karbalai. October 25, 2019.
[253] Second Friday Sermon. Ahmed al-Safi. November 29, 2019.

existing government channels and calling upon the protestors to protect the sanctity of the constitution and of the electoral systems in place.

This behavior is in line with the theory of institutional responsibility. High responsibility and high ability clerics are un-involved in protest movements but will mediate to preserve stability. This is demonstrated by the emphasis on avoiding chaos in the speeches as well as in the pin-pointed involvement in 2018 and 2019-2020.

4.4 **The Response of Sistani's Successors**

This section relies on interviews with seven Najafi Ayatollahs who were described to me as the future of the religious establishment and the successors to the current four Grand Ayatollahs of Najaf. I interviewed these clerics between November 2018 and January 2019, a few months after the 2018 protests in Basra and before the October Revolution.

When asked about their own history of political involvement, these clerics were largely un-involved in historical protests. The limits of their clerical involvement was in the capacity as representatives of figures like Khoei. Moreover, they were all supportive of Iraqi democracy and had participated in all previous parliamentary elections. Like many others in the Hawza, they believed that democratization takes time and that the current time period is preferable to the Baʿathist era.

They held nearly identical views with regards to a cleric's role in society, their involvement in politics, and their involvement in protest. This suggests that there is a socialization occurring within the Hawza that produces fairly similar clerics. In fact, one of the clerics commented on the uniformity of opinion. When asked to describe a cleric's role in society he responded that the clichéd answer was "that of a specialist, like a doctor, or an engineer" (which is, truly, the answer I received most often from clerics). He provided a more

thoughtful answer: "the community wants from the cleric more than simply religious guidance. They want guidance to do good and support for the oppressed."[254]

With regards to political engagement, most clerics at this level viewed it with distaste:

> What saved the situation [in the early 2000s] and was one of the factors for upholding society they [elite clerics] were those who did not enter politics. I remember some of the journalists who came in the beginning of the change, perhaps in 2004 or the end of 2003. They were asking: when will the Shi'a accomplish something and present it to the other honorable Iraqi groups? … He asked: "why do you avoid politics?" I told him "explain to me what politics is, if you mean the management of the affairs of the people then we are in the center of this issue, in its depth completely, because we abide with two commandments: promoting good and forbidding evil, which is the project of religion…If by politics you mean the art of the possible[255], lying, cheating… there is no set standard in politics… the friends of today will become the enemies of tomorrow… we cannot get involved in this from an ethical perspective."[256]

These clerics were, for the most part, uninterested in political activity. The types of political activity they occasionally engaged in were acts of mediation between different societal actors including tribes, political figures, and civil society activists. But even then, these were associated with the offices of the more elite clerics they were connected to and done in a formalized and institutionalized way.

Their views towards protest behavior mirror those at the more elite level, cautioning against harming economic activity and everyday life:

> Social movements or demonstrations… it is different… sometimes it is political demands, sometimes it is service demands, sometimes it is general needs… each of these have their own circumstances. A religious cleric entering protests directly, we have not entered until now, however, supporting the protestors… supporting the demands of the people… protests should not exceed peaceful demands so it does not impact society, because protestors don't represent the entire society, we don't have in any case, except rarely, that protests are

[254] Interview with Muhammad al-Qubanchi. Najaf, Iraq. December 2018.
[255] This definition of politics as "the art of the possible" is common amongst many Iraqi clerics as well as Iraqi politicians that I interviewed.
[256] Interview with Ayatollah Kharsan. Najaf, Iraq. December 2018.

> representative of an entire social state so that people delay their work and business and you know, protests sometimes have negative impacts on the economic situation, on the social situation, so one of its basics is the protection of the rights of others, you may have noticed that the Marjaʿiyya always reminds protestors and the government - it tells the government to notice the rights and the rightful demands of the protestors which include public service. It asks protestors to not encroach upon public property, public money or even private property… you know when people protest in a street, the street will be made busy, its economic movement will be delayed so you should not negatively impact others … you should request your rights without transgressing on the rights of others…. do not transform from an oppressed person to an oppressor.[257]

Other clerics also worried about "even if the protests are peaceful or spontaneous, there may be elements embedded in there that are corrupt"[258] which is a sentiment shared by those at the highest levels as well.

Their sentiments towards protest are reflected in their reaction to the summer 2018 protests and their reaction to the October Revolution: other than supporting the Marjaʿiyya, they chose to remain un-involved in protest. These clerics can be considered to have reasonably high authority and a high degree of responsibility towards the Hawza, seeing as though they consider themselves potential inheritors of the marjaʿiyya. Arguably, this makes them the most important category of clerics to consider.

4.4.1 **The Response of the Bahth al-Kharij students**

This category of clerics are those who have a sense of institutional responsibility – on account of the *increased* bureaucratization of the Hawza – but without much authority, given their relatively lower position in the religious hierarchy. My theory suggests that these clerics are likely to follow

[257] Interview with Ayatollah al-Hakim. Najaf, Iraq. December 2018.
[258] Interview with Muhammad al-Qubanchi. Najaf, Iraq. December 2018.

the behavior of more elite clerics, or, to bandwagon behind them. Indeed, this is what I find from interviews with these types of students.

First, like the Ayatollahs and Grand Ayatollahs described in the previous sections, they hold a slightly admonitory account of the events of 2018 and 2019-2020. Reflecting on the events of Basra the previous summer, one student told me:

> The main problem we have [here in Iraq] is lack of public knowledge that makes a person in Basra go out to protest and be willing to die because he wants water when he should go out because he wants to fix the problem of water. Our problem is lack of awareness. We will look for structural and not superficial answers, if we have awareness. [259]

He later added that Basrawis should have asked for a dam but the way they protested inspired superficial solutions that ultimately were only implemented by the Hawza. He, like many others, referred to the group sent by Grand Ayatollah Sistani to Basra to solve the water crisis as an example of the religious establishment's role in society.

This role that clerics occupy in society is described in the cliché that the Ayatollah in the previous section highlighted:

> Each religious science needs a specialist. Medical sciences require a doctor specializing in medicine. Engineering sciences require an engineer. Similarly, religious matters require a specialist, someone who is dedicated to studying it so that people can go to them.[260]

These clerics are of a different generation than the previous two. Most of them are serious about their Hawza studies although some of them, particularly those from elite families with international offices, have sought university degrees concurrently. Many of them are highly educated – having joined the Hawza after college.

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[259] Interview with bāhth khārij Student from non-clerical family in Nasriya. Najaf, Iraq. June 2019.
[260] Interview with bāhth khārij student from non-clerical family from southern Iraq. Najaf, Iraq. June 2019.

