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MUQTADA AL-SADR:
HOW TO DEMILITARIZE AL-SADR

by

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June 2009

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Muqtada al-Sadr has been one of the most influential individuals in Iraq since the U.S. invasion in March 2003. His Mahdi Army has actively confronted coalition forces and engaged in ethnic cleansing that have resulted in the displacement of thousands of Iraqis. This raises the question of how best to deal with this movement in order to stabilize Iraq. This thesis looks at the history of the Sadrist movement, explains its growth, and attempts to analyze means to integrate it into the political process. It borrows insights from the literature on how terrorism ends to make policy recommendations for the Iraqi government. A three-pronged economic, military, and political approach to channel al-Sadr into the political processes is recommended. The economic approach includes providing the services and welfare programs for poor urban Shia that make up Sadr's constituency. The military approach includes securing Shia neighborhoods from insurgent activities and bombings, a critical service that has until recently has been provided by the Sadrists. Political integration is the final and most important element in the integration process. Sadr has already displayed increased interest in institutional politics and he could be enticed to distance himself from criminal and terrorist activity.

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MUQTADA AL-SADR: HOW TO DEMILITARIZE AL-SADR

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ABSTRACT

Muqtada al-Sadr has been one of the most influential individuals in Iraq since the U.S. invasion in March 2003. His Mahdi Army has actively confronted coalition forces and engaged in ethnic cleansing that have resulted in the displacement of thousands of Iraqis. This raises the question of how best to deal with this movement in order to stabilize Iraq. This thesis looks at the history of the Sadrist movement, explains its growth, and attempts to analyze means to integrate it into the political process. It borrows insights from the literature on how terrorism ends to make policy recommendations for the Iraqi government. A three-pronged economic, military, and political approach to channel al-Sadr into the political processes is recommended. The economic approach includes providing the services and welfare programs for poor urban Shia that make up Sadr's constituency. The military approach includes securing Shia neighborhoods from insurgent activities and bombings, a critical service that has until recently has been provided by the Sadrists. Political integration is the final and most important element in the integration process. Sadr has already displayed increased interest in institutional politics and he could be enticed to distance himself from criminal and terrorist activity.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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I. INTRODUCTION

What strategies should be adopted by the U.S. and Iraqi governments to channel the rebellious cleric Muqtada al-Sadr and his Jaish al-Mahdi militia into the political process to strengthen stability in Iraq? The name al-Sadr is one of the most well known names in Iraq. It is a name synonymous with success, revival, and death. Muqtada al-Sadr emerged in 2003 from house arrest, where he was placed after the assassination of his father in 1999. His rise as a powerful military and political leader comes from the history behind his name and is due to the successes of his Father Ayatollah Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr and his father's cousin and mentor Grand Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr. Muqtada Sadr's movement that he has successfully run stems from his father's principles and ideals. By learning more about the men whose ideals have, in Sadr's mind, legitimized his movement, it will help to understand what drives him and may give insight into his movement and the effects on the future of Iraq.

During the years 2003 to 2007, there were thousands of violent acts each day. The majority of the violence was sectarian in nature causing such great fear in citizens that many fled their homes in search of safer areas. Al-Sadr's militia was involved in much of the violent acts in areas such as Sadr City, Najaf, Basra, and Amarah, initially as protectors of the poor Shia and providing security to the cities. As months passed, some of the less loyal militiamen became more involved in crime and extortion. The people who once supported al-Sadr and his militia were now beginning to fear them and those who could flee did. Near the summer of 2007, support for al-Sadr was fading and he knew he must adhere to the ceasefire, to end the violence and squash the fear.

Muqtada al-Sadr and his Mahdi Army have been involved in the majority of conflict with the coalition forces with the exception of the fighting in al-Anbar Province and Fallujah, although al-Sadr did give the Sunni some support in 2004 during the bloodiest fighting. The fighting in Najaf in 2004 was the biggest battle in which coalition troops and the Mahdi Army engaged. The fighting ended with a truce but the Mahdi Army called it a success because they were able to hold off the larger, more technically

advanced U.S. troops. This gave a huge boost to the morale of the fighters and increased recruitment. The author believes that al-Sadr has realized after years of conflict that it has not achieved anything; the United States are still in Iraq, the country is still unstable, and he has lost much of his support. Therefore, he is becoming more political. He is beginning to think more like his father and cousin in that neither were very violent yet were able to achieve greatness. Al-Sadr understands that the time for violence is behind him and his movement.

The World Health Organization estimated that more than 150,000 Iraqis died from violence between March 2003 and June 2006.[1] Much of the violence suffered was sectarian strife from both the Shia and Sunni. The violence resulted from the U.S. invasion as the struggle for power ensued. Al-Sadr was a part of the violence as the Mahdi Army was formed and began to remove Sunni from predominantly Shia areas especially within Sadr City. The author believes that in al-Sadr's mind, this was a more a move for security purposes than to cleanse Iraq of all Sunni. Like his father, he was a nationalist and believed that all Iraqis could live in cohesion although his actions were at times contradictory.

His father and cousin were both martyred after which their followings grew and their movements continued. If al-Sadr had been assassinated in 2004, it is difficult to say what the fallout may have been but the author believes there would have been much more violence as a result of his death than was suffered while alive. During the tumultuous times of 2003-2007, to have martyred a third al-Sadr would have been disastrous.

Grand Ayatollah Baqir al-Sadr was very outspoken against the Baath regime and paid the ultimate price with his execution in April 1980 shortly before Saddam Hussein ordered the invasion of Iran. Along with a few other Shia clerics, he wanted an equal society. They formed the Dawa party in 1958 beginning Shia politics in Iraq. Baqir al-Sadr's political involvement was the inspiration for Muqtada to enter the political arena although with some urging by Grand Ayatollah al-Sistani. Baqir al-Sadr was never a

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[1] Emma Ross and Fadela Chaib, "New Study Estimates 151,000 Violent Iraqi Deaths since 2003 Invasion," *World Health Organization*, January 9, 2008, http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2008/pr02/en/index.html (accessed May 12, 2009).

violent man but believed strongly in his opposition to the Baath government. Like Baqir al-Sadr, Muqtada has not personally run for any position in government choosing instead to pull the strings of his party. He has been influential using his militia and threats of violence, although Baqir did not have a militia. He had something Muqtada does not, Grand Ayatollah status, which seems to be much more influential than violence.

Ayatollah Sadiq al-Sadr has been the most influential person in Muqtada's life. Sadiq al-Sadr did not rise to power but was instead placed in that position ironically by the man he hated most, Saddam Hussein. After spending much of the 1980s under house arrest, he was made the spiritual leader of the Shia after the end of the Shia uprising in 1992. Saddam selected him because of his name and because he thought he could control him. Sadiq was a smart man who issued *fatwas* in such a manner that they never appeared to be disloyal to Hussein. After a few years, he was able to distance himself from Hussein and began to be much more outspoken against the regime to the point that Hussein felt the need to have him assassinated to avert another Shia uprising. With Hussein gone, the United States became the regime that Muqtada al-Sadr would be most outspoken against and oppose at every opportunity. He implemented many of his father's policies and *fatwas*. Al-Sadr has been much more violent than his father and cousin were but that could be attributed to the increased violence against the Shia and the United States

Since the conflict in Iraq has begun, the violence within the country has been remarkable yet has not diminished the restructuring effort in the country. The first few years saw a lot of sectarian violence, violence between all factions and the United States and coalition forces, and even within factions. It should not have been a surprise when the largest sect, the Shia, did not agree on how the country should be administered now that Saddam Hussein and the Baath party had been abolished. Muqtada al-Sadr leads the Sadrists. He is the only major party leader to have not fled Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s. The Dawa party leader, Nuri al-Maliki, fled to Iran and Syria and the ISCI leader, al-Hakim, fled to Iran where he formed the party from individuals who were once loyal to the Dawa party. Al-Sadr has voiced his opposition to the other parties because of what he views as disloyalty to Iraq and the Iraqi people for fleeing to save their own lives instead of staying to fight.

Since the outset of the Iraq conflict, al-Sadr has been so outspoken and opposed to the U.S. presence that numerous arrest warrants have been issued for him. He has been targeted by U.S. raids, and the Iraqi government has planned and executed missions against him and his militia. However, is he a terrorist or simply a loyalist to Iraq who believes so strongly in his convictions that violence seemed to be the best avenue to achieving his goals? It could also be asked how much of the violence carried out in his name was actually ordered by him. Al-Sadr has been and will continue to be a very influential person in Iraq and the Middle East region.

Many of the scholars who have written about Muqtada al-Sadr and his movement mention his mentors Baqir and Sadiq al-Sadr as influential in Muqtada's Islamic views. Journalist Patrick Cockburn in an authoritative book about Muqtada al-Sadr, dedicated three chapters to Ayatollah's Baqir and Sadiq al-Sadr. He wrote about the influence their lives and deaths had on Muqtada and how it led to his rise.[2] Al-Sadr's actions and the policies he enforces are indicative of his father although with some exceptions; his father was set against any interaction with Iran while al-Sadr accepts assistance. His father did not seek assistance from al-Sistani yet al-Sadr has needed his assistance numerous times.[3] The biggest fundamental reason for Muqtada's required assistance from al-Sistani and Iran is that he is not an Ayatollah and his credentials as a Muslim leader have been questioned.

