

RELATIONS OF THE BA'TH GOVERNMENT WITH THE SHI'A COMMUNITY DURING THE YEARS OF SADDAM HUSSEIN'S RULE IN IRAQ

Received: 5 August 2026 | Accepted: 19 August 2026 | Published: 25 September 2026

Nergiz Gafarli ¹

ABSTRACT

The article examines the interaction between the Shia community and the state under the leadership of Saddam Hussein in its historical context. The ideology of the Baathist regime, the security policy followed by it, and the impact on the dynamics of the power equation between the citizens and the state are analyzed in this paper. The Shiite population, who adhered to the Jafari sect of Islam, formed the majority in Iraq since the beginning of the twentieth century. During the latter part of the twentieth century, the proportion of the Shiites in the population of Iraq was as high as 60%. Despite professing secular Arab nationalism as an official doctrine of its regime, the Saddam Hussein administration consistently practiced marginalization and oppression of the Shia majority. The security considerations strengthened with the advent of the Iranian Islamic Revolution of 1979, leading to mistrust of the Shia community and resulting in persecution politically, economically, and socially. However, the harsh repression of the Shia uprising that took place after the Gulf War of 1991 heightened the tensions to an unprecedented level. Hence, in this study, an attempt is made to understand the impact of discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities under the rule of Saddam Hussein on the social structure of Iraq and the subsequent course of instability. The historical-analytical and comparative-analytical approaches have been adopted for this research purpose. An examination is also carried out in this paper regarding the independent stance adopted by the Shiites despite the antagonism between the government and the Shiites that existed due to the Iran-Iraq war.

Keywords: Iraq, Saddam Hussein, Baath Party, Shiite community, opposition, uprising

1. INTRODUCTION

The Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party, or Ba'ath Party, which came to power in Iraq in 1968, emerged as a party strongly committed to Arab nationalism. The Ba'ath Party, which sought to instill a nationalist ideology in the people through its policies, began implementing measures to reduce the influence of religion in society in the 1970s, in line with its declared principle of secularism.(Bağırova, 2000, p.97) These measures included restricting the activities of religious figures and banning the holding of certain religious ceremonies. For one thing, not only did the Ba'ath not attend to the situation it inherited from its predecessors, but it adopted - at the outset -certain policies which further antagonized the Shi'is. These were: the persecution of the Shi'i Ulama and spiritual leaders; and the 'sunnization' of the upper echelons of the Ba'ath party. It should be noted that the Baath regime went further than its predecessors and took steps such as attempting to destroy holy shrines and starting the sale of alcoholic beverages in cities such as Najaf, which have important spiritual value for Shiites and where the vast majority of the population is religious.

When the Ba'ath Party first seized power in 1963, there were conflicts with the Shiite community, but the immense respect and love shown to the influential Shiite scholar Mohsen al-Hakim by the people during his month-long journey to the shrine cities showed the power of the Shiite marjas to the government and forced them to take a step back. After the Ba'ath Party regained power in 1968, the government's first contact with the Shiite community was a surprise visit by President Hassan al-Bakr to the home of Mohsen al-Hakim.(Abbas, 2013,p.207) The purpose of this visit was not to show respect for the Shiite marjas, but to create the impression that they supported the Baathist government. The visit was organized suddenly, knowing that Mohsen al-Hakim would not accept the visit if informed in advance. It was later reported in the press that the visit was not planned in advance, at the request of Mohsen al-Hakim.