Their participation in elections stems both from a belief in democracy but, also, a commitment to Sistani and Hakim's guidance. Their view of acceptable political behavior is also similar to their teachers:

> Complete avoidance [of politics], in my opinion, is not possible. If politics in its general definition as the organization of people's affairs in a way that accomplishes their interests… direct political behavior, including occupying political roles, having a government position, I am against this. I believe in the non-religiozation of the state. So that it doesn't become a religious state.[261]

They were all uninvolved in the protest movements, including the ones who were from places like Basra and Suq al-Shuyookh. The reasons for their non-participation is that they didn't feel that they could do so in their personal capacity without involving the Hawza:

> I believe there are two issues. One I want to go down [to the protests] in my turban, the Marjaʿiyya must get involved in this issue. If the Marjaʿiyya says go out, we go out. The second time I go out as a normal individual… I wear a *dishdasha*[262] and go out… just like Sayyid Amir [the lay manager of a clerical office], this man [Sayyid Amir] he does not represent the Hawza. The turban represents the Hawza.[263]

This quote is the embodiment of bandwagoning behavior. And, in fact, it was these clerics – as well as the other students in the Hawza – that joined anti-government protests symbolically in Najaf and in Kerbala in fall 2019.[264] When they did so, they held banners of the religious establishment which had Sistani's name. They also limited their protests to areas surrounding the holy shrines.

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[261] Interview with bāhth khārij student from clerical Najafi family. Najaf, Iraq. January 2019.
[262] A long white robe worn by Iraqi men.
[263] Interview with bāhth khārij student from clerical family. Kufa, Iraq. December 2018.
[264] See: http://al-janoob.org/2019/10/News/144596

5 Conclusion

The congruence in behavior at these three levels suggests that there is a strong socialization process occurring within the Hawza. In other words, those who are on a trajectory towards being part of the religious establishment have their views and opinions molded by their teachers in specific ways. You can see this process unfolding even with beginner level students, who, in interviews where their teachers were present frequently made a show of deference to the opinion of their teacher, even if the question was directed at them. This tendency of lower-ranking clerics to follow the behavior of elites is bandwagoning, a behavior that occurs when an individual cleric has a sense of responsibility and little authority. This chapter demonstrated that this particular combination of variables is much more likely to exist in the contemporary Hawza than that of previous eras, mainly due to the fact that the contemporary Hawza has distributed the sense of institutional responsibility amongst lower ranking clerics in a way that it was not able to do so in the past, due to its increasing bureaucratization. What this all amounts to is that the inheritors of the Hawza will always be clerics who believe in the avoidance of chaos. Indeed, this is one of the key takeaways of both the chapter and the dissertation project overall.

The main gap in this chapter is the lack of assessment of Muqtada al-Sadr and his behavior during protest. Others have dedicated entire research programs to understanding Sadrist behavior.[265] His behavior in October 2020 was attempted leadership, instigation of some protests (particularly through his "blue-hat" followers) and a failed attempt to control the nature of the protests. This behavior stands in stark contrast to other elite clerics in Iraq. In the theoretical framework proposed here, he is considered a high authority and low responsibility

[265] See: (Robin-D'Cruz 2019)

cleric. His authority is derived from his associations to the religious establishment, through his father and uncle – who he is eager to publicize and use. His lack of responsibility stems from the fact that he is a Hawza outsider. Even his studies are conducted in the seminaries of Qom and not of Najaf.

However, it is beyond my current resources to assess the behavior of Muqtada al-Sadr. The closest I was able to come is to study the behavior of someone like Ammar al-Hakim, whose role is that of a "politician preacher." Further analysis of clerical behavior in this time period would include examining sermons by other clerics who have different ties to the religious establishment. Transcripts of these speeches are largely unavailable, but videos are.[266] The most important among them, and the one that stands in direct contrast to the Sistani sermons, is the Friday sermons delivered in the Great Mosque of Kufa, by and for the followers of Muqtada al-Sadr. This includes sermons by Sadr himself, as well as by a handful of clerics who support him.[267] In addition to the Kufa sermons, future analysis should look at news coverage of the Friday sermons delivered in the al-Rahman Mosque[268] in Baghdad on behalf of Ayatollah Mohammed al-Ya'qoubi, a former Sadrist cleric and the founder of the Fadhila Party, an Islamist Political Party.

Despite this particular shortcoming, this chapter does make several key contributions to the dissertation overall. Most importantly, it assesses the theory of institutional responsibility under conditions in which the religious establishment enjoys a good relationship with the state and an unprecedented degree of freedom. Some would even argue that the religious

[266] Videos are available on a wide array of mediums but I rely on the videos posted on this page: https://www.youtube.com/user/audayj/videos

[267] Hadi al-Dininawi, Sayyid Dhia al-Shawki, Muhannad al-Musawi, and Asaad al-Nasiri, Mahmoud al-Jayashi, Ali al-Numani, Sadiq al-Hasnawi

[268] For a fascinating primer on the al-Rahman Mosque and the Fadhila Party's takeover of it, see (Sirri 2019)

establishment is allied to the state. I have demonstrated that elite clerics, even under these conditions, will seek to preserve the political status quo. What is different is that this time, the status quo is seemingly more favorable to them. Unlike previous protest movements, however, their limited participation risks delegitimizing them in the eyes of their followers.

Chapter Eight

Conclusion

The theory of institutional responsibility suggests that elite clerics, particularly those in non-institutionalized religious systems, feel an obligation to protect and maintain the religious establishment. This means that these clerics will behave strategically, but not necessarily in a way that promotes their individual well-being. In other words, this is a story that transcends simple accounts of self-interest. In this manner, it theoretically can be used to explain the behavior of elite actors in other settings, beyond religious institutions. What distinguishes religious systems is where authority stems from, in this case: a claim to the divine.

In the empirical setting for this project, the Iraqi Hawza, most elite clerics have demonstrated – at most – a willingness to mediate between state actors and protestors. I argue that their decision to mediate stems from their desire to protect the status quo and avoid political and economic instability. Furthermore, I argue that this desire is constant *despite* regime type. In other words, they sought to maintain the status quo under colonialism, under authoritarianism, and under democratization. But why would that be the case? Alternative explanations would suggest that they would be inclined to avoid clashes with the state under colonialism and authoritarianism in order to protect themselves from reprisals. And, in the post-2003 era, they should seek to preserve the status quo in order to maintain the new permissive atmosphere. Evidence from these various time periods, however, shows that elite clerics sometimes incurred tremendous personal costs in order to protect the religious institution overall. Therefore, existing arguments about the importance of state repressive capacity and ideology are compelling but do not tell a full story. The contribution of the theory of institutional responsibility is that it reframes interest and strategic behavior away from the

personal and towards the institution. Clerics outside the institution behave differently than those within the institution, and those who have an interest and loyalty to the organization. In this way, this theory can travel beyond the Hawza.