Many other sources were referenced as the author researched Muqtada al-Sadr's past and his lineage. Since the conflict began in 2003, hundreds of articles have been published that examine how the fighting has progressed. Of the articles, none of them examined how to demilitarize al-Sadr. The main topic of discussion was his propensity to engage in violence to achieve his goals.

When examining recent events in Iraq, the author relied on news articles from reputable news agencies. He has found few scholarly works published within the last year focusing on al-Sadr since he has been out of the public eye so long.

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[2] Patrick Cockburn, *Muqtada, Muqtada Al-Sadr, The Shia Revival, and the Struggle for Iraq* (New York: Scribner, 2008), 27.

[3] Ibid., 9.

Cockburn dedicates one chapter to describing Baqir al-Sadr and two chapters of the book to depict Sadiq al-Sadr, in the author's opinion, because he understood how important they were to al-Sadr and the success his movement has received. The book portrays both Baqir and Sadiq as very non-secular and greatly opposed to the Baath party specifically, Saddam Hussein. Although the Baath party is no longer in existence, al-Sadr's new enemy is the United States and the government being instituted, at least initially. The book chronologically examines al-Sadr and the influence he has had on Iraq and the changes in Iraq on him. He describes the battle in Najaf in 2004 to some detail, his rise to politics, and the effects the surge had on Iraq. The book was published in early 2008, and thus, does not cover the lull in violence since the 2007 ceasefire. He ends his book by stating that the only way the Sunni could feel confident that Muqtada truly wants unity within Iraq would be if the Mahdi Army and Sadrists were to withdraw voluntarily to Baghdad but he did not see this happening.[4] The author thinks he would be surprised with the resolve the Sadrists have displayed since the Shia targeted attacks in April and May.

Baqir al-Sadr's legacy was discussed by Rodger Shanahan who examined the Dawa party started with great support from Baqir al-Sadr 1958[5] in Karbala.[6] The Dawa party gave rise to Shia Political Islam. In the 1960s, Baqir, due to increasing pressure from the *Marji'iyya*, began to distance himself from the party because the "issue of divided loyalties and authority between the party and the *Marji'iyya* escalated."[7] He had the charisma that people flocked to and was able to amass the Shia population to resist the government. As a Grand Ayatollah, he earned an enormous amount of respect and influence. His influence, close ties to Iranian Ayatollah Khomeini, and his open opposition to Saddam Hussein on the eve of war are what led to his execution in 1980.[8]

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[4] Cockburn, *Muqtada, Muqtada Al-Sadr, The Shia Revival, and the Struggle for Iraq*, 204.

[5] Rodger Shanahan, "Shi'a Political Development in Iraq: The Case of the Islamic Da'wa Party," *Third World Quarterly* 25, no. 5 (2004): 943-954.

[6] Ali A. Allawi, *The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 27.

[7] Ibid., 28.

[8] Shanahan, "Shi'a Political Development in Iraq: The Case of the Islamic Da'wa Party," 945.

Ali A. Allawi, the former Minister of Finance, Defense, and Trade of Iraq, published an in depth look at the conflict in Iraq from before the invasion through the 2005 elections. He does not focus on any one aspect of the conflict but instead examines each area from the invasion, to the political growth, and the militias, and emerging political leaders. He discusses the Shia militias and the problems Muqtada al-Sadr caused for the interim government and Ambassador Paul L. Bremer in 2003-2004.

Many scholars have researched terrorist groups and how they incite fear into a society to meet their intended goals, but only a few authors have focused on how the terrorist groups actually end. Two well-researched readings in how the groups end were an article published by the RAND Corporation and a book written by Audrey Kurth Cronin. The two readings focused more on how the United States can defeat Al-Qaeda but the principles are for any group. They each had similar results although the variables did differ. They each reviewed the same number of terrorist groups from that last four decades and although their methods differed slightly, they reached the same conclusions. These two readings were the main contributors used to determine if al-Sadr could be demilitarized. They studied over 600 terrorist groups from 1968 to 2006 examining what type of organization they were, what they were fighting for, and how they were defeated.[9] Politics was one of the ways terrorist groups end and if the U.S. and Iraqi governments continue to allow al-Sadr to be part of the political process, his terrorist tendencies will end naturally.

Philip B. Heymann wrote another book found to be useful to determine if al-Sadr would continue to use violence and although he did not focus on how the groups end, he did identify what the groups needed to succeed. He also outlined how to counter the needs of terrorist groups, which would ultimately lead to their end.

For Muqtada al-Sadr, and subsequently his militia, to be demilitarized, it is important to understand al-Sadr and to define his organization. During the first four years of the conflict in Iraq, al-Sadr's militia behaved as an insurgency with terrorist tendencies, in other words, while they were certainly an insurgent group that revolted

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[9] Seth G. Jones and Martin C. Libicki, "How Terrorist Groups End: Lessons for Countering al-Qa'ida," *RAND Corporation*, 2008, 2.

against the United States and opposed the new government institution being developed, they used terrorist techniques as a means to implement their own policies. The use of indiscriminant tactics such as IED's, and mortars and rockets cause considerable collateral damage if they even hit the intended target to begin with. Terrorist acts incite fear into a population, which forces people to flee from their homes, and in the case of al-Sadr, a loss of support. It is the use of indiscriminant techniques and the targeting of non-Shiites that the author classifies al-Sadr and his militia a terrorist organization.

Three areas must be focused upon to demilitarize al-Sadr and his militia and ensure they do not return to their terrorist ways. First, Muqtada al-Sadr must be brought into the political arena and placed in a position that the government could benefit from his rising regional standing and his popularity with the Shia lower/middle classes. Second, the government must pay more attention to providing security to the more destitute Shia that have faithfully supported al-Sadr. As long as they feel threatened and they suffer attacks from Sunni, they will continue to seek protection from al-Sadr and his militia. The government must also enact laws and policies to disband all militias in Iraq, which will be the most difficult to enforce. Unless the Badr organization disbands, the Mahdi Army will not disband, and until there is no longer a threat from Sunni militias, neither the Badr nor Mahdi militias will disband. As security forces and the Iraqi Army develop, they will be able to provide better security to all citizens of Iraq allowing the police to root out criminal elements to include anyone apart of illegal militias.

Lastly, the Iraqi government must take economic measures to provide services and welfare programs for poor urban Shia that make up Sadr's constituency. Welfare programs are how al-Sadr was able to create such a large following in the first couple of years of the conflict. If the government were to take the programs under their control, they would lessen the need for al-Sadr's welfare system.

The author maintains that inclusion in politics is the best course of action to take with al-Sadr because he has already expressed increased interest by having met with most of the regional leaders. These meetings also fuel the author's case since meeting with the neighboring leaders reinforces his standing as a legitimate figure in Iraq. He would not want to jeopardize his reputation through association by continuing to destabilize Iraq.

The neighboring countries are feeling the strain from the years of war as many Iraqis have fled to their countries seeking refuge and are placing a large strain on their economies. If the Iraqi government continues to marginalize al-Sadr, he may resume the violence experienced in 2004 as a means to achieve his goals thinking he has nothing to lose. He remains an influential figure and the author believes he could remobilize his militia in a matter of days.

This thesis examines Muqtada al-Sadr's background, where he grew up, and where his radical views stemmed. One chapter is dedicated to his father and cousin because of the immense influence they both had on him as he was growing up and because they were both killed when he was still relatively young. Thus, he developed a deep hatred not just for Saddam Hussein and the Baathists, but for any group he felt was trying to disrupt the Shia livelihood. The author explores the Sadrist movement and how it has influenced Iraq since the invasion both for good and bad. All of this information builds the foundation to understand al-Sadr and what is necessary to demilitarize him and his army. It will not be an overnight occurrence; it will take time and patience. The author believes al-Sadr wants peace in Iraq and also believes he wants to be apart of the restructuring of the country.

II.   THE SADRIST MOVEMENT

On March 20, 2003, the United States began the invasion of Iraq, and by April 9, 2003, Muqtada al-Sadr had resumed Friday sermons,[10] which had been abolished under Saddam Hussein. This was a clear action that al-Sadr was making a move as leader of the Shia community. He even ridiculed other clerics for not taking a stand against the Baath regime and now the invasion force. He especially criticized the elite leader of the Shia, Grand Ayatollah al-Sistani. Almost immediately after the fall of Saddam, the Sadrists renamed the city of Saddam City to Sadr City in recognition of al-Sadr's father Ayatollah Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr and placed his picture on every street corner.[11]

A.   AL-SADR AFTER THE U.S. INVASION

The Sadr II Movement after the U.S. invasion has been filled with controversy. Muqtada al-Sadr was the first cleric to emerge as a Shia leader after the removal of Saddam Hussein from power. After his father's execution, the movement was forced underground and funding became very difficult. Once Saddam Hussein was removed from power, the movement reemerged needing to generate funds to fuel the next phase of the Sadr II Movement. Iran stepped in to assist with the revival assisting with weapons, IED materials, training, and funding even though it went against what al-Sadr's father believed in and the hatred towards Iran that he himself felt. His hatred for the United States seemed to have necessitated his acceptance.

