CONSOCIATIONALISM AND ETHNO-SECTARIAN CONFLICT: IRAQ'S POLITICAL FRAGMENTATION AND FLAWED FEDERALISM

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Abstract

Iraq today faces a significant amount of ethno-sectarian conflict and struggles to maintain its democracy that was born in 2005. When the United States aided Iraq in creating its new democratic constitution, specific institutions were put in place to prevent the ethnic and religious tensions from allowing the government to consolidate democracy and flourish. These institutions were created with the theory of consociationalism in mind to give more minority groups representation in government to quell conflict via proportional representation and federalism. This thesis aims to determine whether consociationalism was effective in consolidating democracy in Iraq by easing ethno-sectarian conflict. In this context, consociationalism is a theory discussed by Arend Lijphart (1969) that argues that a government can still form in a significantly fragmented or diverse state by giving representation to multiple groups to enable a power-sharing agreement and cooperation. To determine if consociationalism has been effective in consolidating democracy, I look at the power-sharing agreements created through proportional representation and the current system of federalism in Iraq. Through my research, I argue that consociational institutions fragmented Iraq's political parties that have created instability in its parliament and its flawed asymmetrical federalism has created unbalance in the strength of its provincial and regional governments. These results suggest that more consolidated parties will help generate stronger parties. A greater effort to decentralize the central government to create stronger regional governments will better consolidate democracy in Iraq moving forward.

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Introduction

With Iraq's complicated history of internal strife and Western imposition, its relationship with democracy has endured yet remains dysfunctional. Iraq is far from being a bustling and stable democracy; however, it has seen improvements from years ago. After the Iraq War, the U.S.-written constitution for Iraq established the new democracy on consociational principles to reduce ethno-sectarian conflicts in the country. In this context, consociationalism is a theory discussed by Arend Lijphart (1969) that argues a government can form in a greatly fragmented or diverse state by giving representation to multiple groups to enable a power-sharing agreement and cooperation. Through proportional representation and asymmetrical federalism, representation and territory would be divided up to provide more minority groups a say in government and not be dominated by the majority party while also attempting to reduce violence. I argue that these consociational institutions have been ineffective in creating stable democracy in Iraq. The proportional representation system created a highly fragmented system of government that proved to increase ethno-sectarian divisions while demonstrating to be incapable of addressing many of Iraq's fundamental governance problems. The federal system has also proven to be problematic with its asymmetrical structure, creating local governments that have shown to be corrupt and ineffective in delivering basic services to their governorates. Alternatively, the governorates that have united to create regions, such as Kurdistan, have a more robust local government structure, despite the other issues

Kurdistan faces. This paper will briefly highlight the history of democracy in Iraq to conceptualize its current relationship with democracy better.

After a brief history to frame the conversation, I will discuss proportional representation in Iraq, its election history, and argue that Iraq's consociationalism does not promote democratic consolidation. Proportional power-sharing further enhances ethno-sectarian divides, preventing Sunnis, Shias, Kurds, and other minorities from working together to consolidate power in government. Although providing representation for each group on paper, Iraq's proportional representation system continues to divide ethno-sectarian groups further instead of facilitating meaningful political discourse to take control of the problems Iraqis face. Proportional representation (PR) fragments political parties and weakens the productivity of parliament. Many different parties receive few seats causing political gridlock, the inability to compromise, and difficulty forming a government. Following this argument, I will discuss Iraq's complicated relationship with its asymmetric federalism and why its current federalism practice is not executed as dictated by the Constitution. Federalism in practice has failed to bring the promises that Iraq's Constitution laid out for decentralization; meanwhile, extensive corruption, a struggle to gain regional status equal to the Kurds, and a lack of national unity, continue to perpetuate ethnic and sectarian tension. Governorates across Iraq struggle to provide basic services to their citizens and show difficulty in consolidating power. Iraq's federalism requires fixing to help the governorates be stronger and more efficient to promote democracy in the state better. The purpose of this analysis is to better understand why democracy in Iraq is not as effective as it should be. While multiple

reasons can explain why Iraq's democracy is fragile, this paper will cover specifically its fragmented proportional representation system and its failing federalism.

Iraq's Relationship with Democracy Before U.S. Invasion

Understanding the history of Western imposition in Iraq helps frame why its questionably drawn borders and ethno-sectarian conflicts damage the current democratic system created for them by foreign governments. Today, Iraq is left with the remains of Western experimenting to build democracy in the Middle East while also extracting

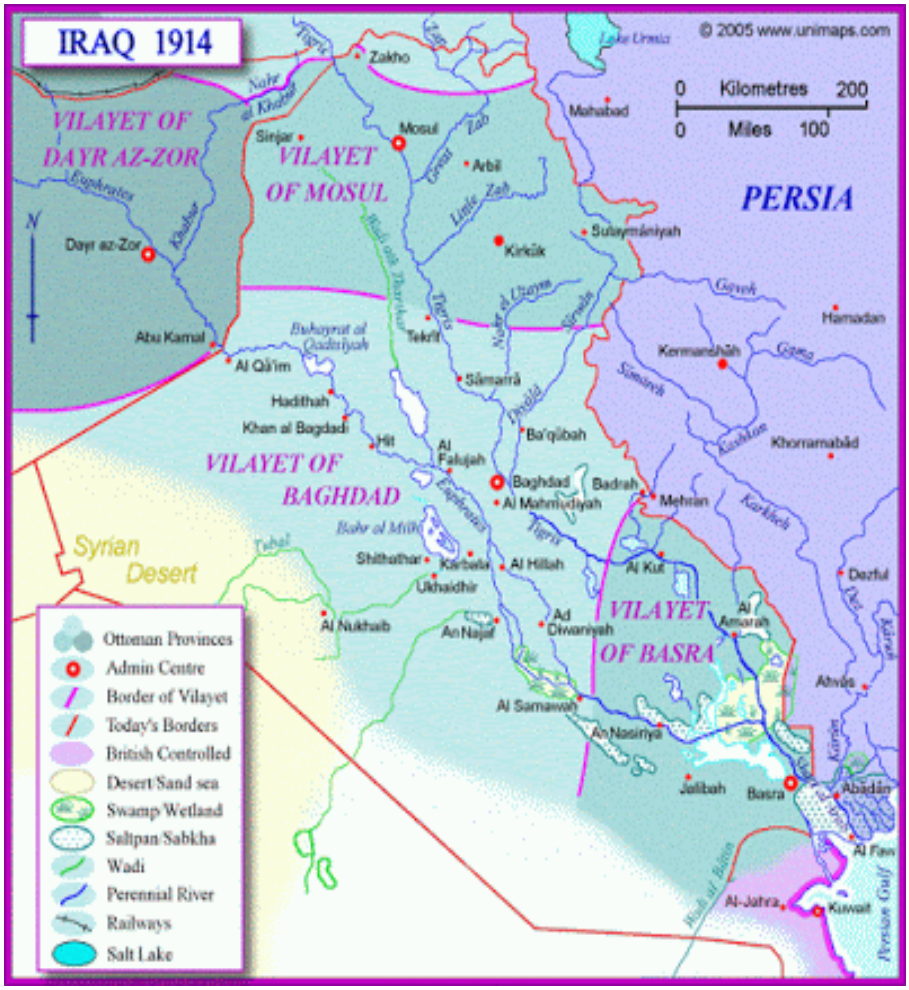


Figure 1: Wing (2017) Iraq 1914

resources for their benefit. The common theme of Iraq's modern history has been occupation and control by foreign powers. Starting in 1920, the British gained control over Iraq under the British Mandate and split up the Ottoman Empire to be controlled by the Allied Powers of WWI at the San Remo Conference. Before this time, Iraq existed under the Ottoman empire as Mesopotamia, with the Tigris and Euphrates rivers running through it, similar to how it is today, as seen in Figure 1. Under the Ottoman Empire, Iraq was split into three provinces and functioned under a tributary system, with different importance levels to the Ottomans and acted as basically three separate states (Dawisha, 2013). Iraq's Ottoman history is important to note because Iraq was originally brought together by these three provinces during the Ottoman Empire with local/tribal autonomy, which functioned efficiently for centuries; however, it was later inorganically split into 18 provinces by Western states to fall under the current Iraqi federal government.