The last seven chapters have presented a lot of condensed information about the Hawza – its structure, its history, and its legacy of participation in politics. This information was directed at various audiences, including political scientists who are trying to make sense of the role of religious organizations in politics; scholars of the Middle East who want to understand an important phenomenon in an understudied country; and scholars of Islam who may be interested in shifting away from focusing on Sunnism or on post-revolutionary Iran. The most important audience, however, and the one this chapters is directed towards are the Iraqi thinkers, activists, and policymakers who are trying to make sense of how the religious establishment will fit into their vision of an inclusive, democratic, yet still predominantly Shiʿa Iraq.

There are several things to be said on this account. First, if this dissertation's across-time analysis has demonstrated anything, it is that the perennial question in Iraqi affairs is: what will the religious establishment do? The British and Ottoman colonizers were just as preoccupied by this question as the Ba'athists in the 1980s and the Americans in the 2000s. Their preoccupation is not unfounded. Wherever the Shiʿa population is protesting, the religious establishment will be called upon to react. The Iraqi nationalists of the 1920s, as I demonstrate in chapter five, forged strong ties to the clerical establishment. Later in the Baʿathist era, protestors in the uprisings of 1977, 1979, and 1991 all looked to the religious establishment for guidance. It comes as no surprise, then, that Iraqis following the events of October 2019 looked to Grand Ayatollah Sistani for guidance. At the end of the day, Shiʿa protestors will look to the Shiʿa

religious establishment for legitimation, for support, and oftentimes, even for direction. There is a cost of this for the Hawza. On one hand, it needs the support of its adherents as a source of its authority. On the other hand, continued political involvement can invite criticism. Despite this, there is little reason to believe that this will make someone like Sistani, or his successors, irrelevant in the near future.

Therefore, in light of their continued relevance, what can be said about their involvement in politics? Simply, that the sense of institutional responsibility exists and will guide the behavior of elite clerics. That clerics perceive themselves as members of a venerable thousand-year-old organization that has survived many oppressive rulers and that will also survive future political pressures. At the same time, there are clerics who can use their ties to the religious establishment to acquire immense mobilization capacity and to instigate and lead protest. This is made possible by the organizational structure of the Hawza – its personalistic and non-institutionalized nature – allows for informal ties (usually, familial) to be exploited for personal gain. One of the clearest historical patterns is the political roles of the sons of the mujtahids, from Muhammad Ridha al-Shirazi to Muhammad Ridha al-Sistani, this is also a perennial feature of the Hawza:

> Yet no one quarrels that sons and sons-in-law play a major role in the marja'iya. They are referred to sometimes as the "eyes and ears" of the marja'. Depending on one's perspective, they are portrayed either as the ones who pilfer money from the coffers of the marja'iya and who perform waste, mediation, for their close friends and associates, or as saintly figures whose closeness to the marja'iya gives them baraka, blessings, smooths the workings of the institution, and in a sense, brings the marja' closer to the people. (Walbridge 2001, 233).

Future research – and the book expansion of this research project – can further prod this relationship. Can these ties explain clerical participation in politics generally? How does the theory of institutional responsibility play out in formal political behavior? Thus far, evidence from the 2018 elections shows that clerics are highly unlikely to run for office. Moreover,

qualitative evidence examining the Iraqi parliament shows that the clerics who end up in positions of governance – figures like Abd al-Hadi al-Hakim and Iyad Jamal al-Din – have affiliations with the religious establishment but are not full members. The activism of outsiders is something that other scholars have pointed out (Nielsen 2017). This dissertation highlights the mechanisms through which it operates.

The second key issue that should be of note to activists, policymakers, and state-builders is that while the Hawza's relationship with politics is of key interest to outside observers, to Hawza insiders, its importance varies. For some academic figures in the Hawza, the fixation on political activity may border on insulting. To others, political involvement is managed through covert back-channel avenues. To others yet, political involvement is more explicit. The typology presented in the previous chapter highlights these different perspectives. What is important for policymakers to acknowledge is the variety of these roles and the types of clerics who occupy them. Truly understanding this can improve the way in which policymakers and activists interact with the Hawza and build lasting relationships and partnerships with its various components.

The descriptions of the seminaries, the paths of learning, and the academic atmosphere presented in the three empirical chapters is demonstrative of the key internal dynamics of the Hawza. It is an institution that is loath to reform itself internally and that prides itself on its commitment to tradition. Part of this commitment is to its role in society. Despite the fears of many, it will not suddenly shift its attention to state-building or to ruling the country. In other words, Sistani's successor will not be very different from him. He will intercede when the political situation is unstable, he will maintain back-channels of communication with the government, and, at the same time, he will fund students and seminaries.

Knowing that the Hawza is unlikely to dramatically change, means that activists and policymakers would be well advised to pay closer attention to how the Hawza understands its role in society and what its views towards democratization are. It is my hope that one of the contributions of this research is to present how clerics define democratization. First, and despite their primarily role as scholars, clerics do have a perception of the marjaʿiyya as being above politics. In other words, that the marjaʿiyya is a "safety valve" that protects Iraq from the mistakes of its political class. This definition of being above the state is sure to have political repercussions going forward.

Second, clerics view what is currently happening in Iraq as a natural progression towards democratization. They participate in elections and emphasize that democratization is a long game. This stands in stark contrast to many Iraqi protestors who believe that the system is too corrupt to be salvageable. In other words, the main point of contention between clerics and activists is that the former view reform as the only acceptable avenue for change while the latter are increasingly turning to revolution. Thus, before any change can occur in Iraqi politics, it bears to keep in mind that the goals of the revolutionaries will never be fully supported by the religious establishment. If the revolutionaries succeed at creating a new status quo, however, they can invariably count on the support of clerics in protecting it.

Appendices

Appendix A

Major Protest Movements in Iraqi History

Protest Name	Date	Purpose of Protest	Elite Clerical Participation	State	Protestors
Arbaʿeen conflict.	1890	Conflict between Shiʿa pilgrims and Ottoman authorities attempting to prohibit pilgrimage.	No data available.	Ottoman.	Shiʿa pilgrims.
Anti-conscription conflict.	1910	Najafis conflict with Ottomans because they offer protection to Arab soldiers escaping army.	No data available.	Ottoman.	Masses.
1905 Najaf Uprising.	1905	Rivalry between Zghurt and Shmurt factions culminates in clashes when Ottomans give authority to Shmurt.	Grand Ayatollah Yazdi was protected by Zghurt and Shmurt factions.	Ottoman.	Zghurt and Shmurt popular factions.