When Muqtada al-Sadr emerged as a rising leader of the Shia people, it was his father's followers and supporters who supported him in an effort to revive the Sadr II Movement. Like his father, he instituted welfare programs to assist the poor Shia and he inspired them with his anti-American rhetoric. A very deep hatred still exists for America from the 1990s because of the economic sanctions and devastation they caused. Although

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[10] Timothy Haugh, MAJ USAF, "The Sadr II Movement: An Organizational Fight for Legitimacy within the Iraqi Shi'a Community," *Strategic Insights* IV, no. 5 (May 2005): 4.

[11] Ibid., 4.

much of the blame for the deaths of thousands of Iraqis was placed on Saddam for not distributing funds to support all Iraqis, they still blamed the United States for not seeing what the sanctions were doing to the country.

Muqtada al-Sadr differed from his father in his seriousness about what he was to achieve. When he spoke, it was with a matter of fact attitude; there was little room in his life for jokes or light-heartedness.[12] He was always about the business of repelling the Americans from Iraq and taking the country back. He carried resentment for al-Sistani because, like his father, he saw him as a Quietist, but because al-Sistani had a larger following and was more revered, he often relied upon him. His father did not agree with the religious figures of Iran and despised the al-Hakim family for fleeing to Iran when the Shia uprising in 1991 and 1992 was in need of leaders. Muqtada al-Sadr shares the same hatred for clergy of Iranian decent and any leader who fled when times were tough.

Al-Sadr's legitimacy as the leader of the Sadrists comes from Ayatollah Kazim al-Hai'ri, who al-Sadr technically represents in Iraq.[13] It is ironic that al-Sadr would have such strong ties to Iran, that al-Sadr would let it be known that he represents a cleric who fled Iraq to Iran since he believes that no Iraqi should be spoken for by someone who is not Iraqi (al-Sistani, who is of Iranian decent) and that Iraqi clerics who fled Iraq abrogated their responsibilities.[14] He receives much of his legitimacy through Grand Ayatollah Kazim al-Hai'ri. Since al-Sadr has not achieved Ayatollah status, he needs al-Hai'ri. He has received funding, weapons, and at times, political support from Iran while at the same time he criticizes other parties, such as ISCI, for their Iranian support.[15]

As a representative of a Grand Ayatollah, al-Sadr has been recognized as a legitimate clerical leader in Iraq. The author believes al-Sadr made an exception with al-Hai'ri because he wanted to lead the movement and he needed al-Hai'ri's blessing as the

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[12] Cockburn, *Muqtada, Muqtada Al-Sadr, The Shia Revival, and the Struggle for Iraq*, 117.

[13] Joseph Felter and Brian Fishman, "Iranian Strategy in Iraq: Politics and Other Means," *Combating Terrorism Center*, October 13, 2008, 30.

[14] Haugh, "The Sadr II Movement: An Organizational Fight for Legitimacy within the Iraqi Shi'a Community," 3.

[15] Kenneth Katzman, "Iran's Activities and Influence in Iraq," *Congressional Research Service*, August 22, 2008, 1-2.

appointed leader of the Sadrists to give him the legitimacy to issue orders and make decisions on behalf of the movement. Al-Sadr had already been leading the Sadr movement from the time it went underground after his father's death, to when the war broke out. When the movement resurfaced, al-Sadr wasted little time mobilizing his followers to patrol the streets of the cities and to rally support for the Sadr movement.[16]

Once the United States had officially removed Saddam from power, the Shia factions began to jockey for power in the now unstable country. Al-Sadr had worked to get the jump on the other parties. The Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), led by Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim until his assassination in August 2003, then by his brother Abd-al-Aziz al-Hakim, and the Dawa party led by al-Ja'afari, had to play catch up to try and gain support, which they did but it was their cooperation with the United States that worked in their favor.[17]

In the early days of the war, al-Sadr was simply a thug who took the opportunity after the fall of Saddam's regime to fill the void. He and a group of young Imams from around Iraq, by invoking Sadiq al-Sadr's name, "seized control of mosques, welfare cent[er]s, universities and hospitals and …instituted forms of local governance."[18] As explained by a journalist for *al-Hawza al-Natiqa,* it was through satellite television that the Sadrist movement was born because of the Shiites' interest in him.[19] They began programs to help the poor Shiite communities, opened mosques, and formed a militia. The Sadrists formed the Jaish Al-Mahdi (JAM), to oppose the already established and well-trained Badr Corps of the SCIRI party and defend Sadr interests.

The Badr Corps is 25,000-strong and has years of structure since its establishment in 1982. All of the members received their training and funding from Iran where the SCIRI party had formed after its founders fled Iraq in the early years of the Iran-Iraq

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[16] Haugh, "The Sadr II Movement: An Organizational Fight for Legitimacy within the Iraqi Shi'a Community," 3.

[17] Nawaf Obaid, "Meeting the Challenge of a Fragmented Iraq: A Saudi Perspective," *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, Revised April 6, 2006, 13.

[18] "Iraq's Muqtada al-Sadr: Spoiler or Stabaliser?" *International Crisis Group,* Middle East Report no. 55, (July 11, 2006): 7.

[19] Ibid., 9.

War. The 10,000-strong Mahdi Army is much less structured and does not possess the discipline of the Badr Corps. Both organizations continue to receive a great deal of aid, training, and finance from Tehran;[20] again, Sadr taking aid from the very same government he has condemned.

While the SCIRI and Dawa organizations were cooperating with the United States, al-Sadr and the Sadrists were being very outspoken against the U.S. forces in Iraq and anyone who cooperated with them and continuing to do so today. After increased violence and continued rhetoric against the United States, the U.S. viceroy L. Paul Bremer on March 28, 2004, closed the *Al Hawza* newspaper for printing a sermon from al-Sadr that had praised the 9/11 attacks.[21] This move marked the start of the most violent opposition al-Sadr would unleash on the coalition forces. Soon after Bremer arrived in Iraq, he began to focus greatly on al-Sadr and his militia. He spent a lot of time tracking him and ordering attacks against JAM.[22]

In early April 2004, Bremer had al-Sadr's top-aide, Mustafa al-Yaqubi, arrested which enraged al-Sadr so he called for an all out demonstration from his supporters with weapons to resist the coalition.[23] This move by Bremer was the last straw for al-Sadr so in April 2004 he ordered what would be the first large-scale fight between the Sadrists and coalition troops. The battle occurred in Najaf and it was deemed a success by the Sadrists because their small army was able to hold off the technologically advanced and better armed U.S. Army. Although the Sadrists were able to prevent complete defeat by the United States, ultimately, it was al-Sistani who negotiated the end of the fighting. Thus, it was not the Sadrists who were the true winners of the battle in Najaf, who were, as Cockburn describes, al-Sadr's opposition, Sistani, SCIRI, and the hawza.[24] The ceasefire in Najaf gave al-Sistani the power to appoint any group to secure the city and

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[20] Obaid, "Meeting the Challenge of a Fragmented Iraq: A Saudi Perspective," 14-15.

[21] Cockburn, *Muqtada, Muqtada Al-Sadr, The Shia Revival, and the Struggle for Iraq*, 139.

[22] L. Paul Bremer III, *My Year in Iraq, the Struggle to Build a Future of Hope* (New York, Threshold Editions, 2006), 190-193.

[23] Cockburn, *Muqtada, Muqtada Al-Sadr, The Shia Revival, and the Struggle for Iraq*, 145.

[24] Ibid., 163.

the shrines; it was SCIRI that was given that honor. With the 2005 elections fast approaching, SCIRI took advantage of the occupation of Najaf by moving members of the Badr Corps into the city who began campaigning for SCIRI support.

Over the course of the next couple of years, resistance from the Sadrists and growing support from the Shia population continued as their anti-coalition sentiment grew. The Sadrists continued their opposition and hostility toward the United States, while at the same time, al-Sadr was seeking representation in the new government. After the 2004 battles in Najaf al-Sistani, as part of the ceasefire agreements, insistence ensued that al-Sadr enters into the political process.[25] The elections in 2005 had formed an alliance for power between the Dawa, SCIRI, and Sadrists called the United Iraqi Alliance (UIA).[26] al-Sadr was the driving force behind the selection of Nuri al-Maliki as Iraq's Prime Minister,[27] although the support they showed each other quickly deteriorated.

1. Muqtada Al-Sadr the Politician

After the standoff in Najaf in August 2004, al-Sadr began to become more involved in the political process at the request of al-Sistani. Al-Sadr gained a lot of support in his transition to politics, and by mid-2006, he had become a strong political figure not just within Iraq, but also with Iraq's neighbors acquiring regional standing and displayed diplomatic skills during an early 2006 tour.[28]

In the infancy of the movement, al-Sadr's goal was not to be part of the political process put in place by the coalition as he was very anti-anything U.S. related. After much violence and the sidelining of the Sadrist movement by the United States and the

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[25] "Iraq's Civil War, The Sadrists and the Surge," *International Crisis Group*, Middle East Report, no. 72, (February 7, 2008): ii.

[26] Allawi, *The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace*, 342-344.

[27] Sudarsan Raghavan, "Sadr Movement Seeks its Way as Others Gain Power in Iraq," *Washington Post*, 5 December 2008, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/12/04/AR2008120404371.html?hpid=topnews (accessed May 3, 2009).