¹Department of History of Asian and African countries, Baku State University, Azerbaijan,
gafarli@18bk.ru, <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-8225-8976>, <https://doi.org/10.54414/JVOY6957>

Within a short period of time, the government began extorting religious donations in Najaf, closing religious schools, canceling Islamic lessons in public schools, and even banning the recitation of the Quran on radio and television. In response to these events, Shiites began their first demonstrations against the government in Najaf and Basra. The culmination of the events was the fatwa issued by Ayatollah Mohsen al-Hakim prohibiting membership in the Baath Party. (Abbas, 2013, p.208) In addition to problems with the religious segment of society, the Ba'ath regime's economic policies were also met with strong opposition from non-religious Shia groups. Thus, four main areas of conflict developed under the Ba'ath regime. First, the state's secularization drive was essentially directed at the autonomous Shia religious institution. Second, the totalitarian Ba'ath state reproduced ethnic, religious, and communal imbalances, both in terms of political representation and participation, and in the unequal distribution and allocation of economic profits. Third, there was the ideological-cultural conflict between the ruling Ba'ath's statist, pan-Arab, social-nationalist ideology and the localist Islamic discourse developed by Shia Islamic groups in the Da'wah model. The fourth area was regional politics; that is, Iraqi-Iranian relations, which, except for a brief period of cooperation (1975-1988), were strained and eventually led the parties to an extended eight-year war.

2. METHODOLOGY

Studies on the relations between the Ba'ath regime and the Shi'a community during the reign of Saddam Hussein show that the ideological policies of the Ba'ath party, the sectarian dynamics of the country, and regional geopolitical factors seriously influenced these relations. Studies by authors such as Yitzhak Nakash, Ziya Abbas, and James Wiley show that the Ba'ath regime officially promoted Arab nationalism and the principle of secularism, excluding Shi'as from the country's governance, and either arresting or exiling those who objected. (Nakash, Y. (1994). *The Shi'is of Iraq*. Princeton University Press. Wiley, J. (1992). *The Islamic Movement of Iraqi Shi'as*. Lynne Rienner Publishers. Abbas, Z. (2013). *Irak'ta Şii Merciliğin Siyasi Rolü*. Önsöz Yayıncılık. These studies emphasize that the government pursued a somewhat moderate and cautious policy during the Iran-Iraq War, but after the war ended, it began to oppress the Shiites more severely than before, and this, together with increasing economic problems after the 1991 Gulf War, led to a major Shiite uprising. Existing studies show that the relationship between the Baath government and the Shiite community was not static, but developed over time, characterized by stages of limited adaptation, strategic co-optation, and harsh repression. Unlike previous studies, this article specifically analyzes the relationship between the Shiite community and the state during the years of Saddam Hussein's rule, analyzing the fact that the policy implemented by Saddam Hussein was harsher than that of his predecessors and its impact on the socio-political and social life of Iraq.

3. RELATIONS WITH THE SHIITE COMMUNITY IN THE EARLY YEARS OF SADDAM HUSSEIN'S RULE

The Baath regime's neglect of the Shia community, keeping them away from the government despite them constituting approximately 60 percent of the population, strained relations between the regime and the community. Undoubtedly, this was due to the feeling of betrayal of the government among the Shia community that supported it during the founding stages of the party, and the socialist ideology promoted by the Baath regime; the nationalist and socialist rhetoric emphasized by the regime was unacceptable to the Shias. On the other hand, in the context of these grievances, the government was concerned about the possibility of the Shiite community approaching the Iranian Shiites. The 1979 Iranian Islamic Revolution further increased this concern. The Iranian government's policy of exporting the revolution and Iran's invitation to Iraqi Shiites to revolt against the existing government under the leadership of Khomeini further inflamed these tensions, and 35,000 Iranians were even deported from the country. (Wiley, 1992, p.78) At such a time, General Hassan al-Bakr, who led the Baath regime, was forcibly removed from power and replaced by his deputy, Saddam Hussein. The rise to power of Saddam Hussein, who was distinguished by a more rigid political line than Hassan al-Bakr, further complicated the relations between the Shiite community and the government. (Bengio, 1985, p.4) Indeed, during this period, many representatives of