Anti-colonial protests in support of Libya in Kerbala, Najaf and Samarra	October 12th, 1911.	Anti-colonial protests in support of Libya	Certain clerics made speeches and read poetry: Muhammad Baqir Al-Shubaibi, Al-Sheikh Ali Al-Sharqi, Muhammad Hassan Kashif Al-Ghita. Religious establishment in Najaf sent two emissaries to Tripoli to figure out how to help in the jihad.	Ottoman.	Masses and clerics
Anti-Ottoman Rebellion in Najaf.	April 1915	Najafis and surrounding tribes protest Ottoman rule and conscription practices.	Ayatollah Yazdi acts as mediator between Ottomans Najafi notables on two occasions (March 5th, 1915 and July 16th, 1915).	Ottoman.	Notables and masses led by Attiyah Abu Kulal and the other sheikhs of Najaf.
Anti-Turkish Rebellion in Al-Hillah	1915	Following Najaf, Al-Hillah protests Ottoman rule and conscription practices.	Elite clerics serve as mediators between Ottomans and Shi'a soldiers fighting the British.	Ottoman.	Masses.
Anti-Turkish Rebellion in Kerbala	May 1916	Following Najaf, Kerbala protests Ottoman rule and conscription practices.	Kamuna family supported by local clerics. Appealed to Grand Ayatollah Yazdi to mediate afterwards.	Ottoman.	Kamuna family aided by tribes and Abu Kulal in Najaf.

1917 Najafi Revolt*	1917-1918	Revolt against British rule, caused by economic situation and local power politics.	Clerics attempt to mediate but do not think timing of revolt is right. Some Najafi clerics in communication with anti-occupation activist clerics, including Mahdi Al-Khalisi.	Colonial.	Najafi notables.
1920 Revolution*	1920	Anti-colonial protests.	Some elite clerics are allied with nationalists. Others are co-opted by nationalists. Some only join much later in the uprising.	Colonial.	Tribes, urban elites, clerics.
Rumaitha and Diywaniya Revolts	1935-1936	Two Shi'a tribal movements protesting lack of representation in Iraqi government. Severely repressed by government.	Kashif al-Ghita supported the rebels and the government appealed to him for help in negotiating with them.	Kingdom.	Tribes.
Al-Wathba Uprising and Al-Masira Al-Kubra	1948	Demonstrations and strikes calling for better wages and living conditions. Workers from Haditha march to Baghdad in protest.	Mohammad Al-Sadr is asked to organize new elections in response to popular discontent.	Kingdom.	Students, Istiqlal Party, Communist Party.

al-Intifada	1952	Demands for nationalization of oil increase, protests started by discontented students.	No clerical involvement.	Kingdom.	Students, Communist Party.
Shiʿa Protests in Najaf and Basra.	1969	A ban on the pilgrimage to Kerbala for Arb'aeen results in mass protests in Najaf and Basra.	Protests were partly in response to arrests of clerics, like Hasan Shirazi who delivered an anti-government speech. Hakim meets with Da'wa to warn them to avoid confrontation with the government.	Early Baʿathist	Shiʿa masses (prohibited from pilgrimages) and Hizb Al-Daʿwa
Hakim funeral protests.	June 2nd 1970.	Protests erupt at Muhsin al-Hakim's funeral to protest the government labeling his son, Mahdi al-Hakim, as a spy.	In response to government accusing Mahdi Al-Hakim of being a spy.	Early Baʿathist.	Funeral procession mourners for Muhsin al-Hakim turn into protestors
Safar Uprising*	1977	In response to a government ban on the Arbaʿeen pilgrimage.	Non-involvement of most elites. Mediation by Sadr.	Early Baʿathist.	Shiʿa pilgrims.
Rajab Uprising*	1979	In response to the arrest of Sadr I.	Co-optation of Sadr I. by Hizb Al-Daʿwa. Non-involvement of other elites. Instigation by Sadr students.	Baʿathist.	Clerics, masses, Daʿwa party.

Al-Intifada Al-Shabaniya	1991	Uprising starts in Basra after withdrawal from Kuwait. Moves rapidly throughout Southern provinces, calls for regime change.	Co-optation of Al-Khoei. Opportunism by Al-Hakim. Bandwagoning of local-level clerics, especially Khoei agents.	Baʿathist.	Masses, soldiers.
Second Sadr Revolt	1999	In response to the assassination of Sadr II, who had been attracting large audiences to his Friday prayer sermons in Kufa.	Some of Sadr's students were involved. Hizb Al-Daʿwa claims involved, but unsubstantiated.	Baʿathist.	Masses.

This table provides an overview of uprisings that occurred in pre-2003 Iraq in which the main participants were Shiʿa Arabs. The list was compiled from various Iraqi history books but because it relies on secondary scholarship, there is a large possibility that there were undocumented uprisings and revolts at the local level in Iraq, particularly in Najaf and Kerbala. Because this dissertation is focused on the role of the Shiʿa Hawza, the table purposefully omits protests in which the Shiʿa were absent. Cases marked with an asterisk have been selected for study. Moreover, the contemporary protests have been omitted because they have been discussed in chapter seven.

The table starts listing uprisings in 1846 because that is when the modern marjaʿiyya was formed with the ascendancy Muhammad Hasan Najafi to the position chief mujtahid (Louer

2008).[269] The table includes the name of the uprising. Where no formal name is given, I simply name it according to the year and location. The date and duration have been compiled from several complementary sources to insure validity. The column on range of clerical participation is observational and limited to a precursory glance of clerical behavior. The second to last column describes the time period which I characterize into seven time periods corresponding with specific years: Ottoman (1846-1917), colonial (1917-1932), Kingdom (1932-1958), Republic (1958-1963), early Baʿathist (1963-1979), and Baʿathist (1979-2003). Finally, the column devoted to "the protestors" lists the primary actors who were involved in rebellion. Categories take on the form of societal actors from masses, tribes, notables, intellectuals, opposition political parties to clerics.