[28] "Iraq's Muqtada al-Sadr: Spoiler or Stabaliser?" ii.

interim Iraqi government, they resorted to "new and more violent means of struggle."[29] The increased violence led up to the bloody battles in April and August of 2004 in Najaf. Up to the climax of 2004, there was much bloodshed and the Mahdi Army suffered hundreds of casualties. Muqtada realized the fighting and bloodshed were not getting him anywhere toward making a difference in Iraq so he changed his course of action.

After the intense and deadly fighting in 2004, Sadr knew that for his movement to be seen as a legitimate force, he would need to conform to the new political system and be elected into the government, which up to this point, he had fought so hard to prevent. Sadr began to lose support from the large majority of the Shiite population as they grew tired of constant conflict and wanted to get back to some sense of normalcy within the country. The months of fighting emblazoned Muqtada but also taught him "violence could not accomplish everything, but that it could provide him recognition and acceptance. That was a lesson he would not forget as he gradually shifted his struggle toward another arena,"[30] referring to politics.

"After the 2004 crisis, Muqtada shifted gears, describing his transformation as a new means to reach the same goal, the end of the occupation. The Sadrist movement first resorted to peaceful resistance, then to armed resistance, and finally political resistance."[31] This is where he continues to work today although the Mahdi Army is changing and not for the better. Before the 2005 elections, Muqtada ordered a ceasefire to the fighting between his army and the coalition forces. He refrained from brazen acts of violence. His army continued to be a prominent force; they erected checkpoints, enforced social mores, patrolled neighborhoods, and engaged in social work, all the while continuing to conduct violent attacks against Baathist's and coalition forces without claiming responsibility.[32]

Once elected, he tried to make changes from within but was still met with much resistance. He maintained that he could call to arms his army at any time to meet the

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[29] "Iraq's Muqtada al-Sadr: Spoiler or Stabaliser?" 10.

[30] Ibid., 12.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid., 13.

threats he felt were worthy. He tried to be more legitimate by distancing himself from abuses and "blamed excessive violence on rogue elements and overzealous militants…"[33] Al-Sadr did not change his "core principles, namely rejection of the occupation, foreign meddling, and Iraq's partition."[34] Once the Sadrists were elected to office in the 2005 elections, "[Al-Sadr] … carefully circumscribed his movement's participation to social ministries, gaining control over resources it then reallocated to key constituent groups."[35] Al-Sadr prefers his constituents hold positions that deal with the social security of the populace as he understands the importance of popular support in this new government.

Sadr's reign in government essentially ended in early 2008 when al-Maliki ordered the Iraqi army, with the help of U.S. and British forces, to Basra to expel the Mahdi Army. The Iraqi army was successful in driving the Mahdi Army back to Sadr City, when on May 11, 2008, they agreed to a ceasefire. This was a devastating defeat for al-Sadr's army and was a huge success for the Iraqi Army. Due to the circumstances of the operation, it was a political defeat for the Sadrists because they were now seen as a terrorist organization on a national stage.[36] Al-Maliki made the ultimatum to al-Sadr that his army was to disband and cease the violence or the Sadrists would be prohibited from participating in the 2009 provincial elections. Al-Sadr saved al-Maliki the trouble and pulled his party from participating in the elections himself.

Al-Sadr was very quiet in the next months only being heard during a protest he organized against the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) being proposed to the Iraqi Government.[37] Al-Sadr has his own agenda in the reconstruction of Iraq and he does not want to work with the U.S. government to achieve his goals, nor does he want ties to the United States once the country has been stabilized. He has made it clear on more than one

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[33] "Iraq's Muqtada al-Sadr: Spoiler or Stabaliser?" 13.

[34] Ibid., 14.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Nazer Yasin, "Sadr Movement at a Crossroads," *International Relations and Security Network Security Watch*, May 15, 2008.

[37] Sudarsan Raghaven, "Followers of al-Sadr Protest U.S. Presence," *Washington Post*, May 31, 2008, http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2008/05/31/MNPS110RH7.DTL (accessed May 3, 2009).

occasion that he is for the nationalization of Iraq and he does not want Iraq to split down sectarian lines. This is what the United States wants also, but as a young democracy, it appears that sectarian divides are exactly what is occurring and there seems to be little anyone can do about it.

B.   THE MAHDI ARMY

Muqtada al-Sadr has been the face of the Mahdi Army since the beginning of the Iraq war and used it as a tool to achieve his political initiatives but the army's political influence has dwindled in the past couple years and is almost non-existent now. Al-Sadr used his army as a means to incite fear into his opposition to try to solidify himself as a force in Iraq to make changes. He eventually realized that force did not return the desired results and when he became part of the political process, he shifted focus from the army to more legitimate means. Although the army has been quiet in the last six or so months, it could rekindle at any time and that fear continues to strike fear into the population.

In the Mahdi Army's infancy, the main agenda was to battle the coalition forces and to cleanse Iraq of any remnants of the Saddam Hussein regime to include the Baathists. They were also concerned with preventing the country from being led by Quietists from the Saddam era and those Imams who chose a life in exile instead of fighting the Saddam regime alongside Sadiq al-Sadr.[38] The army began as small groups of Shiites spread throughout the southern cities of Iraq from Baghdad to Basra. They supported Imams in their respective areas who all supported Muqtada al-Sadr. In the beginning, no interest existed in being a part of the political system the United States had created so they opposed the United States and the Shiites who supported them.[39] They were more interested in gaining support from the citizens of Iraq against the coalition; this included all Iraqis regardless of sectarian beliefs.

Initially, al-Sadr used his army to provide security to Shia in areas that the Iraqi government and the United States were not patrolling or could not secure. While his

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[38] "Iraq's Muqtada al-Sadr: Spoiler or Stabaliser?" 9.

[39] Ibid., 7-8.

militia was providing security, they were also conspiring against U.S. forces and engaging troops when possible. In the first few years of the conflict, al-Sadr had a lot of support that seemed to dwindle as some members of his militia escalated to criminal activity and extortion against the Shia they had been protecting months earlier.[40] This criminal activity had an alternate result. The people they had been charged to protect and provide security for were now abandoning their homes and fleeing to safer areas of Iraq or even to neighboring countries.[41] Displaced people cited the extremist groups like Muqtada al-Sadr as the main culprits that caused the majority of the IDP's to mostly come from the areas with which he was charged.[42]

The army gained notoriety as a political influence in Najaf in 2004 when a small group of approximately 300 militiamen fought the better-trained and equipped U.S. forces only to end in a stalemate.[43] This battle also sparked a sharp rise in recruitment. Al-Sadr gathered a group of followers who chose to leave their studies instead to pursue "street politics to pious education" and for who al-Sadr's lack of education made them feel better about themselves.[44]

The Mahdi Army was very influential in Iraq at the beginning of the conflict through about August 2007 but it has been very quiet since then. In Baghdad on July 9, 2006, al-Sadr and his army became more central in Iraq than ever before after "stepped-up U.S.-led raids against [his] militia, and media allegations of the militia's responsibility for widespread and particularly horrendous sectarian killings…"[45] were reported. His militia has always been regarded as very influential to the successful restructuring of Iraq because of the extent of their violent behavior towards the United States and any person or group believed to support them.

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[40] Sudarsan Raghavan, "A Quiet Filled with Wariness," *Washington Post*, February 26, 2009, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/02/25/ar2009022504055.html (accessed May 3, 2009).

[41] Ashraf al-Khalidi and Victor Tanner, "Sectarian Violence: Radical Groups Drive Internal Displacement in Iraq," *The Brookings Institution*, October 2006, 16-17.

[42] Ibid., 16.

[43] "Iraq's Muqtada al-Sadr: Spoiler or Stabaliser?" 9.

[44] Ibid., 8.

[45] Ibid., i.

The army was certainly gaining a reputation throughout Iraq but it was not a positive one. Their lack of support from the more elite Shia made it difficult for the army to procure weapons and to provide the necessary support for the citizens through legitimate means. The movement was seen as not having any organization and did not have a coherent political program. They also lacked discipline and did not always appear to be following the orders of al-Sadr.[46]

In June 2008, al-Maliki ordered ISF into Amarah, a known weapons shipment hub from Iran. During the three days that forces were in the area, they seized hundreds of weapons and munitions. Al-Sadr called the action "a fierce attack against the Sadrist political movement."[47] This battle was probably the straw that broke that camel's back and led to the ceasefire because it dramatically decreased the arsenal the Mahdi Army had at its disposal. It also helped to prove that Iran was supporting the army with weapons as many of the weapons seized in Amarah had Iranian markings, rockets, mortars, and EFP's (Explosive Formed Projectile), in particular.[48]

The conflict in Basra in early 2008 by the ISF, assisted by U.S. and British forces, caused al-Sadr to order the current ceasefire. On August 7, 2008, a spokesman for al-Sadr told a BBC News correspondent that he would call on his militiamen to stop carrying weapons on the streets.[49] He also ordered "his militiamen to join a new religious and cultural wing of the movement that he is calling the *Momahidoun*, or 'those who pave the way.'"[50] He has also outlined a new plan to divide up the Mahdi Army; he would

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[46] "Iraq's Muqtada al-Sadr: Spoiler or Stabaliser?" 9.