As a result, the country faces problems regarding unity, delivering essential services to the people, and corruption. Iraq had never been a unified country under the Ottomans. Ideas of independence emerged only after the British occupation in 1920 when the state was declared the Kingdom of Iraq. The British remodeled Iraq similar to how they modeled India, with strong tribal cohesion and many provinces. This was soon met with a violent revolt by the Iraqis, who distrusted the foreigners occupying their country and government. Again, this is also important to note, as Iraq's local or municipal governments continue to struggle with legitimacy today. Following the revolt, the British installed a weak Arab monarch, King Faisal, which the British used as a tool to promote British interests in the region while also attempting to appease the Iraqi people. During

Figure 2: World Atlas (2020) Governorates of Iraq

the early years of Iraqi statehood, King Faisal and his government struggled to gain popular legitimacy while also trying to promote their policies, only to experience British interference undermining his credibility (Dawisha, 2013). This anecdote adds to Iraq's current history of attempting to make decisions but instead undermined by other states that have powerful influence within its borders, such as Iran and the United States.

After the British Mandate ended in 1932, Iraq became independent after over a decade of occupation. Britain announced its support for Iraq's admission to the League of

Nations, which immediately connected Iraq to the international community and Western influence (Marr, 2011). Left by the British with fragile institutions and an inefficient government, their independence did not last long. In 1941, the British returned to extract resources and install a pro-British government to support its interests. This era of Iraq's history proves that Iraq's foundations began as what Acemoglu and Robinson (2008) describe as an "extractive state." The "extractive state" is a colonization strategy used by Western powers to serve their strategic interests in regions of the world that can provide them with power or resources. The institutions of extractive states are created without a system of checks and balances on the government. The Europeans' explicit aim in these colonies was to extract resources to develop and further their interests (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2008). With this in mind, the infant stages of Iraq's democracy were not established during the occupation to create a prosperous independent Iraq; instead, a state was created that continues to depend on the international community for its stability. The concept of Iraq being an extractive state will be important when discussing how federalism and decentralization impact government functions. The oil and gas sector in Iraq serves foreign superpowers, supplying them oil at a cheaper rate. For example, its oil made it a valuable state to extract from, especially during World War II, when the British regained control of the state and used it to fuel their oil-dependent ships. Oil remains a common theme, whereas foreign aggressors to Iraq constantly destabilize the region for its extraction.

In 1958, a leftist military coup overthrew the king, killing or arresting all royal family members or members of the monarchy. The officers announced the establishment

of the Iraqi Republic and were in power for several years as a repressive military dictatorship under Prime Minister Abd al-Karim Qasim until 1963 (Dawisha, 2013). After the fall of his regime, countless coups occurred as multiple groups vied for power and separation. The left wanted Iraq unity and radical changes to social policy; however, the Arab nationalists wanted to unify other Arab states to create a stronger coalition and pan-Arab identity. The Kurds also saw an opportunity to demand their sovereignty and autonomy to make their own state (Marr, 2011). This absence of a common agenda was the dominating political flaw of Iraq until the Ba'athists took control in 1968. Under Prime Minister Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr, Iraq began to see improvement in its government function and overall development. Urbanization rapidly increased, and the government nationalized the oil industry to fund programs for further development to raise employment, wages, and education. Iraq began to interact and trade more with the West as the Ba'ath party became the only party with legitimacy in Iraq by 1974. This era of Ba'athist control truly focused on Iraqi nationalism with eventual pan-Arab cooperation and attempts to draw ethnic and sectarian divides under one ideological tent. In 1979, al-Bakr was pushed out of office by the second most influential Ba'athist in Iraq, Saddam Hussein. The improvement made under al-Bakr was quickly lost to the highly oppressive regime of Saddam Hussein, plunging the country into war and debt.

Iraq quickly went from following the Ba'athist ideology to reflecting the personality of a strongman. Between the Iran-Iraq War of the '80s and the invasion of Kuwait in 1990, Iraq was decimated, and the Ba'ath party significantly weakened as the government was required to face the repercussions. The shred of hope that Iraq saw in the

‘70s was crushed under Saddam Hussein and was further crushed after the U.S. invasion and failed reconstruction effort in 2003. Iraq’s continual losses led to the modern institution of Iraq’s democracy, which endures to the present day as a highly dysfunctional system that struggles to find stability.

Understanding Ethno-Sectarian Divisions

Iraq has a unique composition of minorities in the state, and understanding how ethnicity and religion play a role in its politics, internally and externally, can better frame the discussion of consociationalism. As a disclaimer, Iraq has a generalized breakdown of majority groups in the country; however, smaller tribes within this breakdown create fragments within their own ethnic or sectarian groups. To begin, many religious groups in Iraq exist, with Muslims being the dominant majority at about 99 percent. Estimates show that the following percentages make up the religious diversity in Iraq: Muslim (official) 99% (Shia 55-60%, Sunni 40%), minorities <1% (Cordesman, 2018). Along with religious affiliation, there are also ethnic divisions within the country, most notably between the Iraqi Kurds generally in the north of the state and the Iraqi Arabs throughout the country. Estimates also show the following ethnic differences exist within the Iraqi population: Arab 75%-80%, Kurdish 15%- 20%, and Turkmen, Assyrian, Shabak, Yazidi, and other 5%” (Cordesman, 2018). Making distinctions between the ethnic and sectarian crossovers help to better understand Iraq’s history and current political climate. These groups have experienced tension for hundreds of years, but understanding their

recent experiences can provide a framework for recognizing why consociationalism and creating agreements between the groups of a fragmented Iraq is so difficult.

Within this breakdown, it is essential to understand generally where these religious groups reside within the country. By referring to Figure 2, the Kurds are most dominant in the north of the country, enjoying their regional autonomy. It is important to note that the Kurds are mostly Sunni Muslims. Their Sunni Arab counterparts reside in

Figure 3: CIA (2017) Detailed Ethnic and Religious Map of Iraq

the western portion of the country and bordering the Kurdish region. Some Sunni Arabs and Sunni Turkmen live amongst the Kurds, as noted in brown and purple in Figure 3, respectfully. Iraq's Shi'a majority resides in the southern portions of the country,

bordering the Shi'a dominant Iran, which has great power and influence over the Shi'a community in Iraq. Iran's hand in the government in Baghdad has much to do with its connection to the Shi'a Muslims in the south and its connections to Shi'a elites. Baghdad is unique because it is home to both Sunnis and Shi'as, along with a handful of other minority groups who work in the urban center.

The religious groups of Iraq also play a vital role in the violence that ensues as ISIS and Iranian-backed militia groups threaten its security. This helps explain why the tensions between groups run so deep and why consociational agreements fail due to religious and ethnic groups fearing their security. Chaim Kaufmann claims "Possible and Impossible Solutions to Ethnic War," that leaders are not likely to be receptive to

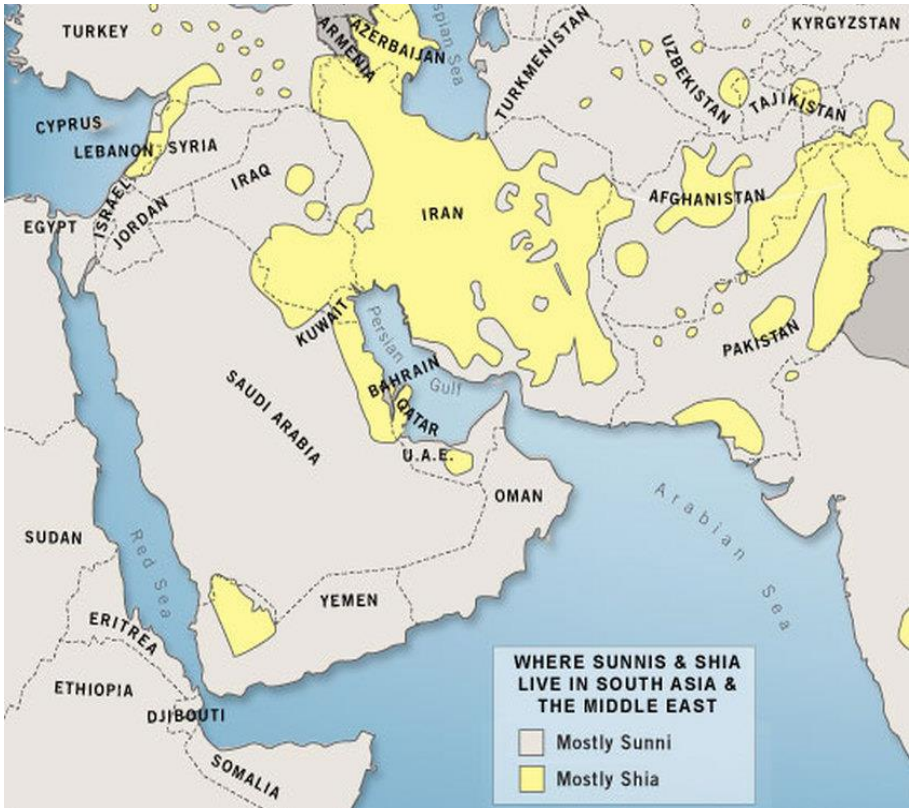


Figure 4: Nasr (2007) The Sunni-Shi'a Divide

cooperation and compromise in government through power-sharing or consociational agreements when under real security threats. He argues that this is due to high levels of distrust between groups after heavy fighting, even after negotiated settlements are made (Kaufmann, 1996). Ethnic tensions between Sunnis, Shi'as, and Kurds within Iraq and motives of violent groups can help explain how warring between ethnic groups can create a security dilemma and high distrust between groups making consociational agreements ineffective at consolidating democracy.