Appendix B:

Fieldwork Appendix

1 Introduction

Although fieldwork in Iraq has recently become more viable[270], it remains that access to the Hawza and its clerics is difficult to negotiate. For the purposes of transparency and reflexivity, I provide a brief description of my experience conducting fieldwork in Iraq. I begin with a discussion of my positionality and views prior to fieldwork, emphasizing the views that may

[269] The cut-off makes it so that I have to omit the Kerbala insurrection against the Ottomans in 1843 which has been covered by (J. R. I. Cole and Momen 1986).

[270] David Patel raises the question of viability of doing research in Iraq in his APSA MENA article "The marginalization of Iraqi Islamists in political science." He writes, "Clearly the dangers of field research in Iraq after 2003 deterred many from visiting the country (aside from the Kurdish Region), but the vast majority of Iraq is safer today than it has been for years" (Patel 2019).

have inadvertently shaped my initial theorizing. Second, I reflect on the advantages and challenges of being a "second generation researcher" and what that means for the scholarship I produce and how I disseminate it to different communities. Third, I discuss how I gained and maintained access to the various communities that I engaged with, including how I presented myself to my respondents. Fourth, I discuss navigating the intersection of activism and scholarship. Fifth, I discuss interviewing opposition party members and protestors. Finally, in the conclusion to this section, I provide an example of some of the interview guides I used.

2 Pre-Fieldwork Views and Influences

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, I did not stumble upon the Hawza by chance. Rather, my research question arose from years of hearing Iraqis in exile, particularly in North America, complain about being disappointed by the clerical establishment, which did not support their protest behavior against Saddam Hussein's regime. It is important to note that these were everyday Iraqis who complained and not members of any Islamist political party. My family has always been distant from political activity. At the same time, and confusingly, these Iraqis venerated the clerics of the Hawza. When the names of Grand Ayatollah Khoei or Sistani were evoked, it was always in deeply reverent tones. As a young Shi'a Iraqi-American, I was taught that "our scholars", as they were called, were the most knowledgeable in all matters. My family, both those in Iraq and in the United States, loosely emulated the grand ayatollahs of Najaf, though I myself never did.

In June 2003, I travelled to Iraq for the first time since I left it as a young child in the mid-90s. From 2003 until I graduated high school, I spent nearly every summer in Kerbala and it was where I was introduced to the lived practices of Shi'ism – the pilgrimages, the rituals, and

the visitations to the shrines. Over the years, I watched as clerics were dragged from their position as near deities in the streets of Southern Iraq to opportunistic political actors worthy of condemnation. Between these views and the complaints I heard from exiles as a child, I wondered: did clerics really behave opportunistically in politics and protest?

The question lingered in the back of my mind and transformed into a research puzzle through my years taking classes in Islamist Political Thought at Wellesley and, later, as a PhD student at MIT. I was exposed to two biases: first, that Shiʿa clerics had disappointed Iraqis and secondly, that they were, particularly at the level of the marjaʿiyya, venerable and honest community leaders. Fortunately, these biases balanced themselves out and were ultimately mitigated by a process of learning that occurred over the course of my fieldwork. My decision to do fieldwork over the course of several years in months-long and weeks-long spurts granted me the space to learn and to run my ideas by others. Sharing my research and my interview guides with both political scientists and Iraq experts allowed me to refine my questions, to confront some of my biases, and to answer some of the pressing questions that every Iraqi scholar must contend with: including, does this work contribute to division of Iraqi society in any way? How does one write about Shiʿism and Shiʿa victimization while not conjuring sectarianism at a delicate time in Iraqi domestic politics? How does one tell a century's worth of stories, as faithfully as possible, while respectfully distancing oneself from conventional and mythologized narratives?

Saddam Hussein's anti-Shiʿa sectarianism was introduced to me in Iraq, not in the United States. As a child growing up in the United States, I had no idea that Saddam Hussein was Sunni nor was I taught that Sunnis received preferential treatment in Iraq. As the sectarian war brewed in Baghdad and in the small towns that connected Kerbala to Baghdad, I developed the same

aversion to the very word "sectarianism" that many other Iraqis possess. Fixating on it, I came to believe, was allowing the West to dictate our national identity. As a scholar, I made a conscious decision to not study sectarianism because I did not want to contribute to the already fraught relationships between Iraq's various victimized communities. I only include this brief reflection here to explain to the reader why my dissertation rarely makes mention of the Hawza's role and views towards sectarianism. To some, perhaps this is a major omission and perhaps a potential variable. From my perspective, my decisions as an Iraqi outweigh any research benefits that may accrue from studying what is popular. When hundreds of thousands of Iraqis protested in 2019 and 2020, they intentionally eschewed and critiqued sectarian lenses. The least I can do to support them, from the outside, is to respect their vision of Iraq by avoiding the urge to transform any story about Iraq into a story about sectarianism.

Perhaps if I was not Iraqi, it would be easier to dismiss the implications of the research and the way in which it will be received. It would also be easier to produce scholarship without activism. However, because I am Iraqi, I include this reflection on my research to show that I am both aware of my positionality and am open to sharing how it may have impacted me.

2 The Positionality of Second Generation Researchers

I view positionality in fieldwork as a combination of both group membership and group engagement. Group membership can be defined as ascriptive identity, which you are born with and is involuntary. On the other hand, group engagement is a voluntary act and includes involvement with the community and attendance of formal and informal events, thus signaling commitment to the group. I differentiate between these two aspects of identity because I consider myself a member of a group (Iraqi Shi'a) which I was born into and have chosen to not

actively engage in (e.g. by attendance of organized rituals, by membership in a mosque or other Islamic organization[271], etc…).

I describe myself as a "second generation researcher" or someone who is born into an identity and maintains an intimate understanding of the community, despite non-engagement. Some may assume that a second-generation researcher has the advantages of someone with active engagement, including built-in networks and easier access. In reality, there are extreme disadvantages of being an in-group member, something which has been expressed to me, on multiple occasions, by other Arab social scientists doing fieldwork in the Middle East. In an article on proxy interviewing, Melani Cammett notes that researchers have reached a consensus in that there is no inherent advantage to being either an outsider or an insider (Cammett 2013). For example, Cammett touches upon one grievance of many "insider" researchers: "...despite its presumed advantages for access to sources and in-group events, insider status is not always superior, especially with elites" (ibid 127). At the same time, Cammett shows that certain types of elites may find speaking to an outsider, and particularly an American, off-putting: "As a U.S. citizen, it is difficult to gain access to and conduct meaningful interviews with representatives or supporters of parties such as Hezbollah, which has hostile relations with the U.S. government" (ibid).

As an Iraqi-American, I had the unique experience of having different parts of my identity produce different reactions and results. The way in which I presented myself, which I elaborate on below, allowed me to gain and maintain access to a community that is otherwise closed off to outsiders.