[47] Anthony H. Cordesman and Jose Ramos, "Sadr and the Mahdi Army: Evolution, Capabilities, and a New Direction," *Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS)*, August 4, 2008, 13.

[48] Ibid., 26.

[49] BBC News, "Mehdi Army to give Peace a Chance," *BBC News*, published: August 7, 2008, http://news.bbc.co.uk.bo/pr/fr/-/2/hi/middle_east/7548543.stm (accessed August 26, 2008).

[50] Tom A. Peter, "After Setbacks, Sadr Redirects his Mahdi Army," *The Christian Science Monitor*, August 11, 2008, http://www.csmonitor.com/2008/0811/p07s01-wome.html (accessed August 26, 2008).

transition much of the army into a civilian movement to deal with "religious, social and cultural affairs," and the other group would be an "armed force of experienced fighters labeled 'the special companies'."[51]

[51] Cordesman and Ramos, "Sadr and the Mahdi Army: Evolution, Capabilities, and a New Direction," 13.

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III. MUQTADA AL-SADR'S LINEAGE

Muqtada al-Sadr's history is actually quite short. He was born the youngest of four sons on August 12, 1973. When he was twenty-one, he married a daughter of Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr.[52] Al-Sadr joined his father's movement in the 1990s acting as security for his father and later becoming editor of the paper published by his father's movement. He was not the most obvious successor to his father, and if his eldest brothers had not been assassinated, he would not be the leader he is today. Al-Sadr was made responsible for al-Thawra (later Sadr City) in Baghdad[53] where he assembled numerous followers and many reunited with him in 2003.

When al-Sadr's father was assassinated, al-Sadr took the movement underground, and due to the close scrutiny by Saddam, was unable to reach out to many of Sadr II supporters until just after the U.S. invasion. While underground, he spent much of his time trying to understand his father and father-in-law better. While under house arrest from 1999 to 2003, he archived the speeches and works of his father and cousin.[54] During this period, his belief structure was realigned although he could not know when Saddam would fall; he obviously had a plan for when he did. After the United States began their invasion of Iraq in March 2003, al-Sadr emerged ready to implement his father's ideals and policies.

In al-Sadr's nearly thirty-six years, he has witnessed a great deal of death in his family at the hands of Saddam Hussein and suffered great hardships created by the UN sanctions imposed on Iraq in 1992. His father's mentor, Baqir al-Sadr, was executed when Muqtada was a teenager and his father and two eldest brothers were assassinated when he was in his mid-twenties placing a lot of responsibility on him to support his

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[52] Cockburn, *Muqtada, Muqtada Al-Sadr, The Shia Revival, and the Struggle for Iraq*, 112.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid., 114.

family. Not only was he responsible for the well-being of his family, he had to be constantly aware of the surveillance he was under by Saddam Hussein as the last al-Sadr threat.[55]

He knew what he would need to do to create a following of supporters and how to place himself at the center of the conflict. He was the first cleric to speak to the Shia in mass. Although the United States had removed the man that had caused so much pain in his life, he was not grateful. He wanted the United States out of Iraq so the Iraqis could rebuild and reform the government without outside assistance. When al-Sadr was asked what the "Sadrist Movement" meant,

> he said it was simply made up of people who followed the teachings of Mohammed Sadiq al-Sadr... He added that in the broader sense, the movement included anybody who honored the "Speaking Hawza" and followed the teachings of Ayatollah Baqir al-Sadr... Both wanted an Islamic society that would prepare the way for the return of the Imam Mehdi, the redeemer who would end the rule of tyrants and establish justice in the world.[56]

Muqtada al-Sadr has risen from a relatively unknown cleric to become the most influential Shiite in Iraq. He has a long family history in Iraq stemming from his father Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr who was the spiritual leader of the Shiites in the 1990s. Sadiq al-Sadr was mentored by his cousin Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr until Baqir's execution in April 1980. Both of these men were very outspoken against the government. Although Muqtada did not know his future father-in-law very well, since he would have only been about eight when Baqir was executed, he has been influenced by his beliefs. This thesis examines Muqtada's two mentors and their movements as well as how Muqtada's movement is similar and dissimilar to them.

Each of the clerics lived modest lives. Baqir lived in a rented house and did not drive a car (although very few people did during the 1970s in Najaf); he believed it was important to live like his students.[57] Both men died at the hands of Saddam Hussein,

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[55] Cockburn, *Muqtada, Muqtada Al-Sadr, The Shia Revival, and the Struggle for Iraq*, 113.

[56] Ibid., 114.

[57] Ibid., 34.

Baqir al-Sadr in April 1980 and Sadiq al-Sadr in February 1999. They were both very popular, and had huge followings from the Shi'a communities, although Baqir al-Sadr's popularity did not grow until after his death. Saddam feared them both; Baqir al-Sadr because of his close association with the Iranian clerical leader Ayatollah Khomeini and Sadiq al-Sadr because of his rapidly rising popularity, antagonism of the Ba'ath party, and the reputation of Baqir al-Sadr that led to their deaths. Saddam had feared a coup like the one suffered by the Shah of Iran and took action with the arrest and execution of Baqir al-Sadr in 1980 and subsequently Sadiq al-Sadr in 1999.[58]

It is important to understand Baqir and Sadiq al-Sadr's movements to understand Muqtada better. Although Baqir was less influential, his beliefs transcend into the movement of today. Sadiq al-Sadr was and still is by far the most influential person in Muqtada's life. It is also important to understand how Muqtada al-Sadr was able to revive his father's movement, the Sadr II Movement, after the fall of Saddam Hussein to become the most influential group in Iraq. Muqtada's movement also differs greatly from his father's and father in law's movements in that it is not against the Baathist regime, and not entirely against Sunnis, but it is against the Americans and any group that Muqtada al-Sadr feels is not true Iraqi. The Americans in this era could be compared to the Baathists in the eyes of Muqtada and his followers.

The foundation of the current movement is an awakening of Sadiq al-Sadr's movement in the 1990s, which is why it still carries the same name, Sadr II Movement. Baqir's movement was known as Sadr I. The biggest difference between the two movements was that Baqir's was political while Sadiq's was wholly about taking care of the Shia population ensuring they were treated fairly with the same advantages as the Sunni. Muqtada al-Sadr's movement began as his father's but has become a combination of both Sadiq's and Baqir al-Sadr's as he has moved more onto the political stage.

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[58] Cockburn, *Muqtada, Muqtada Al-Sadr, The Shia Revival, and the Struggle for Iraq*, 27.

A. GRAND AYATOLLAH MOHAMMAD BAQIR AL-SADR

"If my little finger was Baathist, I would cut it off" was the response from Baqir al-Sadr when he was asked to submit to the Baathist government in Baghdad.[59] When did this hatred of the Baathist government begin and how did a young Shi'a cleric come to be one of the most outspoken persons against the regime? His resentment came to light in the late 1950s while he was studying at the *hawza* in Najaf. Baqir al-Sadr is widely believed to have started the Dawa party that would come to be what he is most known for and would lead to his execution.

Although the exact origin of the Dawa party is still unknown, there are three theories on when it was founded and by whom. The first theory is that it was formed by three men, Talib al-Ria'I, Sayyid Mahdi al-Hakim, and an unknown person on July 14, 1958. The second theory is that is was formed on October 12, 1957, in accordance with Dawa party documents and verified by one of its leading figures, Muhammad Saleh al-Adib. The final theory is that it was established in Najaf October 12, 1957, by eight clerics in the house of the leading Shi'a authority, Sayyid Mubsin al-Hakim. Months later in Karbala, a second meeting was held attended by the same members as the first along with some new member to include Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr who was credited with naming the party the Islamic Dawa Party.[60]

The significance of when the party was established is important. If it was before the July 14, 1958 Revolution, it would seem it was formed "as a reaction to the influence and popularity of the Iraqi Communist Party. …[T]o stress that the Dawa party was founded before that date means that is had emerged as an objective response to the existing intellectual, political, and social conditions."[61] Shanahan believes it was established as a method for the Shi'a Muslims to express their desires in accordance with

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[59] Cockburn, *Muqtada, Muqtada Al-Sadr, The Shia Revival, and the Struggle for Iraq*, 27.

[60] Abdul-Halim al-Ruhaimi, "The Da'Wa Islamic Party: Origins, Actors and Ideology," in Faleh Abdul Jabar, ed. *Ayatollahs, Sufis and Ideologues: State, Religion and Social Movements in Iraq* (London, Saqi Books, 2002), 151.