While many fighters have alternative motives, it is important to distinguish them from each other. Firstly, The Shi'a militias that dominate Iraq are found all over the country. These groups, typically backed by Iran, have an incredible influence on Iraqi politics because these militias usually back Shi'a political parties and their leaders. Shi'a groups backed by Iran and Sunni groups usually supported by Saudi Arabia create tensions between each other, making compromise and cooperation in government more difficult. These groups emerged primarily as a response to U.S. failure following the invasion in 2003 and to counter U.S. influence in the Middle East during that time. External goals and objectives by the stronger neighboring countries, who benefit from having their hand in Iraqi politics, constantly interrupts the system of consociationalism and representation for the different ethnic and sectarian groups of Iraq.

Iran's manipulation of Iraq aims to achieve a variety of goals to maintain Iran's sphere of influence in the Middle East. Iran wants to see an Iraq that is not influenced by other foreign governments, especially by foreign powers that Iran sees as threatening, such as the United States, Shi'a-dominated terrorist organizations within Iraq, or its

regional rival, Saudi Arabia (Pollack, 2017). As Iraq seeks to grow its democratic practices, Iran consistently throws wrenches into the Iraqi political system to prevent the state from gaining power. It can be argued that Iran would prefer to see a weak and unstable Iraq over a strengthened and powerful Iraq that has the potential to show hostilities toward them or take their place as a powerful hegemon in the region. U.S. intelligence has evidence that Iran funds and supplies Iraqi militias with guns, explosives, military supplies, money, and even civilian goods (Pollack, 2017). These contributions from Iran fuel the Shi'a militias, many of which also back many political parties and Shi'a elites. According to Kenneth Pollack, many Iraqis believe that their Shi'a politicians who have ample funds for their campaigns or to benefit their constituencies are Iranian-backed. This constant Iranian hand in the Iraqi government and civil society helps explain the dynamics of many Shi'a Iraqis and militias in the south and across the country. Iran's influence in Iraqi politics is significant because when discussing consociational agreements, Iran's hand in politics shifts the balance to favor Shi'a religious groups, which hold most of the country's population.

Shifting from how Shi'a groups are affected externally, ISIS was created out of a variety of conflicts that affected the security of Sunni Ba'athist Muslims, recruiting them to join the insurgency group, which declared its caliphate in 2014. Although there are many other Sunni militia groups, ISIS is the most apparent threat to the sovereignty, legitimacy, borders, and civil society of Iraq, all of which are required to make it a functioning state. As a result of de-Ba'athification and other threats to the Sunni

Ba'athists in Iraq, they fought for the creation of a Sunni Islamic State to secure their power over other ethnic groups within the region.

Iraqi ethno-sectarian divides are more than complex. Overlapping interests make it hard to distinguish where one militia ends and another begins or where the militia ends, and a position in government begins. From the Saddam Hussein era, where the government was anti-Shi'a and anti-Kurdish, or the U.S. invasion, which came with the unemployment of thousands of Sunni Iraqis, the incentives to join ISIS or a local militia for all ethnicities and religious sects were strong because of the desire to power balance against each other for their security. After the invasion of 2003, many Iraqis fled for their lives or were forced into displacement because of violent insurgents. Military-aged Iraqi men struggled to feed and provide for their families, so for many, joining a militant group was the only way to keep their families alive.

Whether it be for money or an Islamic State, attempting to form a consociational government in 2005 with its new constitution proved complicated. While consociationalism attempted to appease all groups, the ethno-sectarian divides still prevent progress from being made today. Between Iraq's long history of conflict, its relationship to Iran, and its complicated local militia and insurgency influence, a consociational democracy was not fit to handle the complex situation of various internal and external forces and its effects on ethno-sectarian relationships within the country.

Theory of Consociationalism

As previously laid out, the new Iraqi democracy faced many conflicts regarding external influence and ethno-sectarian tensions that prevented Iraqis from cooperating in government. The United States attempted to solve these tensions by creating a consociational government that would represent the many groups that exist to ensure that all Iraqis would feel represented through proportional representation and asymmetrical federalism. Consociationalism would suggest that the many different groups would be more efficiently represented through democratic institutions to create a more stable Iraqi government. I argue that consociationalism as a means of attempting to stabilize a fragmented democracy does not support democratic institutions in Iraq or can manage the complex ethnic divisions in the state, which counters the theory proposed by Lijphart. Instead, consociationalism in Iraq feeds the ethno-sectarian divides, fragments political parties, and leads to a more unstable federal government that struggles to meet the expectations of delivering basic services. To accurately articulate why consociationalism is not the best solution for Iraq, it is important to highlight the critical arguments made by Lijphart, who is a known supporter of the theory in the field of political science and international relations.

Faced with the conflicts described above, American officials attempted to build a set of democratic institutions that could bridge and manage ethno-sectarian and religious conflict. Using a power-sharing framework, they designed institutions using the theory known as consociationalism. Arend Lijphart (1969) argues that a consociational democracy works to form a “cartel of elites” that are willing to use power-sharing

systems to turn a fragmented state into a stable democracy. The overarching concept of consociationalism is that a government can be formed in a greatly fragmented or diverse state that can represent multiple groups to enable a power-sharing agreement and cooperation. While the "Anglo-American" democracies show high levels of political culture and social structure, Lijphart claims that the Continental European systems show instability because of their fragmented political culture that results in a resistance to political change (Lijphart, 1969). Many countries in the Middle East experience the same realities, especially Iraq, when considering the long history of ethnic tribal identities and lack of overlapping memberships. Lijphart describes how the elites in societies with few overlapping memberships, sharp cleavages, and deep fragmentations do not experience pressures to have moderate attitudes in government. He ultimately argues that not all societies with fragmented political culture and role structure exhibit immobilism and instability. Essentially, fragmented yet stable democracies or consociational democracies can exist when groups are given adequate representation. These democracies rely on a consociational solution to counteract the destabilizing factors. Lijphart describes the organic creation and mutual understanding of these solutions during the creation of the government, citing Belgium's example, explaining that "... the political instability caused by subcultural cleavage was deliberately avoided at the time of the birth of independent Belgium… It was a remarkable and *self-conscious 'union of the oppositions'* that made the revolution of 1830, wrote the Constitution of 1831, and headed the government in its critical years" (Lijphart, 1969). The "self-conscious 'union of the oppositions'" is a critical piece of the consociational puzzle. All parties need to be willing to open their

doors to cooperation, which usually requires complex negotiations that involve overcoming political theories such as the security dilemma; however, this will be discussed later.

Lijphart also argues in his discussion of power-sharing that proportional representation (PR) systems are best for states with ethnic divisions for three reasons. First, proportional representation is a key part of a consociational electoral system to elect government officials proportionally to the different ethnic, sectarian, gender, or other social groups that may otherwise not see representation in government. Second, PR allows flexible party representation over time, parties split as new changes require new political translations, and the expression of ethnic and non-ethnic groups to participate in voting. Third, proportional representation would allow ethnic groups to define themselves. He states that it is much simpler when it is known how many civilians identify with each group and when the ethnic groups concentrate as ethnic political parties or other ethnically based organizations (Lijphart 1991).