[271] Barring a brief period of membership in Wellesley's Muslim Student Association, Al-Muslimat.

3 Gaining Access and Navigating Identity

In a meeting with the head of a prominent clerical family in Najaf, I was advised to present myself as a Kerbalai working on her Ph.D. in the United States. My father was present in this meeting and his presence was encouraged for the subsequent ones for cultural and religious reasons surrounding the permissibility of women being left alone with non-relative males. However, even before receiving this advice I introduced myself to clerics as being Iraqi, raised in the United States, and from a Kerbalai family. Depending on the setting, I would highlight other parts of my identity including: my tribe, my family's participation in protests, and my academic credentials.

My tribe was a signal of being "Arab" which sometimes needed to be evoked, though less commonly amongst clerics and more commonly among protestors and opposition party members. My family's participation in the 1991 uprisings and my grandfather's execution were on rare occasions raised – more by my father than myself – as a means of signaling that I harbored no Baʿathist sympathies and that I was not a stranger to political suffering. In some instances, it was the evidence I needed to prove that I was not a foreign intelligence officer. As mentioned in the dissertation, many clerics had family members who were executed or deported by the government.

I sometimes relied on my identity as an academic to build rapport with Hawza clerics with academic leanings. Many clerics in the Hawza asked about my research and shared their own, particularly those who had side-projects relating to peace-building. Other times, my lead contact in Kerbala who arranged some of my interviews used my academic background and MIT or Harvard's name as a way to signal to potential interviewees that I was someone who deserved their time. In many cases, this was a form of pride and I was considered one of their

"sisters", "daughters" or "granddaughters" on account of my Iraqi and Shi'a identity. Despite our shared identity, clerics understood my responsibility as a researcher to try to be objective. As an example, Grand Ayatollah Muhammad Sa'eed al-Hakim, met with me briefly to ask me to "not embellish" and to "speak the truth about us [the Hawza]"[272].

I was careful to maintain a visibly professional appearance to reinforce my academic identity. Although many female scholars advise adhering to local dress standards, I tried to maintain the same style of dress I would for any professional setting, with the addition of always having an Iraqi abaya on hand. I chose to do that in order to emphasize my academic identity and in order to appear consistent if we were to meet in a different setting or if they decided to search for me online. After all, I knew I was not being regarded as an outside visitor but as someone who was part of the same community. There were instances in which I wore an abaya because the clerical office or seminary was in an area close to a shrine where dress standards were enforced. In only one instance, a cleric requested that I wear an abaya for an interview which was conducted in his house. Other than that request, that particular interview was not very different from the others.

A typical interview unfolded as follows: I would get a cleric's name and phone number from either a colleague of theirs who made the recommendation (and whom I had interviewed) or from an assistant at the office of a cleric who helped me arrange a set of interviews during later fieldwork trips. I would then send them or their assistant a text message introducing myself, mentioning the name of the mutual contact who made the connection, and a short blurb in Arabic about my project. Most clerics (or, their assistants) responded positively – having received a phone call from the mutual contact ahead of my message. Some would ask to see the

[272] Meeting with Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Sa'eed al-Hakim. Najaf, Iraq. January 2019.

interview questions (and I would send them the interview guide) and others would simply move on to arrange a time and place for the meeting. We almost always met at either the guest sitting room of their homes or at their office in a seminary. I rarely interviewed a cleric alone and was almost always accompanied by a male member of my family, most commonly my father who was familiar with my research and my interview questions. More importantly, he was able to navigate social settings and advised me on proper address. He rarely interjected in my interviews except to dispel any fears my interviewee subjects had about my intentions and my identity. He sat in on interviews that commonly went over an hour and listened patiently while I went through my interview guide, only answering questions if they were directed at him.

4 Bridging Scholarship and Activism

During one notable occasion, a cleric had been directing his responses towards my father rather than at me. My father calmly and politely explained to the cleric that he was not the researcher and that he should not assume so simply because I was a young woman. These interjections of feminist activism, though rare, are impossible to avoid. I am less concerned about their impact on my research simply because my research had little to do with gender (though there was a question about women's rights in the interview guide). On my end, I avoided providing my own perspective or pressing my respondents in any way. I sometimes posed follow-up questions but they were mostly for clarification. The most difficult experience I had to sit silently through was when I posed a question, near the end of the interview, about women's rights in Islam and a middle-ranking cleric responded to me jokingly by saying "what about men's rights?", I smiled

and waited for him to finish answering the question. But I would be remiss to not mention that after my fieldwork was concluded I did contact various clerics – particularly high ranking ones – to advocate for their involvement in promoting women's rights. The greatest irony is that I also contacted them in the middle of the October protests to ask them why they were not being more supportive of the protestors. My research answers this question.

Although I am certain that a good number of clerics would not have rejected interview requests from scholars with different (non-Shi'a, non-Iraqi) backgrounds, I doubt that they would have received answers as forthright as the ones I received. There are also clerics who would have rejected interviews with outsiders and I was able to interview them as well. These clerics, as I discuss throughout the empirical chapters, have a profound fear of outsiders, most notably of foreign intelligence. It would be difficult to convince them, for example, to speak to a white American. Though most were put at ease after a few moments of speaking to me and asking questions about my origin, few took longer to convince. The most extreme example was a high ranking cleric in Najaf who told me that one of the purposes of my research – to introduce the Hawza to a new audience – was giving out the Hawza's secrets to outsiders. This was a rare opinion (and the only reaction of this type), but needless to say, I cut that interview short.

I have also tried to give back to the Hawza as much as I could in areas that were distant from my work. I hesitate to say "without sacrificing objectivity" because I think objectivity is both a myth and a privilege of those who do not study communities they are tied to. For example, I agreed to participate in a conference in which I had the freedom to write on whatever topic I chose (I ended up writing about youth and unemployment). I politely refused participation in another conference, associated with the religious establishment, and requesting a

paper on their role in peace-building. I felt the latter was too close to my own research. I have done smaller favors for those who have allowed me to interview them: translating and making introductions to members of civil society or to academics abroad. In order to understand and study the Hawza comprehensively, I have to be both a recipient and a contributor.

5 Interviewing the Opposition

My experience interviewing members of the opposition – the Da'wa Party and protestors from the 1970s – was different from my experience interviewing clerics. Participants in the protests were very difficult to find and I happily agreed to interview anyone that my respondents recommended, including those who witnessed but did not participate. These interviews were easiest to conduct – I had a semi-structured interview guide and allowed people to tell me their stories. They were happy to allow me to record their stories and usually expressed surprise that any scholar was documenting them. I met many of these figures in their places of work or in restaurants in Najaf. We shared meals and long conversations before and after the interviews. Many of them participated in other protest and opposition activity and described it to me as well.