[61] Ibid., 152.

the "tenets of Islam."[62] The party was formed with the assistance of the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) in opposition to the growing threat of Arab Nationalism and land reforms. The *ulama* felt threatened not just legislatively but also ideologically as evidenced by the decline of students in the Najaf *hawza* from 6,000 in 1918 to about 2,000 in 1957, with only 326 being Iraqi.[63]

The party's goals and objectives to "restore Islam to the life of Muslims, government by the tolerant *Shari'a*, and establishment of the rule of God on Earth as a final goal"[64] outlined four stages to attain the above goals. Stage one was the "transformative phase inspired by the form of struggle waged to change the community. Two was the political phase that implies political struggle against the enemies of Islam. Three was the seizure of power that implies the struggle to lead the community. The final phase [wa]s the struggle for the party to apply Islam in part of the community and eventually [throughout] the entire community."[65]

The first phase was performed underground and lasted 22 years until the Islamic revolution in Iran in June 1979 when the party moved on to the second phase. Although the party had not openly released the name of their movement, they were active in the 1960s and 1970s through violent action against the government and educating the community through articles in their illegal newspaper, *Sawt al-Da'wa*, which was widely distributed on the campuses of Baghdad University.[66] The party had received enough focus that in 1971, the new Saddam Hussein regime had staged a move to liquidate the party beginning with the arrest of Baqir. He was shortly released, but others would not be so lucky. In 1973, a leading party figure was executed, and in 1974, another prominent member and four of his associates were arrested and later executed.[67]

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[62] Shanahan, "Shi'a Political Development in Iraq: The Case of the Islamic Da'wa Party," 944.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Al-Ruhaimi, "The Da'Wa Islamic Party: Origins, Actors and Ideology," 153.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Ibid., 155.

[67] Ibid.

Following the one-day arrest of Baqir in 1979, the Dawa party moved on to phase two, which was a violent and deadly phase. Al-Sadr ordered military operations against government officials and organs of repression. He confirmed the need to take up arms and to overthrow the government.[68] On March 30, 1980, the Revolution Command Council (RCC) made it illegal to be a member of the Dawa party and any violation would be punishable by death. In April 1980, Baqir and his sister were arrested and executed five days later. In September of the same year, the Iran-Iraq War broke out as a result of attacks by Saddam Hussein on Iran. The Dawa party members were very angry about the recent developments and stepped up their attacks on the government resulting in brutal retaliation. The majority of the remaining party members fled to Iran where the party leadership continued their rhetoric.[69] Over the course of the war, the party began to identify itself more with Iran. The party staged coup attempts and assassination attempts on the president of Iraq without success. They also took part in much of the fighting in Iraq.[70]

Although the party was established by clerics, it was not universally accepted by most of the religious leaders in Iraq. They "were opposed to any political Islamic activism in general, and to any organized partisan activity in particular. Popular quarters viewed political activism as a departure from Shi'a Islam and its precepts. Any devout Muslim or clergyman involved in politics would be derided, excommunicated and viewed with suspicion."[71] Baqir al-Sadr knew he would have to sell the idea to the clergy and since half of the leading body was clerics and the other half elites of university and religious school graduates, it would be received as a worthy movement.[72]

The Dawa party gave rise to Shi'a Political Islam. In the 1960s, Baqir was a leading *mujtahid* in Najaf and was inline to become the *marja* in the future. However, due to his involvement in politics, his appointment was in jeopardy. Thus, due to

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[68] Al-Ruhaimi, "The Da'Wa Islamic Party: Origins, Actors and Ideology," 156.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Ibid., 157.

[71] Ibid., 152.

[72] Ibid., 153.

increased pressure from the *Marji'iyya*, he began to distance himself from the party.[73] Many in the *hawza* felt that his political activities were harmful to it and that his continued rhetoric in the editorials he published in the monthly journal *al-Adwa* concerned members as being detrimental to the *hawza*. In 1961, Baqir al-Sadr gave up his post in the *Dawa* party and his editorial in the *al-Adwa*.[74] From 1961-1968, Baqir al-Sadr concentrated on the *hawza*, reformed the curriculum and helped to establish a college in Baghdad.

In 1968, the Baathists rose to power beginning a new phase in the struggle between the Sunni and Shi'a. The Baathists began to limit the Shi'a power by closing elementary and high schools and the college in Baghdad that Baqir al-Sadr had helped to establish. They "confiscat[ed] the land and funds set aside for building Kufa University, shut down the *Risalat al-Islam* (the only religious journal the government allowed to be published at th,e time) … expel[ed] hundreds of non-Iraqi students from the *hawza* in Najaf, and issu[ed] a law [that] require[ed] Iraqis attending the *hawza* to join the armed forces."[75] This action took the Shi'a leaders by complete surprise so they began a campaign to protest against the Baathists by pledging support from outside Iraq but to no avail, which ultimately leads to the accusation of a coup by the Baathists forcing Mahdi al-Hakim (the *marja*) to be smuggled out of the country. Ayatollah Khoei became the Shi'a leader and refrained from taking any action against the Baath government.[76]

The years that followed were filled with tragedy and contempt. The Baathists continued to crack down on the *hawza* by expelling any non-Iraqi students until Baqir al-Sadr convinced al-Khoei to issue a *hukm* to students to stay in Najaf and continue their studies. In 1972, the Baathists went after the Dawa party. They were arrested and sentenced to one to five years in prison. A couple years later, seventy-five members, some of them religious scholars, were rounded up and sentenced. Five of the members

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[73] T. M. Aziz, "The Role of Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr in Shii Political Activism in Iraq from 1958-1980," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 25, no. 2 (May 1993): 210.

[74] Ibid.

[75] Ibid., 211-212.

[76] Ibid., 212.

were sentenced to death and three of them ulama. To prevent further persecution of religious scholars for their affiliation with political parties, Sadr issued a *fatwa* forbidding students and scholars of the *hawza* from joining any political party. One year later, Baqir al-Sadr was detained and interrogated in Baghdad but was soon released.[77]

In the early 1970s, Baqir al-Sadr saw how the movement was growing and the increased militancy against the Baathists, which he saw as an anti-Islamic government, so he directed the Shi'a opposition.[78] In 1977, the Baath regime prevented the annual Shi'a ceremonies that commemorated Imam Husayn's martyrdom and was determined to use any means possible to prevent the pilgrimage from Najaf to Karbala. This incited massive protests against the regime with protesters chanting antigovernment slogans. Through the negotiations of Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim, the government agreed to lift the ban if the people agreed to stop the chants but the protestors refused. The Baathists arrested hundreds of protestors and imprisoned them. This incident was the catalyst to the split in the Baath party that resulted in Saddam Hussein taking power in Iraq. Baqir al-Sadr was now in the crosshairs of the Baathists as the organizer of the protests, not al-Hakim.

The revolution in Iran in 1978 presented Baqir al-Sadr with another opportunity to move against the Baath regime. Ayatollah Khomeini's overthrow of the Shah gave the Iraqi Shi'a the motivation to do the same in Iraq. Baqir al-Sadr made several political moves against the regime by pledging his support of Khomeini. In one message to Iran, he had "called on Arabs in Iran to obey the leaders of the revolution because the Islamic republic represented the state founded by the Prophet where people of different nationalities and ethnic background could live in tranquility."[79] Sadr issued a *fatwa* prohibiting Muslims from joining the Baath party or its affiliated organizations. This was a very dangerous move and many people feared for Baqir al-Sadr's life.[80]

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[77] Aziz, "The Role of Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr in Shii Political Activism in Iraq from 1958-1980," 212-213.

[78] Shanahan, "Shi'a Political Development in Iraq: The Case of the Islamic Da'wa Party," 946.

[79] Aziz, "The Role of Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr in Shii Political Activism in Iraq from 1958-1980," 215.

[80] Ibid., 216.

Khomeini wanted Baqir al-Sadr to lead the Shi'a movement in Iraq before the Iran-Iraq war to sway the Shiites to rise up against Hussein. Iran's main focus was to remove Saddam from power,[81] a desire Baqir shared. Khomeini issued a letter to Baqir al-Sadr to stay in the *hawza* and not to leave Iraq; a wish he never intended to disobey. His loyalty to the Shi'a instigated large, violent demonstrations all over Iraq. He told his followers to stop the demonstrations in an effort to prevent the government from cracking down on the movement. As he had feared, the government reacted to the protests by detaining hundreds of Dawa party members including Baqir al-Sadr. His detention sparked demonstrations and very violent ones that forced his release.

The government now knew just how powerful he was and placed him under house arrest. In 1979, he was paid a visit and told to withdraw his support of Ayatollah Khomeini but he refused. A new mediator was sent to his home and asked him to agree to just one of five conditions to spare his life: "withdraw his support of Ayatollah Khomeini and of the Iranian regime; issue a statement supporting one of the government's policies, …; issue a *fatwa* forbidding association with the Dawa party; revoke the *fatwa* the prohibited joining the Baath party; or be interviewed by an Iraqi of other Arab newspaper that was affiliated with the Iraqi regime."[82] He refused each of the requests stating, "[t]he only thing [he] sought in [his] life [was] to make the establishment of an Islamic government on earth possible."[83] Since it was to be in Iran, he was content and accepted his fate. Baqir al-Sadr's fate was sealed on March 31, 1980, when the Revolutionary Command Council passed the law that sentenced all past and present members of the Dawa party to death. He was arrested on April 5, 1980. Three days later, his body was delivered to Sadiq al-Sadr for a secret burial and Baqir al-Sadr's sister was never seen again.[84]

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[81] Shahram Chubin and Charles Tripp, *Iran and Iraq at War* (Westview Press, 1988), 1.

[82] Aziz, "The Role of Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr in Shii Political Activism in Iraq from 1958-1980," 216-217.

[83] Ibid., 217.

[84] Ibid., 217-218.