the Shiite community were subjected to persecution, torture, and some were killed. These measures led the Shiites to begin a political and ideological struggle against the regime, and this movement was led by two of the most famous and influential scholars of the time, Mohsen al-Hakim and Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr. Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr was a member of the Sadr family, the most famous family of scholars in Iraq, and he was known not only as a religious scholar but also as a philosopher. His works, such as "Iqtisaduna" and "Falsafatuna," were among the most famous books written at that time. Al-Sadr's message after the Iranian Islamic Revolution reflects the essence of the events: "In the current situation, Islam does not need reform, but revolution, and it is necessary to fight against the real enemy." This message of Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr was addressed not only to Shiites, but to all Muslims in the country. Thus, during this period, the regime faced two leaders with both charisma and political influence - al-Hakim, who was the symbolic leader of the world's Shiites, and al-Sadr, who had great influence over the "Dawa" party. (Aziz, 1993, p.210) The "Dawa" party was established in 1957 with the aim of organizing the fight against the spread of communism and a number of anti-Islamic ideologies in society. When it comes to the question of who founded the party, there are two different opinions. According to Hussein Baraka al-Shami, one of the leading figures of the party, the founder was Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, while according to Muhammad Mehdi al-Hakim, one of the leading founders of the party, the party did not have a specific founding leader. The first step of the government against Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr and Mohsen al-Hakim was to restrict their religious activities. The confiscation of land and funds allocated for the construction of the Jawadein primary and secondary schools in Baghdad and the University of Kufa, the expulsion of hundreds of non-Iraqi students from the Najaf Scientific Seminary, and the adoption of a law requiring Iraqi students studying in the seminary to join the army served to implement this policy. (Aziz, 1993, p.212) In August 1979, al-Sadr was arrested by the Ba'ath regime. At that time, his sister Amina al-Sadr made a fiery speech in Najaf, calling on the people to fight, and after public protests, Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr was released. However, in 1980, he was arrested again, this time with his sister Amina, and they were executed in April of that year. (Jibouri, 2014, p.43) After that, al-Sadr's supporters were persecuted, and about 500 of his supporters were killed. On June 6, 1980, an assassination attempt was made against Saddam Hussein, led by Ibrahim Tahir. Saddam Hussein, who survived this attempt, took advantage of the incident to further intensify the process of deporting representatives of the Shiite community to northern Iran, and from July 1980 to 1982, 23,672 people were deported to the northern regions of Iran. (Wiley, 1992, p.82).

4. SADDAM HUSSEIN'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE SHIITE COMMUNITY DURING THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR

In 1980, the Iran-Iraq War, one of the most devastating wars in history, began. The eight-year war caused unprecedented damage to the economies of both Iraq and Iran, as well as to the living standards of the population. (Tripp, 2007, p.216) At the start of the war, Saddam Hussein's plan was to overthrow the Iranian regime through war, prevent the regime from influencing the Shiites in his own country, resolve the long-standing border dispute over the Shatt al-Arab waterway in Iraq's favor, and incite an uprising among Sunni Arabs in Iran's Khuzestan region to annex these territories to Iraq. To achieve his goals, he first had to ensure stability within the country. In order to ensure that the Iraqi people fought together against the enemy, Saddam tried to normalize relations with the Shiite community and the Kurds. The regime promoted the idea that everyone, regardless of religion, sect, or ethnic identity, was a representative of the Iraqi people and that they should resist the enemy in order to protect the homeland. During this period, Saddam Hussein took a number of steps to win over the Shiite community. Some restrictions on religious activities were lifted, funds were allocated for the renovation of shrines in Najaf and Karbala, which are important religious centers for Shiites, and Saddam Hussein himself personally visited these shrines. Saddam Hussein also implemented a number of social and economic concessions to economically bind the Shiites to the regime. Expanded public sector jobs and increased the recruitment of some Shiites into the military and government offices, although restrictions on senior positions remained. Schools and universities were expanded in Shiite areas, and students were given state scholarships. On the other hand, roads, hospitals, water, and electricity projects were being implemented in these regions, both to support the war economy and to reduce discontent