The Da'wa party interviews took on a more journalistic aspect though I had to frequently assure them that I was not a journalist, but a researcher interested in their past political activity. With higher ranking members, I frequently had to show a transcript of my interview to someone in their office. These interviews tended to be shorter and to begin with a sort of defensiveness that would erode once they believed that I was genuinely interested in their opposition-era years and not in present-day politics. Most of these interviews took places in offices in Baghdad, though infrequently over the phone and once, in London. I confess that I was very careful with

personal information when talking to politicians and presented myself very formally with my academic credentials and identification.

6 Interview Guides and Analyses

The interview guides for each of these groups was different. Below is a sample interview guide I used as a skeleton for all clerics in the contemporary era, with adaptations depending on the time period, their ranking, and other factors.

1. How old were you when you decided to join the Hawza? What motivated you to join?

2. Have you studied before or are you currently studying in a typical university? What kind of studies? What motivated you to pursue it?

3. As a Hawza student, where did you get your monthly stipends from and was it enough? Did you have any other jobs?

4. How do you perceive the role of the cleric in society? What are his responsibilities towards society?

5. What are the job opportunities available for clerics?

6. Are you currently a representative for any cleric? What is the role of the representative and what are his responsibilities?

7. Is there a desire of transforming the Hawza into an official private university like Al-Azhar in Egypt? What is your personal opinion on the matter? Do Hawza students face any difficulties because their certificates are unofficial?

8. In your opinion, in which ways do non-Muslims in the West misunderstand Islam?

9. In your opinion, which state has an ideal relationship between its religious and governmental institutions? What is the ideal relationship between religious and governmental institutions?

10. Do you think a cleric should avoid politics entirely? What type of political activity can he engage in?

11. If popular anti-government protests occur, under what conditions and at what stage should clerics get involved and what type of involvement is appropriate for them?

12. There have been a lot of recent protests in Iraq and in the region, have you participated in any? What was your role?

13. Did you participate in the previous Iraqi elections?

14. Today, Iraq face a lot of problems like: terrorism; crisis of water, electricity and services; failure of education system; weakness of electoral system; corruption; poverty; human rights; women's rights; environmental problems; decrease in religiosity and in morals. So what, in your opinion, is the most important problem that Iraq faces?

By contrast, the interview guide below is one I used for clerics in the 1970s. It is extremely comprehensive and I never did ask any cleric all of the questions in it. It is directly copied from my fieldwork file and includes my personal notes as to the importance and purpose of each question. I thought a lot about the purpose and importance of questions so that I would be able to easily adapt the interview guide if I was pressed for time. I also had to frequently adapt if clerics answered multiple questions. I am happy to share my other interview guides with interested researchers. Please note that the interview guides I carried to the actual interviews were all in Arabic.

Question	**Question Number**	**Purpose [Hypothesis Testing, Establishing IV, DV background, etc…]**	**Additional Info on Purpose**	**Importance of Asking Question**
Where were you trained?	1.1	Establishing IV	Hierarchy, bureaucracy	Not very - info may be available online
Who were your teachers?	1.1.1	Establishing IV	Hierarchy, bureaucracy	Not very - info may be available online
Who were your colleagues?	1.1.2	Establishing IV	Hierarchy, bureaucracy	Not very - info may be available online
What level did you achieve?	1.1.3	Establishing IV	Hierarchy, bureaucracy	Not very - info may be available online
Who provided you with certificates for that level?	1.1.4	Establishing IV	Hierarchy, bureaucracy	Not very - info may be available online
Do you teach now?	1.2	Establishing IV	Hierarchy, bureaucracy	Not very - info may be available online

Where do you teach?	1.2.1	Establishing IV	Hierarchy, bureaucracy	Not very - info may be available online
Who are your students?	1.2.2	Establishing IV	Hierarchy, bureaucracy	Not very - info may be available online
While you were a student, how did you support yourself financially?	1.3	Establishing IV & Hawza specific question on degree of financial independence	Bureaucracy	Important
How did your colleagues support themselves?	1.3.1	Establishing IV & Hawza specific question on degree of financial independence	Bureaucracy	Important
How do you support your students today?	1.3.2	Establishing IV & Hawza specific question on degree of financial independence	Bureaucracy	Important
Are you currently an agent of any Grand Ayatollah?	1.4	Establishing IV	hierarchy	Not very - info may be available online
Do you have your own agents?	1.4.1	Establishing IV	hierarchy, bureaucracy	Not very - info may be available online
How big is the network [that you are part of/that you have established]? Where does it extend to?	1.4.2	Establishing IV	hierarchy, bureaucracy	Important

There are many people who believe that the Shi'a clergy are divided between the quietists and the activists.To what extent do you think this characterization is true?	2.1	Alternate explanations	The role/prevalence of ideology of political quietism vs. political activism	Very important
If it is not true, how would you describe the fractures in the Hawza?	2.1.1	Establishing IV and assessing Alternate explanations	The stability of the religious system	Very important
Where would you place yourself in this system? Where would you place your students and your teachers?	2.1.2	Establishing IV	hierarchy	Important
Could you draw the structure of the Hawza for me - with the seminaries and who leads them?	2.1.3	Establishing IV	hierarchy	Important

Others have divided the Shi'a into the camps of those who believe in Wilayat al-Faqih and those who do not. What is your opinion on the matter? Is this a proper way to characterize the Shi'a clergy or would you propose another way?	2.2	Establishing IV and assessing Alternate explanations	the role/prevalence of ideology of political quietism vs. political activism and the stability of the religious system	Very important
What is your opinion on Wilayat Al-Faqih?	2.2.1	Alternate explanations	Ideology and views on the role of religion in politics	Moderately Important
Do you think Wilayat Al-Faqih can be successfully implemented in Iraq?	2.2.2	Alternate explanations	Ideology and views on the role of religion in politics	Moderately Important
Do you think it is religiously permissible to have Wilayat Al-Faqih in a place that is as religiously diverse as Iraq?	2.2.3	Alternate explanations	Ideology and views on the role of religion in politics	Moderately Important
In your view, what is the primary role of Shi'a clerics in their communities?	3.1	Establishing IV	Relationship with community	Important