A new faction of the party began to break away from the party and form its own leadership and ideals. This party would become known as the Supreme [Council] of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq led by Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim on November 17, 1982.[85] The faction had a tough time recruiting followers because it was regarded as an Iranian faction and not decisively pro-Iraqi. The break and flee to Iran are the biggest reasons for the hatred between Muqtada and the ISCI today.

After the conclusion of the Iran-Iraq War, many of the Dawa activists began to leave Iran for other capitals around the world. After the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq in 1991, many Iraqis sought refuge in western countries. The Da'wa party left Iran to settle in the West where the party refined their policies and were taking into consideration the twists and turns experienced in Iran and other nations around the world to cope better with the new developments in Iraq.[86]

Baqir al-Sadr has been dead for over two decades now but the party he was responsible for forming and empowering is still in existence. Although the party is not the same as it was when Baqir was alive, it is still flourishing and has become the most significant party in Iraq. As the oldest party still in existence in Iraq, it has weathered many changes to include numerous founding members fleeing to Iran, the further dissemination after the Iraqi invasion into Kuwait, and finally moving back to Iraq after the U.S. invasion in 2003 to become the leading party. It is common knowledge that Muqtada al-Sadr played a major role in the appointment of Nuri al-Maliki as the leader of the Dawa party yet receives little credit as a legitimate politician.

The Dawa party is very dynamic and continues to grow as the situation in Iraq changes but it is not what Baqir al-Sadr wanted. He wanted a state like Iran, run by the *hawza* not a system based on western beliefs. He would be very pleased that the Baathists are no longer in power and that nationalism is growing.

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[85] Al-Ruhaimi, "The Da'Wa Islamic Party: Origins, Actors and Ideology," 157.

[86] Ibid.

B.   AYATOLLAH MOHAMMAD SADIQ AL-SADR

Baqir and Sadiq al-Sadr were very opposed to secular government, which Muqtada al-Sadr continues today.[87] Before the execution of Grand Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr in 1980, he had taught Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr and graduated him as an independent scholar in 1977. Sadiq continued his studies earning Grand Ayatollah status that qualified him to be the leader of the Shia movement in 1992, although by Saddam's appointment.[88] Ayatollah Sadiq al-Sadr, or Sadr II because he is the second martyr, became the spiritual leader of the Shia in Iraq after the death of Grand Ayatollah al-Khoei in August 1992 as a way to settle the revolt of the Shia in 1990-1991 after the conclusion of Desert Storm. He had been under house arrest for the ten years prior by Saddam Hussein because of his continued anti-Baathist rhetoric.[89] Saddam chose Sadiq al-Sadr because he was Arab and if he could compel the most outspoken cleric to cooperate with his regime then he could control the Shia population. After the massacres of thousands of Shia in 1991, Saddam believed that by co-opting a member of the al-Sadr family, he would be able to control the Shi's community.[90] Sadiq al-Sadr was also selected because of his bloodline and his relationship to the Grand Ayatollah Baqir al-Sadr who had been martyred at the hands of Hussein's men more than a decade earlier.[91] Saddam thought he had Sadiq al-Sadr under his thumb, when in reality, he was as anti-Baathist as he could be without being too overt. Saddam also thought that because of his nationalist beliefs, he would be supportive of the regime in the fight against the United States. He could not have been more wrong.[92]

Unlike Baqir al-Sadr, Sadiq al-Sadr did not care about politics, he did not speak out against the government (at least not overtly), he did not support a political party, nor

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[87] Haugh, "The Sadr II Movement: An Organizational Fight for Legitimacy within the Iraqi Shi'a Community," 1.

[88] Ibid., 2.

[89] Cockburn, *Muqtada, Muqtada Al-Sadr, The Shia Revival, and the Struggle for Iraq*, 78.

[90] Ibid., 79.

[91] Ibid., 78.

[92] Ibid., 79.

did he try to gain power through a coup. He was a nationalist and regularly expressed his nationalist views; he believed that Sunna and Shia could live in harmony.[93] He wanted to revive the faith among the Shia and raise the spirits of the Shia people and have them enjoy the same rights as the Sunni. He wanted the Shi'a to be given the same rights as the Sunni, to receive the same education and wealth. He created a welfare system designed to assist the poor Shia, to educate them, give them medical aid, food, and the other needs people had. He revived the Friday sermons and led them on many occasions; this was a big step against the Sunni regime.[94] In a mosque in Kufa, he chanted "Yes, yes to Islam; yes, yes to the faith; no, no to injustice; no, no to Israel; no, no to America; no, no to the devil."[95] This was a chant against the regime but it was stated in such a way that there was nothing to which the regime could object.[96]

"[Sadiq al-Sadr's] response to anti-Shiite discrimination was; there is no Sunna and no Shia. Yes to Islamic unity! a slogan one still can see on banners adorning mosques with which he was associated."[97] What Saddam did not realize at the time was that Sadiq al-Sadr was very set in his beliefs and would not sacrifice the freedom and rights of the Shia for his own benefit.

Like his cousin Baqir al-Sadr, Sadiq al-Sadr was imprisoned numerous times for being outspoken against the government. He was first arrested in 1972 along with his cousin and Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim. He was arrested again in 1974 and endured an immense amount of torture until his release in 1975. He was placed under house arrest and intently prayed so much that he damaged his health. He became so angry at the world that even when he would visit the Imam Ali Shrine, people would be too afraid to speak to him.[98]

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[93] Cockburn, *Muqtada, Muqtada Al-Sadr, The Shia Revival, and the Struggle for Iraq*, 80.

[94] "Iraq's Shiites under Occupation," *International Crisis Group*, Middle East Briefing, Baghdad/Brussels, September 9, 2003, 16.

[95] Cockburn, *Muqtada, Muqtada Al-Sadr, The Shia Revival, and the Struggle for Iraq*, 79.

[96] Ibid., 79-80.

[97] "Iraq's Muqtada al-Sadr: Spoiler or Stabaliser," 5.

[98] Cockburn, *Muqtada, Muqtada Al-Sadr, The Shia Revival, and the Struggle for Iraq*, 81-82.

During the 1980s, he was not as outspoken but still held great contempt for the government. He also began to speak out against what he called the "pacific marji'iyyah compared to the active or militant marji'iyyah."[99] According to Cockburn, Sadiq al-Sadr's plan in 1991 was to "persuade the regime that he was under its control so he could build a mass movement, making Shiism once more relevant to the spiritual, psychological, and economic needs of the faithful."[100] After Iraq invaded Kuwait and the United States defeated them, the U.N. placed economic sanctions on the country that deepened the suffering of the Shia. Although the suffering was not the U.S.'s intention, Sadiq al-Sadr held immense contempt for America. The impoverishment and devastation felt by the Shia was the catalyst Sadiq al-Sadr needed to rise up as their leader and what also catapulted Muqtada al-Sadr in 2003.[101]

Sadiq al-Sadr was believed to be weak and controllable by the Baath regime but he was able to trick them. He intended to strengthen the Shiite belief by establishing a network of preachers and organizers and created a sort of truce with the regime to create more room to maneuver. When the regime offered him bodyguards, he refused stating that he was already considered a government agent and he did not want to damage his credibility as the supreme spiritual leader any further. His façade did not last long before Saddam began to distrust him and kept him under constant surveillance. Around 1997, he became much more confrontational towards the regime and suffered more and more restrictions.[102]

Sadiq al-Sadr was unlike other clerics in that he spoke to the poor, he understood their hardships, and he empathized with them. When he would speak to the masses, he would speak of the things that concerned them, such as the lack of electricity, water, and

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[99] Cockburn, *Muqtada, Muqtada Al-Sadr, The Shia Revival, and the Struggle for Iraq*, 82.

[100] Ibid., 82-83.

[101] Ibid., 85-86.

[102] Ibid., 88.

other services. Sadiq al-Sadr amassed a following of the poor Shi'a because they were most in need of guidance and support and were frowned upon by the more wealthy who saw the poor as a threat to their interests.[103]

The Sadrists sought the younger Shi'a as their supporters as the older Shi'a were more aligned with the Quietists like al-Sistani. The older Shi'a did not want to upset the order; they had money and comfort while the youth were more anti-Baathist and wanted a more unified state in which they could have more control. The same young Shi'a that followed Sadiq al-Sadr rallied behind Muqtada al-Sadr in 2003.

Sadiq al-Sadr continued to fight for the rights of Shi'a up until his assassination in February 1999. He knew his death was coming, "in 1998 he began to wear a white shroud over his shoulders, a sign that he expected to be martyred."[104]

Along with Sadiq al-Sadr, his two eldest sons, the most likely successors, were also assassinated leaving Muqtada al-Sadr to continue his father's movement under Grand Ayatollah Kazim al-Hai'ri who fled to Iran.[105] Muqtada al-Sadr took the movement underground in Iraq along with much of the support his father had and still received assistance and legitimacy from al-Hai'ri.[106] With al-Hai'ri in Iran, it was Muqtada al-Sadr who stayed to ensure his father did not die in vain. He was not seen as the threat to Saddam that his father was because he did not possess the credentials his father did and because he was seen as more of a simpleton[107] not capable of harming Hussein.

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[103] Cockburn, *Muqtada, Muqtada Al-Sadr, The Shia Revival, and the Struggle for Iraq*, 92.

[104] Ibid., 80.