in the region. As a result, the war, which was a success for this policy of the Baath regime, was very difficult for Iraq and brought with it economic difficulties. However, this “softening” policy never created real equality. Shiites were very limitedly represented in high political and military positions. In particular, the security structures were almost entirely under the control of the Sunni elite, who were considered the most loyal to the regime. In Shiite regions, a strong control system was established; informant networks, constant surveillance, and an atmosphere of fear made open organization virtually impossible. Another important point was the lack of a unified position within the Shiite community. Some religious and political groups, such as the Dawa Party, opposed the regime and maintained ties with Iran. However, the broad masses preferred to remain passive. This made the regime’s work easier: it mainly targeted the active opposition, but kept the general population under control through fear and limited social security. Although the economic situation worsened towards the end of the war, a large-scale Shiite uprising did not occur. This was due both to the strength of the harsh repressive apparatus and to a certain sense of national solidarity that arose within society under war conditions. Overall, the relationship between the Shiites and the Saddam regime during the Iran-Iraq War can best be described as “forced cooperation in a climate of mutual distrust.” On the other hand, Iraq’s defeat in the Gulf War in 1991 further aggravated the situation. Conditions were created for the Kurds in the north of the country and the Shiites in the south to begin their uprisings against the government. However, unlike the political demands of the Kurds, the Shiite groups remaining in Iraq never acted with political intentions such as violating the territorial integrity of Iraq or seeking autonomy or self-determination.

5. SHIITE UPRISINGS AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT IN THE 1990S

The first demonstrations of the 1991 uprising began on 10 February. A crowd of mostly Shia Muslims gathered in the city of Diwaniyah to protest against Saddam Hussein and the Baath Party. The insurgents included disaffected Iraqi army soldiers. On March 1, 1991, a day after the ceasefire in the Gulf War, a T-72 tank returning home after Iraq’s defeat in Kuwait fired a shell at a giant portrait of Saddam Hussein hanging over Basra’s main square, and the soldiers and onlookers cheered. The uprising in Basra was initially led by army officer Muhammad Ibrahim Wali, who gathered a force of military vehicles to attack government buildings and prisons in the city; he was supported by the majority of the population. The uprising in Basra was completely disorganized and spontaneous. On the other hand, US President George H.W. Bush addressed the Iraqi people, urging them to overthrow the regime. (Nakash, 1994, p.274) Although the rebels viewed this speech as a message of support, no overt support from the United States was observed after the uprising began. A few days later, a demonstration near the Imam Ali shrine in Najaf turned into a gun battle between army deserters and Saddam’s security forces. Within days, the uprising had spread to all the major Shiite cities in southern Iraq - Amarah, Diwaniyah, Hillah, Karbala, Kut, Nasiriyah and Samawa. The insurgents in the region included thousands of members of the Iran-based Badr Brigade, members of the rebel Sunni army, leftists such as the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP), anti-Saddam Arab nationalists, and even disaffected Baathists. What was disastrous for them was that all the various revolutionary groups, militias, and parties were united only in their desire for regime change, because they had no common political or military program, no integrated leadership, and little coordination among themselves. On March 7, in an attempt to calm the uprising, Saddam Hussein offered Shiite and Kurdish leaders a share in the central government in exchange for loyalty, but the opposition groups rejected the offer. At the height of the uprising, the government lost effective control over 14 of Iraq’s 18 provinces. One of the most important clerics in the uprising was Ayatollah Khoyi. Khoyi, considered the most influential mujtahid of the time, addressed the insurgents and urged them to be careful not to harm innocent people and to refrain from inhumane actions.