Federalism can be used as a consociational agreement to grant autonomy to specific groups who live in different regions of a country. Rather than the central government making all of the country's decisions, federalism allows for each governorate to function in a way that better suits the citizens of the province and leaves room for negotiating terms on a more localized level. This requires a weaker central government and stronger provincial governments to manage their policies under the umbrella of the national government. Iraq is an example of a state, while not entirely homogeneous in all areas, with clusters of ethnic or sectarian majorities in certain regions. Federal

agreements are common in states with diverse societies so that specific minority groups have autonomy while also participating in the central government's decision-making through power-sharing arrangements (Keil and Alber, 2020). The goal of federalism in Iraq is to recognize that each governorate has different needs across the country, and decentralization would attempt to help focus on the specific problems that each region faces.

To further explain the relationship federalism and consociationalism has, federalism in this context is seen as a way to achieve a result. Many see federalism as a way to achieve a result of an ethnic or social division issue. Federalism allows for political unification, democracy, popular self-government, and the accommodation of diversity (Elazar, 1985). Consociationalism seeks to reconcile differences within the country rather than accept one group's dominance over the minority. Federalism provides group autonomy in different regions of the country to produce a result of reconciliation and unity. Federalism in Iraq attempts to provide the Kurds, the Sunnis, and the Shi'as with their own governorates and local governments to facilitate Iraq's diverse demands across the country and allow for different ethnic and religious groups to maintain their identity within their governorate.

Consociationalism in Iraq

2003 marked the chaotic beginning of Iraq's new democratic federalist state. Through the decimation of the country following the U.S. invasion, Iraq experienced extreme levels of looting, rioting, and uprisings, costing the state over thirteen billion

dollars. The Sunni insurgency also formed, following the disbandment of the Iraqi military and the removal of Ba'athists from the government, putting thousands of Iraqis out of work and unable to support their families. Amongst the tragedy that struck Iraq due to a lack of concentrated reconstruction efforts, the Constitution was formed in 2005 by an elected assembly of Iraqis, which was a challenging process that required many negotiations between Iraqi and American politicians with many different backgrounds. Article 1 of the Constitution explains the system of government that was put in place for the Iraqi state. Article 1 says, "The Republic of Iraq is a single federal, independent and fully sovereign state in which the system of government is republican, representative, parliamentary, and democratic, and this Constitution is a guarantor of the unity of Iraq" (Iraq Const. art. I). The keywords in this description of the Iraqi state are "representative" and "parliamentary." The parliamentary system in Iraq consists of the parliament, the prime minister, the president, the cabinet, and the judiciary. The general election creates a Council of Representatives, in which members are voted into their seats using a proportional system. This is the election that forms the government that requires the election of the Prime Minister by the largest parliamentary bloc. The largest parliamentary bloc must coalesce a group of parties to form a coalition that makes up the majority of parliament. This step is essential for the government to be created, as the prime minister is the primary head of state and commander in chief. The president is selected by two-thirds of parliament and serves a largely ceremonial role. There is not much contention surrounding the presidential election, unlike the contentious process for electing the prime minister. The prime minister chooses the cabinet, which must be

confirmed by the majority of the Council of Representatives, while the president selects one or more vice presidents, who primarily serve a ceremonial role. When the parliament was first created, there were 275 seats, with 45 of these seats reserved as "compensatory" seats for those who did not reach enough votes within their electoral districts to gain a seat but met a specifical national average to gain a seat (Trumbull and Martin, 2011). The total number of seats has since increased from 275 to 325 in 2009. The proportional representation electoral system has been in place since the government's formation in 2005, with slight changes to how it functions. It has created dozens of parties that are very fragmented and come from all different ethno-sectarian backgrounds.

The proportional electoral system that Iraq uses is called the Sainte-Lague method, allocating seats based on a divisor to allocate seats to a proportion of parties. This process is accomplished through a mathematical calculation that uses a divisor to allocate seats and is repeated until all the seats are filled. In recent elections, this has significantly benefitted the smaller parties, allowing minimal percentages of the vote to still receive seats, especially in the 2014 and 2018 elections. Previously, the system caused smaller parties much frustration, claiming that it denied them proper representation among the big coalitions, which resulted in the shift to allow parties with fewer votes to gain more seats. On the other side of the debate, the larger parties complained that the smaller parties often elected leaders inexperienced in federal politics and were challenging to work with and form coalitions.

Consociationalism in Iraq is also seen in the attempt to create a federalist state with a decentralized government. While the supporters of federalism point to the Kurdish

Regional Government in the north, or the KRG, as a success story for strong Iraqi federalism, the rest of the country faces the harsh reality of ineffectiveness, corruption, and overall frustration with the system. Today's state is made of 18 provinces that fall under the federal government. The Kurdistan region was constituted as a federal region and given powers to have a regional government in the Constitution. To this day, the Kurdish region remains the only constituted region in Iraq. The Iraqi Constitution, in Article 119, also arranged a federal and consociational agreement in where governorates, together or separately, could achieve a higher regional status (Cameron, 2010). This was arranged so that major parties in the state can have power in federal policymaking while still representing their regional interests. Regional status intended for the KRG to have autonomy but also remain a part of Iraq. The flaw in the design is that federalism is not symmetrical; instead, it is asymmetrical, giving varying amounts of power to different regions and groups, and contributes to the weak governance within provinces across the state. The regional status allows a group of governorates to band together into a region to gain control over its resources, industry, and infrastructure and create an independent regional government and military force. The central government feels threatened by this stipulation because if all the provinces of Iraq could gain regional status equal to the KRG, the central government's power would be threatened by stronger regional governments, creating more strained conflicts. As a result, Baghdad has given significant pushback to the decentralization efforts described in the Constitution out of fear that their power would diminish.

Federalism in Iraq was created with many goals in mind. Being a state comprised of different ethno-sectarian, historical, and political differences, those who crafted the current government sought out a way to allow the different demographics of Iraq to manage their societal tensions. Different governorates of Iraq have diverse needs, and the concept of federalism aimed to provide adequate representation and quell violence while providing the necessary support for each province. The 2005 Constitution allows for asymmetrical federalism between the central government and the governorates not incorporated into a region, as per Article 123. The Constitution does not necessarily outline a clear and concise decentralization plan; instead, it allows the central government to control how much devolution can occur, meaning that decentralization efforts struggle to give governorates the power they need to function correctly (Fleet, 2019). Overall, decentralized asymmetrical federalism allows for a stronger Kurdish Regional Government, the central government, and the weaker governorates to regulate their problems while still being connected to Baghdad to settle disputes and improve governance. While Iraq's Constitution calls for the governorates to be decentralized, in reality, this required a significant restructuring of governmental functions and the government struggled to commit to the decentralization process.

Outcomes of Consociationalism: Proportional Representation

To use Lijphart's phraseology, in 2003 when the current government formed, there was no "deliberate joint effort by the elites to stabilize the system," in the case of Iraq; instead, the United States and its allies used consociationalism to attempt a power-

sharing agreement between the three ethno-sectarian groups of the country: Sunnis, Shias, and Kurds. While ethnic representation is suitable for a diverse society, Lijphart's emphasis on creating parties based along ethnic lines tends to focus political leaders on ethnic tensions, rather than solving the universal problems that Iraqis face, such as access to consistent electricity and clean water. For context, Iraq after the invasion was a whirlwind of chaos and ethno-sectarian violence. In an attempt to equalize the uneven share of dictatorial power. Many Sunnis were expelled from government positions, and many faced unemployment due to de-Ba'athification and the military's disbandment, forcing many military-aged men to join the insurgency. At the same time, the Shi'a majority sought to harness power in a destabilized system and the Kurds sought independence to create their own state, separating themselves from their Iraqi identity. As the country descended into chaos, officials attempted to solve the problem through consociational agreements; however, this proved to be a complicated process with extreme divisions on all sides. As officials tried to create a power-sharing agreement to form the new government, the ethno-sectarian divides continued to linger in the system due to the consociational structure. Proportional representation was expected to bring about reconciliation between the three main groups; however, it fragmented the political system further and did not encourage the opposing groups to reach across the aisle.

I argue that the proportional representation system in Iraq perpetuates the ethno-sectarian divides within the country. The system fuels politicians to work within parliament along ethnic or sectarian lines rather than be focused on the problems Iraq faces, such as border security, providing basic services, and eliminating corruption.