Do they serve as the conscience of the community to remind them of what is right or wrong?	3.1.1	Establishing IV	Relationship with community	Moderately Important
Do you they mainly perform social services like officiating weddings and leading prayers?	3.1.2	Establishing IV	Relationship with community	Moderately Important
Do they serve as the representative of the community? In what capacity? Who do they represent the community to?	3.1.3	Establishing IV	Relationship with community, relationship with state	Important
What role does the community assign you to? Is this the same role that you think a cleric should primarily occupy?	3.1.4	Establishing IV	Relationship with community	Important
In times of war versus times of peace, does the nature of that role change?	3.2	Establishing IV	Political role of clergy, relationship with the state	
What political role – if any – do you think clerics had during the Ba'athist Era?	3.2.1	Establishing IV	Relationship with community, relationship with state	Important

The American Occupation?	3.2.2	DV Background	Assessing stability of religious system - if changing state/church relations changes political role. Possible external validity - are occupations, civil wars, invasions and wars like uprisings in motivating clerical participation?	Not very important
The civil war era?	3.2.3	DV Background	same as above	Not very important
The post-occupation era?	3.2.4	DV Background	same as above	Not very important
The invasion of Da'esh?	3.2.5	DV Background	same as above	Very important
What about during times of uprisings against the government, what is the role of a cleric then?	3.3	DV Background	It's good to establish what they believe their role is vs. the role that they actually end up playing - raises the question: can the religious system push clerics to behave in ways that they previously rejected?	Very important
Can you describe your daily life as a cleric during the Ba'athist era?	4.1	Establishing IV	Relationship with the community, relationship with the state	Important
What were your duties as a religious leader back then? How have they changed over the years, in post-Ba'athist Iraq?	4.1.1	Establishing IV and comparability	Relationship with the community, relationship with the state	not very important

What obstacles did you face back then? What obstacles do you face today?	4.1.2	Establishing IV and comparability	Relationship with the community, relationship with the state	important
What sort of relationship would you say that the government had with the Hawza?	4.1.3	Establishing IV	Relationship with the state	very important
What sort of relationship does the current government have with the Hawza?	4.1.4	Establishing IV	Relationship with the state - does it change behavior?	moderately Important
Did you receive any Khums during the Ba'athist era?	4.1.5	Establishing IV	Bureaucracy and relationship with the state (financial independence)	important
How did people pay Khums at the time?	4.1.6	Establishing IV	Bureaucracy	important
Where did the money go to?	4.1.7	Establishing IV	Bureaucracy	important
Were you ever involved in any opposition movements?* OR (If they were involved): I know that you were involved in [opposition movement]…)	4.2	DV Background	Establishing Political Activism	important
MAI?	4.2.1	DV Background	Establishing Political Activism	important
SCIRI?	4.2.2	DV Background	Establishing Political Activism	important

The Da'wa Party?	4.2.3	DV Background	Establishing Political Activism - make sure to ask them HAD questions if yes	important
What sort of involvement?	4.2.3.1	DV Background	Establishing Political Activism	important
To what extent would you characterize any of these groups as religious?	4.2.3.2	DV Background	Establishing Political Activism	important
What was the goal of the group?	4.2.3.3	DV Background	Establishing Political Activism	moderately Important
Were any other religious leaders involved in this group?	4.2.3.4	DV	Establishing Political Activism	important
Were you ever involved in any popular uprisings? OR (If you know they were involved, I know that you did [such and such] during the [uprising], can you explain ….)	4.3	DV	Establishing Political Activism	very important
1977? 1979? 1991? 1999?	4.3.1	DV	Establishing Political Activism	very important
If yes [for any], can you describe the nature of your involvement?	4.3.2	DV	type of participation	very important
When did you get involved exactly and why?	4.3.2.1	DV	motivation, timing	very important
What were the general reasons that you became involved?	4.3.2.1.1	DV	motivations	very important

Was there a defining moment for you during the uprising that motivated you to participate?	4.3.2.1.1.1	DV	motivation, timing	very important
Did any senior cleric at the time suggest or mandate involvement or non-involvement? Did any senior cleric suggest or mandate the nature of involvement? And were you motivated by any of these orders?	4.3.2.1.1.1.2	DV	Motivation, Ability, Constraint, Timing	very important
What did you think the goal of the uprising was?	4.3.2.2.	DV	Motivation	very important
What did you think the outcome would be?	4.3.2.3	DV	Motivation, opportunism	very important
Did you think it would be successful at regime change?	4.3.2.3.1.1	DV	Motivation, opportunism	very important
Did you think it would be successful at government change?	4.3.2.3.1.2	DV	Motivation, opportunism	very important
Did you think it would be successful at change in government policies?	4.3.2.3.1.3	DV	Motivation, opportunism	very important

If you didn't think it would be successful, when did you know that? Did your opinion about its success change over time?	4.3.2.3.2	DV	motivation, types of participation, change over time	very important
Did you face any pressures from the Ba'athist government at the time? Did these pressures change after the uprising, in what way?	4.3.2.3.3	DV	co-optation	very important
How did your fellow clerics behave at the time?	4.3.2.4	DV	clerical participation	very important
Can you name some of the clerics you knew at the time and what their reaction was?	4.3.2.4.1	DV	clerical participation	very important
Who did you think instigated this uprising?	4.3.2.5	DV	instigation	very important
Was it premediated or spontaneous?	4.3.2.5.1	DV	instigation	very important

What was the general mood – in the Hawza – after the success of the 1979 Iranian Revolution? Did any clerics believe that the same could happen in Iraq? If yes, who? And who opposed them in this belief?	4.3.3.1.1	IV & Alternate Explanations	motivations and external involvement	very important
Many people think that this uprising was really an attempt to export the Iranian Revolution into Iraq, do you think this view is true?	4.3.3.1.2	IV & Alternate Explanations	motivations and external involvement	very important
If yes, who orchestrated this attempt?	4.3.3.1.2.1	DV	Instigation?	very important
If not, then what was actually happening?	4.3.3.1.2.2	DV	Alternate explanations?	very important
What impact do you think Khomeini's correspondence with Sadr I had on the morale of the people and the Hawza prior to the protests?	4.3.3.1.3	IV & Alternate Explanations	motivations and external involvement	very important
What role did Iraqi clerics have in this uprising?	4.3.3.1.4	DV	clerical participation	very important

Specifically, what was the role of Sadr I. vs Khoei?	4.2.2.1.4.1	DV	Elite clerics role	very important
Is there anything else you would like to tell me about concerning your experience as a religious cleric that I have not asked you about?	4.3	general question	strategy to see if there are critical aspects I am missing	moderately important
Is there anyone else you would suggest I talk to ?	4.4	general question	strategy for getting more contacts	important

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