The rebels’ advantage did not last long, and regime forces quickly counterattacked and began to regain control of the cities. Brutal methods were used at this time, and even chemical weapons were allegedly used against the rebels in Basra. True, the United Nations, after an investigation, determined that there was no evidence that the Iraqi authorities had used chemical weapons to suppress the uprisings, but it did not rule out the possibility that phosgene gas, which could not be detected after the attack, was used. In the south,

Saddam's forces had suppressed only part of the resistance by the end of March. On March 29, Abdul Aziz al-Hakim admitted that the Shiite rebels had withdrawn from the cities and that fighting was limited to rural areas. Thus, by the end of March, the regime had almost completely suppressed the uprising. The regime's swift suppression of the rebellion also caused disillusionment among the opposition. In March and early April, an estimated two million Iraqis, 1.5 million of them Kurds, fled the cities where the rebellion had been suppressed, into the mountains along the northern border, the southern swamps, Turkey, and Iran. In southeastern Iraq, thousands of civilians, deserters, and insurgents sought dangerous refuge in the remote Hawiza marshes along the Iranian border. The uprising was followed by widespread reprisals against the Marsh Arabs, which resulted in the ecologically disastrous draining of the Iraqi marshes and the large-scale and systematic forced displacement of the local population. On 11 August 1992, at a special meeting of the UN Security Council, the United Kingdom, France and the United States accused Iraq of conducting a "systematic military campaign" against the marshlands, warning Baghdad of possible consequences. On 22 August 1992, President Bush announced that the United States and its allies had established a no-fly zone south of the 32nd parallel for all Iraqi aircraft, in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 688, to protect the opposition from government attacks. (Tripp, 2007, p.230)

After the uprising, Saddam Hussein's repression of Iraqi Shiites continued to intensify. In addition, a new faction emerged within the Islamic Dawah Party: the Islamic Dawah Cadres. This faction began publishing a newspaper called *Fajr al-Iraq* (Dawn of Iraq), declaring its goal of establishing a "human state" using democracy and the "call" to Islam. In addition, the mention of the Islamic Union of Iraqi Turkmen, which was formed as an ally of the Dawah Party during the Kuwait War in 1991 and has offices in the Iranian cities of Shiraz, Qom, and Isfahan, also suggests that the Dawah Party has gained support among Iraqi Shiite Turkmen.

The Iraqi government's post-Gulf War policies further reduced religious activity in Najaf and Karbala, damaging the fabric of Shia culture and society in Iraq. While much of the damage to the shrines was repaired by May 1992, the surrounding bazaars were not rebuilt. The "project to expand and develop the area around the holy shrines" involved transforming much of the Iranian-influenced architecture and many of the bazaars in Karbala. (Nakash, 1994, p.278) In Najaf, the decline in the position of Shia Islam is also evident in the United Nations Human Rights Commission report written by former Dutch Foreign Minister Max van der Stoel, who visited Najaf in January 1992. Stoel reported that parts of the famous Shia holy cemetery of Wadi al-Salam had been destroyed and that construction of a highway was underway, passing over the graves. This was one of the deliberate acts of desecration of the holy sites by the government. Stoel wrote that libraries containing manuscripts, which formed part of the Islamic tradition, were being deliberately destroyed. He stated that while there were several thousand students and clerics in Najaf in 1970, their numbers had fallen to eight hundred during the Gulf War. After the uprising in March 1991, these remaining students also disappeared. The destruction of libraries, along with the emigration and arrests of religious students and clerics, could further diminish the importance of the Shia seminaries still operating in Najaf, potentially favoring those in Qom, Iran. The brutal destruction of much of Karbala and Najaf by forces loyal to Saddam demonstrated the extent of his hatred for the Shiites, while his project to divert the Euphrates River attracted considerable attention at the time. The Hindiye Canal, branching off from the Euphrates at Musayyib, a few miles upstream from Karbala, aimed to bring water to Najaf. The strongest symbol of Iraq's determination to rebuild after the war is the "Third River" project, also known as the Saddam River Irrigation Project. It's an excavation project that United Nations human rights observers in Iraq have described as "the environmental crime of the century." Essentially a canal, the project is planned to flow 350 miles from Mahmudiya, above Musayyib, into the Persian Gulf. The canal aimed to circumvent international sanctions by increasing Iraq's cultivated land starting in the summer of 1993. Some experts suspect that the canal also aimed to drain swamps near Shiite-populated areas, allowing the Iraqi army easier access to the south. Indeed, American satellite photos taken in March 1993 show that a third of the Amara swamp had already been drained. (Khadduri & Ghareeb, 1997, p.75)