Timothy Meisburger argues that proportional systems, especially in developing countries, perpetuate social, ethnic, and sectarian divisions. Further, he claims, "in emerging democracies... parties often form around preexisting social cleavages—including differences of religion, ethnicity, tribe, language, or culture—and PR-based systems can have the unfortunate effect of sharpening rather than dulling such splits" (Meisburger, 2012). This is a part of the modern debate about the PR system. As mentioned earlier, scholars such as Lijphart claim that consociational agreements are the ideal way to mitigate these challenges; however, in Iraq's case, the country does not appear to be advancing towards a bustling democracy due to its consociational institutions. When observing the effectiveness of the government in 2018, according to the Varieties of Democracy Project, Iraq scored a -1.32 on a scale of -2 to 2. Much of this can be explained by the fragmentation of the parties and the election of incompetent leaders.

The fragmentation of Iraq's political parties results from the proportional representation system, which created an unstable environment within the government. Not only does this prevent parties from defining themselves with concrete values that reach and identify with many Iraqis, but the fragmentation also halts the government from making much-needed decisions for the country, especially the forming of the government. The election results can be seen in the next section, showing increasing fragmentation over time. The elections highlighted the fragmentation of Iraq's political parties, the lack of party discipline, and the lack of legislative control among coalition and alliance leaders. Iraq's socio-ethnic diversity tends to result in many parties for representative purposes (al-Shadeedi and van Veen, 2020). As a result of the

fragmentation and inability to form alliances with other parties, Iraq faces extreme obstacles to progress its agenda within parliament. For example, Iraq went 289 days without forming a government in 2010. This was not only destabilizing for the country, but it also spoke to how fragmented the system is because of proportional representation.

The proportional representation system also produces weak leaders who lack accountability or influence to make a policy difference. Iraq does have many competent officials who want to produce tangible progress. However, its politics prevent the government from addressing important problems like economic and justice system reforms, fixing corruption issues, restructuring the military and security forces, repairing Sunni regions damaged under ISIS control, and fully reintegrating Iraqi Kurds (Cordesman and Hwang, 2020). Candidates are chosen by the weak and fragmented parties and therefore not necessarily responsive to the constituency but to party elites instead. Many politicians remain loyal to their identity and discourage working across the aisle, putting their ethno-sectarian differences above policy that can help resolve the problems Iraq desperately needs to fix. Elected officials may be more concerned with appealing to their party leaders and not to the voters. This results in high levels of corruption within the government, frustrating Iraqis across the state, and causing the protests that emerged in 2019 and early 2020. Iraq is known for its high levels of corruption, as its bureaucracy is deeply woven with political party interests (Lust, 2020). The government is mainly unresponsive to voters' dominating issues and instead favors the party elites within the system. These factors lead to tremendous instability for the country, primarily because of the ineffective governance that followed elections. From

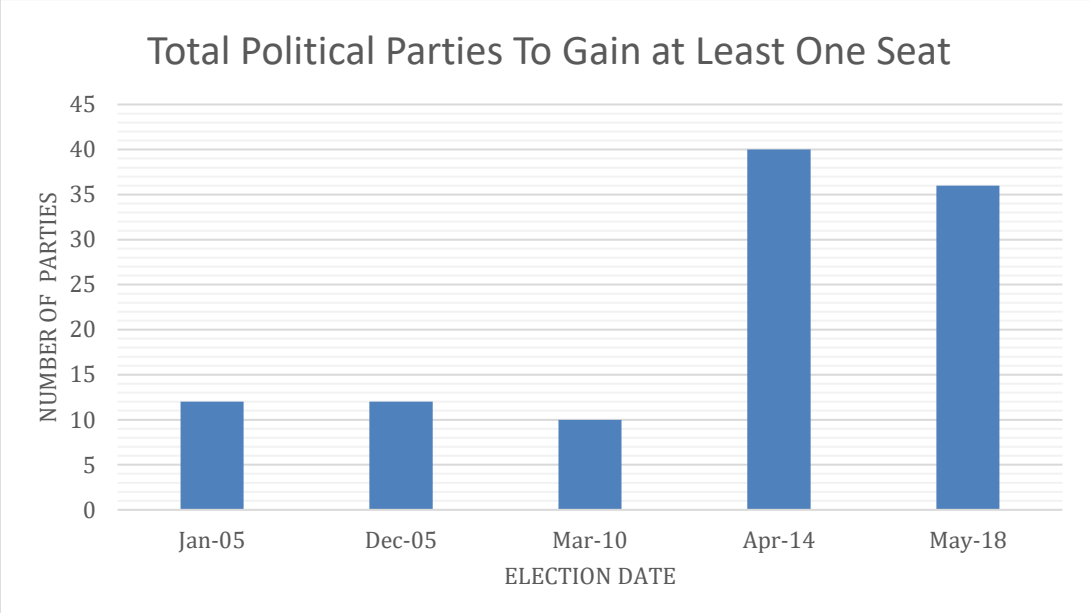
Al-Jafari in 2005, to Al-Maliki in 2006 and 2010, to Al-Abadi in 2014, to Mahdi in 2018, to al-Kadhimi in 2020, the system continues to elect Prime Ministers who are not effective in taking control of the country and putting it on track to improve basic services such as access to electricity, control the rampant local militias, and improve the responsiveness of regional governments. Instead, the head of government lacked the political capital to make policy decisions that directly addressed Iraq's diverse political, social, and economic interests (al-Shadeedi and van Veen, 2020). The proportional system does not provide the government the tools to elect a leader with widespread support and strong political capital. More consolidated parties can prepare leaders to fill these roles with more support from constituents and government officeholders.

Election Results Over Time

This section contains information regarding elections in Iraq since its modern democratic history starting in 2005. My conclusions from the data are that the fragmentation of political parties increased over time. Over thirteen years, Iraq's elections showed a significant increase in the number of seats allocated to smaller parties that received minimal percentages of the vote. For example, in the 2018 election, the other parties gaining no more than three seats averaged 0.27% of the total vote for each seat, with the smallest party receiving only 0.04% of the total vote to gain one seat. These minimal percentages that allow for seats in parliament can split up parties, which does not encourage the larger parties to reach across sectarian or ethnic lines to appeal to these smaller parties. Instead, many parties are left with few seats and a small voice in a

polarized and fragmented government. Because coalitions were not built through shared political ideology or policy, and because leadership often had conflict along ethnic or sectarian lines, these coalitions fragmented quickly in later years, undermining the quality of governance in the longer term (Al-Shadeedi and Van Veen, 2020).

Graph 1 shows how many political parties gained at least one seat during that particular election. The results show that over time fragmentation of parties increased dramatically and many minor parties formed, particularly in the last two elections. The results range from between 10 to 12 winning parties between 2005 to 2010, to between

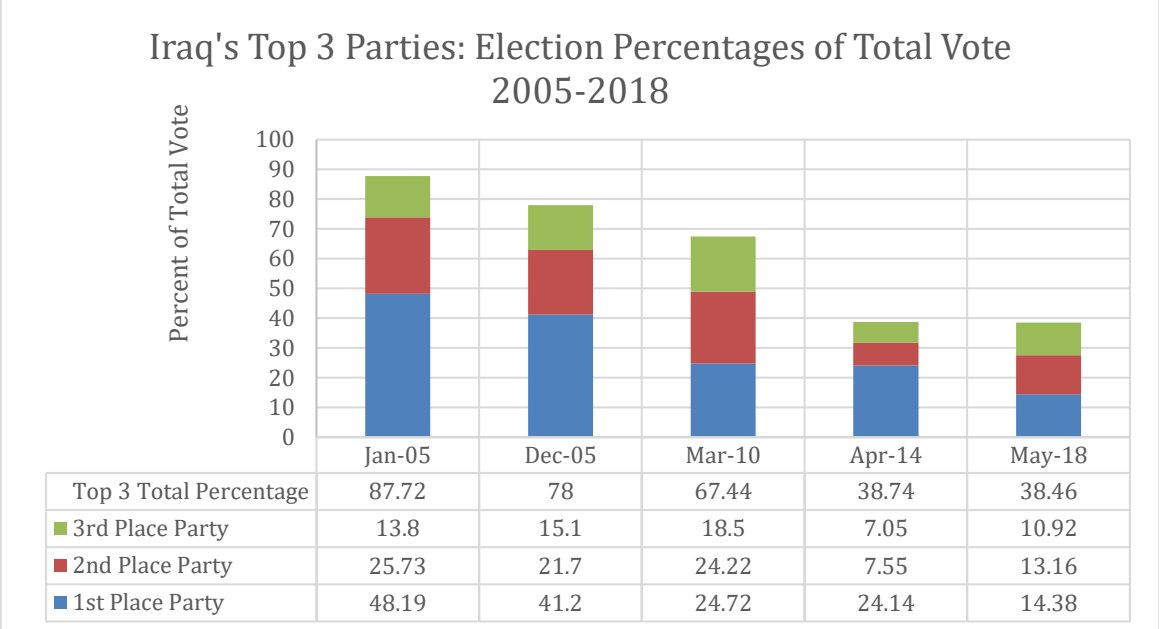


Graph 1: (election results from) Iraqi Independent High Electoral Commission; O'Sullivan and Al-Saiedi (2014)

35 to 40 parties between 2014 and 2018. The dramatic increase can be attributed to party fragmentation and splits within political parties. As a new democracy, this is not the most stable way to form a government because the parties lack cohesion and national recognition among Iraqis. Well-known and established parties can help Iraqis better unify under common ideologies with strong politicians accountable to their constituents. This

fragmentation can divide the population over ethnic or sectarian differences and does not incentivize larger parties to reach across the aisle to gain a more extensive base.

Graph 2 shows how much of the total vote the top three winning parties received. As you can see, there is a steady decline over the years in how much the top three parties represent the overall voting population as more parties fragment and disperse the vote across various parties. When Iraqis first went to the polls in 2005, the top three parties represented about 87% of the population. This starkly contrasts with the decline in 2018, where the top three parties represent only about 38% of the population. Another



	Jan-05	Dec-05	Mar-10	Apr-14	May-18
Top 3 Total Percentage	87.72	78	67.44	38.74	38.46
3rd Place Party	13.8	15.1	18.5	7.05	10.92
2nd Place Party	25.73	21.7	24.22	7.55	13.16
1st Place Party	48.19	41.2	24.72	24.14	14.38

Graph 2: (election results from) Iraqi Independent High Electoral Commission; O'Sullivan and Al-Saiedi (2014)

interesting note about this graph is the steady decrease of the vote percentage going to the first place winning party. In 2005 the top winning party represented 48% percent of the population, while only representing 14% of the population in 2018. When the first-place winning party only gains support from 14% of the population, this shows a lack of unity and cohesion within the government and the people.

Al-Muhasasa Principle

After creating Iraq's new democratic political system when the United States occupied the state in 2003, an unwritten rule, known as the Al-Muhasasa Principle, quickly became a political norm to allocate power to the three major ethno-sectarian groups. This power-sharing, consociational, system intended to create more proportionality for the government's major positions: President, Prime Minister, and Speaker of the Council of Representatives. Under the principle, each office was held by a Kurd, a Shi'a, and a Sunni, respectively. It has no legal basis, but Iraq's constitutional framework for democratic leadership transformed into a practice where politicians are nominated and appointed based on their ethnic or sectarian identity rather than their politics, ideas, accountability, or competence (al-Shadeedi and van Veen, 2020). Considering that many of Iraq's leaders lack democratic experience, it is not surprising that this principle was negotiated in Iraq's quasi-democracy between its governance model and its actual practices. Observing Iraq's history before the invasion, the majority population, the Shi'as, have used this principle to suppress Sunni leadership in government, which does not help resolve their ongoing ethno-sectarian tension.

To further explain the damage that the Al-Muhasasa Principle does to Iraq's democracy, the system continues to encourage an ethno-sectarian based allocation of important government positions and resources, reduces accountability, and creates a closed system of elite rule. In al-Shadeedi and van Veen's book, *Iraq's Adolescent Democracy*, they emphasize the overly broad elite inclusivity that has reduced the need to develop ideas and forms of political participation that appeal to voters, the lowered the

need for performance accountability and the decreased necessity of engaging in functional opposition. The Al-Muhasasa system also allowed for elite inclusiveness in Iraq's public revenue distribution which causes democratic governance and representational problems. This is relevant because as Iraq's top leaders are held to these divisive standards, the parties that hold positions in the Council of Representatives also emphasize the same characteristics of unaccountability, poor leadership, lack of unity, and voter appeal.

Majoritarianism: Solution to Proportional Representation

In reviewing the many problems that the Iraqi system faces, I argue that a potential solution to the destabilization and fragmentation of proportional representation would be the implementation of a majoritarian system. A majoritarian system, also known as single-member districts (SMD), will help Iraq consolidate its political parties and resolve the fragmentation issues in parliament. A single-member district is an electoral system that elects one representative rather than allocating seats proportional to the vote. Through this, SMD systems create majority governments through plurality. The difference between a majoritarian system and a proportional system is whether or not most of the preferences are taken into account or almost all of the preferences.

With a proportional government, almost all of the preferences are taken into account and form broad coalitions. The potential for change is limited due to many parties and allocated seats. Responsibility within minority and coalition governments remains unclear. If voters are unsatisfied with the government, proportional systems

obscure governmental responsibility, making a change to the government difficult. Coalition and minority governments that depend on many opposition parties obscure accountability and make it difficult for the electorate to assign blame (Lundell, 2011). Defined responsibility is evident when a single party with a voter majority in the legislature governs alone. Majoritarian democracies take into account the majority of preferences and provide efficient opposition parties that can challenge the government and change the executive in power (Lundell, 2011). This type of election system would consolidate parties and allow for them to create a more concrete ideological position. When in power, it is clear which parties are responsible for policy decisions and are typically more predictable and politically defined when they are consolidated with explicit political ideologies. Also, it would require the parties to reach across ethno-sectarian lines to produce a majority to pull in votes and accommodate for other groups.

As an emerging democracy, following an era of extreme fragmentation and frustration with internal and external influences, Iraq was given a system that immediately clung to the ethno-sectarian divisions and continues to struggle to transcend those original issues. Meisburger, a scholar who makes strong arguments for majoritarianism, discusses how majoritarian systems are more flexible and more likely to develop democratic attitudes and allow democratic parties and states to emerge (Meisburger, 2012). According to his argument, a majoritarian system may allow Iraq to consolidate more democratic and fully developed parties to allow for more productive democracy to emerge. Allowing Iraqis to hold the government accountable and turn over executives and governing coalitions through clearly defined majority parties may make

their unstable and fragmented government more responsive. Perhaps a PR system can be effective in a more developed Iraq; however, majoritarianism would provide the state with a structure that can help the parties identify their ideologies, consolidate supporters, define their platforms, and reach across the aisle to gain more widespread support from Iraqis of different backgrounds.

Majoritarian systems also allow for candidates to succeed by broadening rather than narrowing and intensifying their appeal to smaller groups and smaller parties, resulting in fragmentation (Meisburger, 2012). This is important because instead of having allegiance to the party, which is seen in Iraq's current PR system, Iraqi politicians will have more of an incentive to be responsive to the people they represent while building upon a more unifying party platform to reach a broader audience of civilians. Meisburger also discusses how elected officials are often responsive to party leaders rather than voters in a PR system and cannot harness the democratic attitudes needed to form alliances across the aisle that might better serve the constituent's interests. Iraq needs leaders that can work together and transcend their ethno-sectarian differences. Not only will forming the government be a more straightforward process, but Iraqis will also be incentivized to focus on ideologies and policies rather than registering to a party that only represents their ethnic or sectarian identities.

Iraq moving forward needs a durable government without the fragmentations that limit its democratic growth. Horowitz, a professor of Law and Political Science at Duke University, suggests several possible goals for an electoral system, many of which are not accomplished in Iraq under the current proportional representation system. These include

accountability to constituents, stable government, and interethnic and interreligious conciliation. While the goals of representation are achieved in this system, many groups still feel disadvantaged, and the state's security is compromised by the ethno-sectarian tensions and extremist terrorist organizations that arose out of decades of conflict. Majoritarianism would help Iraq achieve these missing goals to consolidate power in the state.