After the Gulf War, another spiritual blow for the Shiites was the death of Ayatollah Khoyi. After

Khoyi's death in 1992, Sayyid Ali Sistani and Muqtada al-Sadr's father, Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr, were the most prominent mujtahids in Najaf. However, in the second half of 1992, Baghdad still had not given any indication of which marja it considered the head of the Najaf region. The event that surprised everyone occurred in January 1993. Saddam's regime issued a decree appointing Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr as the first "official marja" of Najaf. Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr was the cousin of Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr and Amina al-Sadr, who had been executed in 1980. However, at this time, disagreements also arose among the scholars of the Najaf seminary, since Khoyi's supporters saw Sayyid Ali Sistani as his successor, and he was even entrusted with leading Khoyi's funeral prayer. On the other hand, al-Sadr was supported by the authorities, and even organized a trip for him to the remote southern regions of the country, where he held meetings with the population. The southerners were very impressed to see a marja visiting them for the first time and advising them in the local Iraqi dialect. However, this period of relative calm did not last long, and relations between Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr and the government soon deteriorated, as from 1998 onwards al-Sadr began to criticize the regime in his Friday sermons. This can be partly explained by the fact that he had chosen a quiet position, waiting for the right conditions to arise, and during this time he had increased his influence among the Shiite community in the south of the country, and the main issue he criticized in his sermons was the obstacles created by the regime regarding the pilgrimage to Karbala and the restriction of religious freedom of the people. He issued a statement saying that "even if the government prohibits such a visit, the public must undertake it", after which relations between the regime and the government became even more tense. After that, the Kufa Mosque was surrounded by regime forces to prevent al-Sadr from delivering the Friday sermon, and clashes broke out between the population and security forces.

The situation was further complicated by the authorities' new wave of arrests in February 1999. Therefore, Sayyid Sadr announced in his sermon that if the authorities did not release the detainees, he would order the imams leading the Friday prayers to mobilize against the government. The government sent a messenger to Sayyid to reconsider his threat, but he refused and remained stubborn. Therefore, al-Sadr was placed under house arrest, but he violated the order to stay at home and, after leaving his house accompanied by his sons Mustafa and Mu'ammad, as well as his son-in-law, was assassinated on the road and shot dead along with his two sons. At that time, Saddam Hussein claimed that the incident was organized by Iran to prevent public discontent, but this claim was met with skepticism in society and failed to prevent the start of a wave of protests. Clashes broke out between security forces and protesters in Baghdad and other cities, and a significant number of people were killed or injured. Opposition groups even managed to seize several police stations and Baath Party offices, which they held until the morning of March 18, but then withdrew due to circumstances. After the suppression of the demonstrations, mass arrests by the Baath regime continued.

After the death of many influential mujtahids in Iraq, the most influential scholar was Seyyed Ali Sistani. He was born in 1930 in the Iranian city of Mashhad, and in his youth he came to the city of Najaf to receive religious education, where he received lessons from important scholars such as Ayatollah Khoyi. Seyyed Sistani is mainly distinguished by his non-interference in politics and his calm position. Although the Baathist government came to the conclusion that Seyyed Ali Sistani, who had completely isolated himself from politics, would not pose a threat, it did not recognize him as the leader of the basin. It should be noted that Sistani strongly condemned the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. (Marr, 2012, p.200).