First, as Horowitz claims, PR systems can have perverse consequences in multiethnic societies. He argues that electoral systems that limit elites' ability to control and put forth party candidates produce more responsive representatives (Horowitz, 2003). Many may argue that many parties in a majoritarian electoral system nominate and push for candidates frequently during election cycles; however, it is still the constituents who vote for candidates during the primaries to produce the general election list at the end of the day. If most of the voting population does not approve of a candidate in the primaries, they will not make it to the general election. Allowing for SMD elections would allow the constituents to choose their candidate within their region and produce an elected official that is more responsive to the people than the party elites who chose the candidate to be on the list. This concept of accountability also ties in with the reconciliation of interethnic and interreligious groups. Accountability to the constituent would provide an incentive to work across the aisle, transcending differences in identity, and formulate policies conducive to addressing Iraqis' everyday problems. Majoritarianism also allows for the system to reward moderate behavior. Proportional representation systems allow for smaller and more extreme parties to hold seats in parliament, making coalition building a

challenge in emerging democracies. Coalitions formed following elections that manage to form a majority of just over 50% of the seats in parliament may prove fragile and unstable when ethnic issues arise (Horowitz, 2003). Iraq faces this fragility with its current coalition-style government. With an electoral system that directly elects its officials, Iraq may find that this would bring greater stability without the need for a forced or struggled coalition. This ties directly into Horowitz's goal of durable government. Deeply fragmented legislatures often find difficulty in forming a durable coalition. Majoritarian governments take the instability out of the equation and allow the people to elect accountable leaders.

Iraq has been using proportional representation for the past 16 years, without much improvement in its governance. To create more stability in the Iraqi government, clearly defined parties with explicit ideologies that overcome ethno-sectarian divides must be developed. In this discussion of Iraq, it is important to consider its unique history and current challenges, what it has already tried, and acknowledge that the current system is not working to unite Iraqis and build the liberal democracy that politicians and state-builders had anticipated.

Outcomes of Consociationalism: Federalism

Another aspect of consociationalism in Iraq is the federalist system that was put in place, largely to help control the varying needs of the diverse populations around the country and keep the Kurds under the Iraqi federal government but still have autonomy in the state. Although the federalist system works for the Kurds in the north, the rest of the

country struggles to handle the new responsibilities of managing a province, providing basic services, defending borders, and overall national unity. Iraq is the perfect example of a state in which federalism and decentralization are promised in its constitution, but can only be found in the Kurdish region located in the north. In Keil and Alber's discussion of Iraqi federalism, they raise an interesting perspective about the need for federalism to be repaired and made more robust, following through with the Constitution's commitments. An expert in federalism and decentralization, Eva Maria Belser, highlighted how successive regimes in Baghdad have prevented the creation of new regions, and have failed to implement key aspects of the 2005 constitution, thereby leaving Iraq as a half-finished state, in which the Kurdistan region enjoys substantial autonomy, while Baghdad continues to dominate and rule over the rest of the country (Keil and Alber, 2020). This is a problem for national unity and created a dynamic of contention between the governorates that do not have regional status, the Kurdish region, and the federal government in Baghdad.

Figure 5: Mohammed, H.J. (2019) Administrative Map of Kurdish Region of Iraq

The Kurdish region in the north is a common point of contention when discussing Iraqi federalism. While the Kurds are the crafters and biggest supporters of federalism in the state, it can be viewed as a way for the Kurds to secede in the future and deny Iraq the unity factor that it desperately needs. Iraqi identity slowly began to be seen among the Arabs within the country; the same can not necessarily be said of Kurds (Romano, 2010). Although I acknowledge that the Kurds have their own set of problems, especially considering their strong desire for secession. Outside of having their own sovereign nation-state that their adversaries can agree upon in the Middle East, I would argue that the Iraqi Kurds are dealt a solid hand considering their autonomy within Iraq. By this, I mean that Iraqi Kurds not only have their own regional government where they can make their policies and decisions, but they also have access to other Iraqi resources such as water ports for oil distribution. I would also argue that the regional federalism seen in the Kurdish region is the ideal model for how federalism should look throughout the country, with a robust decentralized government that is relatively efficient in delivering services, managing the public sector, and budgeting their funds. Federalism in the rest of the state does not look

the same as in the Kurdish region. Instead, the rest of the governorates do not share the same levels of power and independence under the central government, which causes efficiency problems within the local governments which will be discussed later.

Along with the discussion of unity, the Iraqi Security Forces' inability to manage the borders and prevent enemies from devastating the country has forced the Peshmerga forces to fill their role. Article 121 of the Constitution of Iraq provides that regions can create and manage their internal security forces and police outside of federal forces. This provides the legality for the Peshmerga forces in the Kurdish region. There have been many instances in which the Iraqi Security Forces have turned down the fight against ISIS, and the country depended on the Peshmerga forces to fight the enemy without the proper equipment or weaponry. Once the Iraqi army left all ISIS-controlled regions, the Peshmerga moved in to fill the security vacuum that was created due to a lack of Iraqi military presence (Akreyi, 2018). This discussion is meaningful because although the Kurdish region has its fair share of issues, its regional status allowed it to have its own military to defend itself from foreign threats, something Baghdad could not provide. Instead of relying on the weak national government to provide local security, if the rest of the governorates could achieve these same regional advantages that Kurdistan has, it can better secure the country from domestic and foreign enemies that threaten the system's stability. This is just one example of how decentralizing and providing the governorates with more powers can strengthen Iraq's democracy and government function.

Outside of the Kurdish region in the north, the rest of the governorates struggle to handle the responsibilities of management and provide basic services. "The execution

rates of the budgets in Iraq at the governorate level have been relatively subpar. While capacity has grown considerably with time, some of the governorates still struggle with effective budget execution and procurement" (Fleet, 2019). This is partially due to inadequate capacity on the governorate level and poor organization. The decentralization process has also created an abundance of confusion about the provincial leaders' roles and how to manage specific aspects of the governorate. For example, the governorates depend on Baghdad's funding; however, there is a lot of bureaucratic corruption at the federal and governorate level that prevents the funds from going to good use. Another example of the confusion is within the Financial Affairs Directorate. There is no single person in charge or held accountable for the province's finances within the governorates. The financial advisor in the governor's office and head of the Administrative and Financial Affairs Directorate have overlapping roles (Fleet, 2019). These are only a couple of examples of how the governorates' capacity and efficiency are held up by disorganization and corruption, explaining why many people in Iraq live without consistent basic services such as electricity and water.

As mentioned in the previous section, many Iraqis are protesting the government's corruption and lack of comprehensive policy to repair infrastructure and restore basic services. The waves of protest in Basra, Iraqi Kurdistan, Baghdad, Nineveh, and other parts in the south of the country are extremely telling about the inability of Iraq's political system to deliver basic services to its citizens, which requires the transcending of ethno-sectarian divides (al-Shadeedi and van Veen, 2020). These protests also coincide with the widespread unpopularity of the federalist system among Iraqis.

Many fear the corruption and self-interest of the local politicians and political parties are more of a priority than improving services, which is seen in many governorates where the protests occur. The near-daily electricity outages are a constant reminder for Iraqis how the system fails to provide them the services they need and exacerbates their frustration with the corruption. As politicians are known to lose track of funds on the governorate level or even pocket it themselves, many live with poor infrastructure, roads that need desperate repair, and inconsistent clean water, electricity, and sewage systems.

Repairing Iraqi Federalism

The discussion of Iraqi federalism is more complex, as there is no straightforward solution to resolving the relationship between the governorates, the ethno-sectarian tensions that remain vigilant between them, or the lack of accountability to the Iraqi people. As discussed in detail, Iraq's federalism is deeply flawed. The Constitution of Iraq promises decentralization but seems to only follow through for the Kurdish region. Iraq is too unstable to rely on unique and complex forms of federalism, but it cannot rely on the central government to solely conduct the planning and decision-making for the country's governorates that were not given the powers promised in the Constitution. Instead, the central government is more focused on the policies of national interest instead of addressing local needs (Cordesman and Hwang, 2020). I argue that a form of federalism is necessary for giving the ethnic and religious groups necessary autonomy, such as the Kurds, and managing the diverse demands of the citizens in different governorates. Cordesman and Hwang suggest that federalism in Iraq needs to be more

focused on healing and uniting Iraq's divisions and emboldening regional governments to control their territories to accommodate their citizens better. This approach to federalism in Iraq may help change its current asymmetrical federalist system to bolster and give the governorates more strength. I also argue that by allowing governorates to achieve regional status with their neighboring governorates more easily, they can band together to increase productivity, efficiency, and independence from the central government in Baghdad. More efficient regional governorates would allow the central government's functioning to be more effective, as the delegation of powers takes the pressure off of Baghdad to micromanage situations in different governorates.