6. CONCLUSION

Relations between the Ba'ath Party, which seized power in Iraq in 1968 following a coup, and the Shiite religious authority were strained from the beginning, and the Ba'ath regime soon began implementing sanctions against the Shiite religious authority. In addition to the pressure from the Ba'ath Party, the Shiite religious authority also experienced internal divisions. In less than twelve years, the Ba'ath regime had cornered the Shiite Marja'iyya, executing tens of thousands of Dawa Party members. Among those executed were Grand Marja Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, as well as numerous clerics and seminary students. With al-

Sadr's execution, the government dealt a fatal blow to the Islamic movement. Severely weakened by the Ba'ath regime's brutal and savage attacks, the Shiite Marja'iyya, after al-Sadr's execution, withdrew into itself in order to survive and interfered less in Iraqi political life.

Following the Iraqi army's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 and its swift defeat by the US-led international coalition in the First Gulf War, which began in January 1991, the Shiite community in southern Iraq revolted. Finding themselves in a leadership crisis, they sought help from the Shiite Marja'i (religious authority). The Supreme Marja'i, Grand Ayatollah Abul-Qasim al-Khoyi, was forced to accept leadership of the uprising in response to the community's demands. However, after the Ba'ath regime brutally suppressed the uprising, it targeted the Shiite Marja'i again. In this context, al-Khoyi was arrested, tortured, and, due to his advanced age (over 90 years), sentenced to house arrest. This punishment did not stop there; it led to the execution of approximately 200 people close to him, including his sons.

After witnessing the experiences within the Shiite religious authority and the institution itself, the Saddam regime understood that it would be very difficult to undermine religious unity within the Shiite community in Iraq. In an effort to maintain control over the Shiite Marja'iyya and the Hawza, he asked some religious leaders and Marjas to govern the seminary openly and amicably, but most religious leaders rejected this request. However, the Shiite religious authority, which must always adapt to evolving events in order to maintain its continuity, did not miss this opportunity. Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr, a cousin of Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, seemed to accept the leadership of the Hawza on the condition that the government would not interfere in any way.

Saddam Hussein's brutal treatment of the Shiites stemmed from his view of them as a constant source of concern for his regime. The Shiites constituted a vast majority; if they united against a government whose legitimacy they did not recognize, they could overthrow it. Unable to communicate their grievances to the international community, the Shiites were forced to fight Saddam's tyranny alone. They understood that Saddam's regime would never make peace with them. They never forgot the ruthless destruction and burning of holy Shiite cities by Saddam's armed forces. The oppression and suffering they endured at the hands of forces sharing their homeland remained etched in their memories. Indeed, in the post-2003 reconstruction of Iraq, political bans were imposed on members of the Ba'ath Party at certain levels, the Iraqi army was disbanded, and high-ranking Ba'ath officials who had participated in massacres against the people were tried, with many, including Saddam Hussein, sentenced to death.

REFERENCES

1. Abbas, Z. (2013). *Irak'ta Şii merciğinin siyasi rolü*. Önsöz Yayıncılık.
2. Aziz, T. M. (1993). The role of Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr in Shi'i political activism in Iraq from 1958 to 1980. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 25(2), 207-222.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/s0020743800058499>
3. Bağirova, A. (2000). Çağdaş Irak'ta egemenlik, din ve dinî muhalefet. *Avrasya Dosyası*, 6(3), 97-110.
4. Bengio, O. (1985). Shi'is and Politics in Ba'thi Iraq. *Middle Eastern Studies*, 21(1), 1-14.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00263208508700610>
5. Al-Jibouri, Y. T. (2014). *A Tribute to The Sadr Martyrs*. AuthorHouse.
6. Khadduri, M., & Ghareeb, E. (1997). *War in the Gulf, 1990-91: The Iraq-Kuwait conflict and its implications*. Oxford University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780195083842.001.0001>
7. Marr, P. (2012). *The modern history of Iraq* (3rd ed.). Westview Press.
8. Nakash, Y. (1994). *The Shi'is of Iraq*. Princeton University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/s0021086200000529>
9. Tripp, C. (2007). *A history of Iraq* (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.3917/ving.098.0227n>
10. Wiley, J. N. (1992). *The Islamic Movement of Iraqi Shi'as*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.