As mentioned, the current system of Iraq's federalism is confusing and often causes tension between the political parties and the central government. As certain parties and successive prime ministers have created gridlock in parliament over where the power lies, within the central government or the governorates, decision-making in major areas of the decentralization process has been delayed. The failure of the national government in Baghdad to reach a common understanding of federalism and decentralization has been a significant obstacle to effective governance over the past few years (Alkadiri, 2010). Iraq not only needs to come up with a solid decentralization plan that is agreed upon and can be passed through parliament, but the Constitution needs to be amended to reflect these policies to avoid contradictions. The governorates struggle to understand their role and lack the flexibility to make their own decisions.

The oil and gas sector has been a major player and serves to be a great example to explain why federalism in Iraq is failing and how it desperately needs to be amended. Shi'a leaders have attempted to create a Shi'a region in the south of Iraq by uniting the Shi'a-dominated provinces; however, many of the decentralization efforts made for the oil-producing governorates, such as Basra, Dhi Qar, and Maysan, have been opposed. The ISCI is the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, an influential party within Iraqi politics, especially during its early days of attempting decentralization and democracy. The ISCI also has deep connections with Iran, which has incredible influence in Iraqi policy making and seeks to suppress efforts of democracy growth. Shi'as planned to create a region in the south of Iraq, which has been consistently rejected by ISCI's Islamist Shi'i political rivals, particularly al-Maliki's (previous prime minister from 2006-2014) Dawa party and the supporters of Muqtada al-Sadr (a prominent Shi'a populist and the head of the Sadrist movement). While these two parties are both Islamist in nature and promote Shi'a ascendancy in Iraq, both emphasize the need

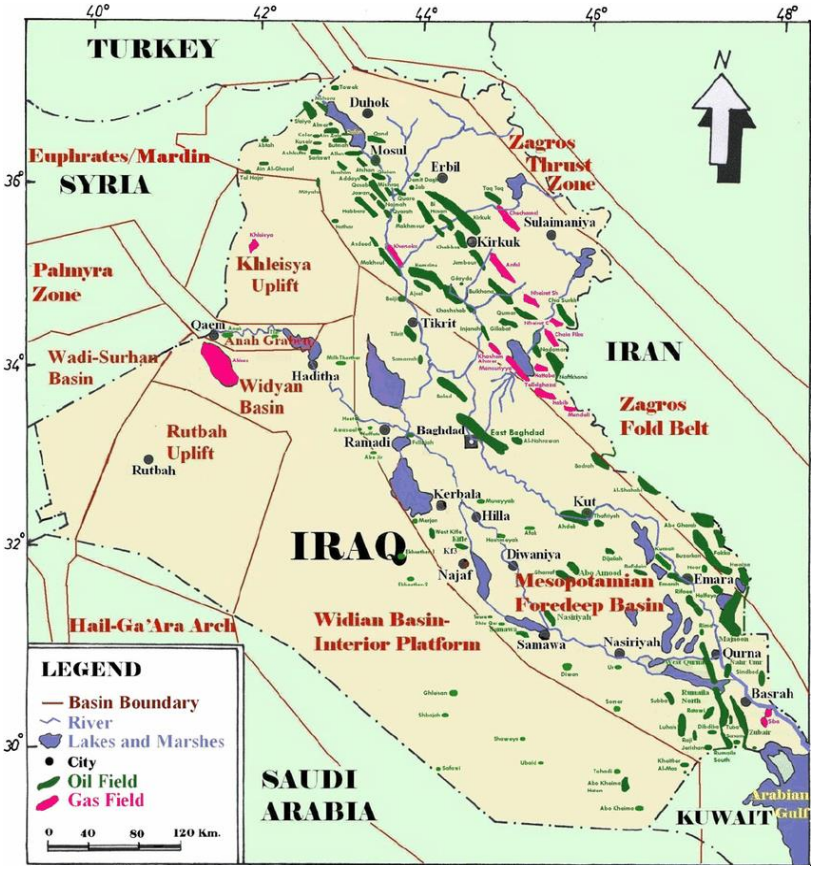


Figure 7: Al-Ameri (2010) Iraq with Locations of Basins, Oil Fields, and Wells

for a strong central government and seek to put a stop to decentralization efforts (Alkadiri, 2010). The Shi'as' dominating parties consistently support the weak system of federalism without supporting legislation to decentralize power to the governorates. Their connections to Baghdad and insistence on not delivering the promises of decentralization define the fragmentation in the Iraqi parliament and expose the government's inability to be held accountable to the civilians or by the Constitution. The governorates' lack of power to demand their policies over oil revenues and the support that elites give to the central government is at the center of the current debate about the federalist system. Control over oil money solidifies the central government's coercive power and funding of economic development, thereby tying the governorates more directly to Baghdad (Alkadiri, 2010). Gaining regional status like the Kurdish region has acquired will allow the Shi'a, Sunni, and mixed regions to have a clearer understanding of their role and more easily cut the ties the oil money creates to Baghdad's coercive power by having stronger and more consolidated regions. While the Kurds experience significant autonomy from Baghdad compared to the rest of the country, stronger regional statuses by combining the rest of the governorates into larger, more consolidated regions will alleviate the pressure from the governorates who cannot manage their funds or understand their roles. "Control over how local hydrocarbon resources are managed and over the receipts that flow from their export is critical to ensure maximum autonomy from Baghdad" (Alkadiri, 2010). Although the Kurdish region faces frequent pushback from Baghdad, its ability to still manage its region with autonomy can significantly benefit the rest of the country, where weak federalism is failing.

As well as achieving stronger federalism through regional status, Iraq demands structures be put in place to help eliminate the corruption and mismanagement of funds and planning. Iraq's federalism is weak has much to do with the volume of corruption, not only in Baghdad but also in the governorates as well. Not only do these officeholders fail to understand their role in government, but they also fail to accurately allocate funds to follow through with projects, repair infrastructure destroyed by ISIS, and provide basic services to the people. Luay Al-Khatteeb, the founder of the Iraq Energy Institute, sheds light on the dysfunctional system of federalism in Iraq and some of the reforms that can be put in place to help manage corruption and mismanagement. She argues, "A multisector Federal Oil & Gas Council (FOGC) could be created to manage private sector investment in the petroleum sector across all of Iraq's 18 provinces as a grand regulatory body designed to maximize efficiency and coordination" (Al-Khatteeb, 2018). Regardless of the attempt to restructure Iraq's federal system, a council such as this is critical to ensuring that corruption and mismanagement cease to be a theme that holds the state back from progressing. This would be a big step forward in keeping the government accountable to the people.

Repairing the broken promises of decentralization would bring about much-needed change to the federalist system in Iraq. The governorates require the central government to keep the Constitution's promises and give them more power to control their territory and resources with adequate support. Consociationalism in the form of asymmetrical federalism only allows for the ethnic group of the Kurds to achieve regional status, creating tension between Arab Sunnis and Shi'as who reside in the

weaker governorates. If they could share the same privileges, this would put all ethnic and religious groups relatively on the same playing field, allowing their governments to provide basic services that are desperately needed. This would help to consolidate democracy better if all governorates were able to thrive under efficient regional governments.

Conclusion

To conclude, Iraq's dysfunctional democracy has not seen the growth predicted by those who supported consociationalism for the state's development. Iraq's capacity from the beginning was not fit to adapt to this type of system, as the commitment to compromise and united power-sharing was inorganic and influenced by external forces. Consociationalism, or the theory of using systems of power-sharing to turn a fragmented state into a stable democracy, is not the solution for Iraq; instead, Iraq needs a more accountable central government with leaders that are not divided based on their ethnic or religious identities, but rather on ideology or policy. The proportional representation system is ineffective at helping elected officials work across the aisle and perpetuates the ethno-sectarian cleavages that only hurt the country rather than unite it. Majoritarianism can serve as a potential solution to political parties' fragmentation and help consolidate them with more explicit political ideologies. Federalism and decentralization in Iraq are also lost promises of its constitution. To better resolve the conflicts that Iraq experiences as a result of federalism, there needs to be a more concerted effort to decentralize and formulate regions out of the many weak governorates to help the rest of the state see the

efficiency that the Kurdish region enjoys. Iraq's current state of democracy is limited in its growth because of these factors, which have not helped solve enduring problems Iraq faced over a decade ago. Issues such as providing basic services, uniting the country under a national identity, transcending ethno-sectarian divides, or defending its borders from internal and external forces result from a failing system of consociationalism. If Iraqis want to experience a more robust democracy, amendments need to be made to the current system to transcend ethno-sectarian divides that prevent efficient governance.

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