[105] Haugh, "The Sadr II Movement: An Organizational Fight for Legitimacy within the Iraqi Shi'a Community," 4.

[106] Juan R. I. Cole, "The Rise of Religious and Ethnic Mass Politics in Iraq," in David Little and Donald K. Swearer, ed. *Religion and Nationalism in Iraq* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2006), 53-54.

[107] W. Andrew Terrill, "The United States and Iraq's Shiite Clergy: Partners or Adversaries?" *Strategic Studies Institute*, February 2004, 17.

Cockburn credits Muqtada al-Sadr as being more intelligent and crafty than most people ever gave him credit for, and although it is true he did not go far in his religious studies, dropping out of the *hawza* to work in his father's movement, he has been able to amass a large following. He published and edited the *al-Hawza,* a periodical started during his father's movement and continued after the fall of Saddam. Even though no evidence exists that the Sadr II Movement did anything from Sadiq al-Sadr's death to fall of Saddam Hussein, Muqtada al-Sadr was successful in keeping the movement alive and awakening it in April 2003.

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IV. HOW TO DEMILITARIZE MUQTADA AL-SADR

Since Muqtada al-Sadr emerged, he has become one of the most influential persons in Iraq. Since before the first days of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, he has been very outspoken against the U.S. presence and the only mainstream cleric who has not wavered in his position towards the United States. In the first few years of the operation, he utilized his militia to enforce his anti-U.S. rhetoric, to incite fear into the non-followers, but most notably to support the poor Shia of Iraq. Al-Sadr called for his army to uphold the August 2007 ceasefire and there has been very little violence at the hands of any of his followers since. He has even denounced any violence committed in his name and encouraged the individuals to be arrested. This continued separation from violence has only displayed an increased desire to become a more legitimate figure in Iraq. Al-Sadr maintains a very strong and loyal following, and with each passing month and year, his following will only continue to grow. The author has entitled this chapter with the word 'demilitarize' but with that comes 'legitimization' as al-Sadr continues his studies with the goal of gaining Ayatollah status and supporting the young government from behind the scenes.

Historically, Muqtada al-Sadr and his loyal following have been labeled terrorists and insurgents and no one can argue his actions certainly meet the criteria for such labels. In the author's opinion, al-Sadr is going to continue to be a very influential figure in Iraq for a very long time making it very important for other nations to recognize him as a legitimate influence. He has already taken steps towards peace as he becomes more political and continues his studies in Qom, Iran but the United States can do much more to ensure violence is not rekindled after the withdrawal of troops from Iraq. To understand how to legitimize such a radical leader and the Mahdi Army that in the past has seemed to have no real structure and committed violent acts against anyone regardless of sectarian belief, it is first necessary to define the organization. As stated above, the organization has been defined as a terrorist group and insurgency so how does the United States approach the dilemma of demilitarizing them and ultimately legitimizing the Sadrists and the Mahdi Army?

A.   HOW TERRORIST GROUPS/INSURGENCIES END

Extensive work has been done that examines terrorist groups but little work has been done on how they end.[108] To be able to understand how the groups end, terrorism should first be defined. The RAND Corporation defines terrorism as: "…involv[ing] the use of politically motivated violence against noncombatants to cause intimidation or fear among a target audience," and a terrorist group as, "a collection of individuals belonging to a nonstate entity that uses terrorism to achieve its objectives."[109] Before Muqtada al-Sadr became politically involved, his organization could be considered a terrorist group but once he became involved in politics, he and the Ssdrists became a state entity. Anthony Oberschall refers to a definition by Laquer as "the use of covert violence by a group for political ends."[110] He continues to describe four key elements that the author feels are important to highlight: "(1) it is collective action, not individual; (2) it is political, not criminal; (3) it is covert, not conventional warfare; and (4) it is of course violent."[111] Audrey Cronin loosely defines it as inciting fear into the public and then exploiting that fear to accomplish their intended goals.[112] As the above definitions explain, a universal definition for terrorism does not exist but seems to be more author-defined. However, one common theme pervades, which is that it involves violence against civilians to incite fear usually for political means.

There have been over six hundred terrorist groups in the last forty years and slightly less than half have actually ended. Of the groups still active, approximately forty percent are still active and twenty-one percent has moved to another area.[113] The RAND Corporation conducted a study to analyze why terrorist groups end by examining five ways and Audrey Cronin evaluated why terrorist groups end to understand how Al Qaeda

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[108] Jones and Libicki, "How Terrorist Groups End: Lessons for Countering al-Qa'ida," 1.

[109] Ibid., 3.

[110] Anthony Oberschall, "Explaining Terrorism: The Contribution of Collective Action Theory," *Sociology Theory* 22, no. 1, Theories of Terrorism: A Symposium, (March 2004): 26.

[111] Ibid., 26.

[112] Audrey Kurth Cronin, *Ending Terrorism: A Strategy for Defeating Al Qaeda* (Routledge, 2008), 7.

[113] Jones and Libicki, "How Terrorist Groups End: Lessons for Countering al-Qa'ida," 4, 35.

will end. Phillip Heymann outlined terrorist needs in order to survive. All three authors had many commonalities in their assessments to end terrorism. One of the most striking was to refrain from using large-scale violence against the groups. To end terrorism, the terrorists groups must be understood as well as ascertain what they need to survive. Terrorism has two purposes, "to gain supporters and coerce opponents."[114] Al-Sadr has been very accomplished in each. In the first months of the conflict, he amassed incredible support by supplying basic necessities to the poor Shia populations, such as food, electricity, blankets, and security. Once he had a large support network in place, he was able to use coercion to sway political decisions such as when he threatened violence if al-Jaafari was not selected as the Prime Minister after the 2005 elections.

Heymann approached the dilemma of how to end terrorism by analyzing what the terrorist groups need to survive and how to counteract those needs. He first described the terrorist needs as recruits; resources; training; tactical information; access; means to escape (does not apply to suicide bombers); a haven; hope; and social acceptance.[115] To cutoff all of the needs above would be a very lofty effort and require immense resources to enforce. Taking the previous needs into consideration, it is easy to understand why the Sadrists were so successful in their actions until the summer of 2007 when al-Sadr declared the latest ceasefire. There seemed to be an endless number of Shia who wanted to be part of his movement and they found safe haven in a number of areas. Sadr City was the main haven, but so were Najaf, Basra, and Amarah. Resources in the form of munitions, funding, training, and even a place to escape came from their neighboring Shiite's in Iran.[116] Mahdi Army militiamen also found convenience in being able to blend into the surrounding neighborhoods making it very easy to escape after an attack on coalition forces. Since they were committing attacks around their safe havens, few locals were willing to cooperate with the coalition troops so intelligence was very difficult to obtain. Tactical information was easy for the Sadrists to get because of the rampant

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[114] Jones and Libicki, "How Terrorist Groups End: Lessons for Countering al-Qa'ida," 4.

[115] Phillip B. Heymann, *Terrorism, Freedom, and Security: Winning without War* (Cambridge, MA, The MIT Press, 2003), 167.

[116] Kenneth Katzman, "Iran's Activities and Influence in Iraq," *Congressional Research Service*, August 22, 2008, 2.

corruption and the number of ordinary civilians willing to act as lookouts for the insurgent fighters. Muqtada al-Sadr gave the Sadrists great hope that they will one day defeat the United States and send them back home. At a time when citizens were experiencing violence everyday, it became socially acceptable to fight the U.S. troops and for Shia to fight Sunni. Since the Sadrists meet each of the terrorist's needs, it will be very difficult to defeat them.

Heymann outlined five state preventive strategies: reducing enthusiasm for attacks; deterrence through law enforcement, military, or economic threats; denying access to targets, resources; gathering and processing information (intelligence) on individuals, groups, organizations, and activities; disruption including covert operations, asset forfeiture, and incapacitation.[117] Just as with the terrorist's needs, this is a very diverse and difficult list of actions to achieve. Heymann does not examine how terrorist groups end but the lists above give a great starting point. Many of the actions listed above would certainly work in Iraq against al-Sadr and the United States has instituted many of them albeit with some failure. As the United States continues to withdraw troops and pull back their bases, they have denied access. The United States has been gathering and disseminating information since before the conflict began but many mistakes have been made with old intelligence or even wrong intelligence, which works against them as innocent civilians are either arrested or killed. Deterrence has been increasing as the Iraqi security forces are taking over at checkpoints and conducting patrols but with an increase in attacks on Shia civilians in April and May that have taken the lives of over 150 innocent people, they are actually strengthening support for Muqtada al-Sadr as the people seek security.

A renowned writer who has published numerous books about terrorism, Audrey Kurth Cronin has examined how terrorist campaigns have ended. She described six pathways: decapitation, basically arresting or killing the movements figure head, i.e., Muqtada al-Sadr; repression, aggressive military campaigns or domestic crackdowns; success, the terrorist group achieves their intended goals; negotiated settlement, the group

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[117] Heymann, *Terrorism, Freedom, and Security: Winning without War*, 167.

becomes a legitimate political group (the area focused upon), implosion, the group loses the support network and implodes; reorient, groups shift focus from political targets to criminal activity (something that has been seen within the Sadr organization).

The RAND article is very similar to the assessments Cronin described. The five ways RAND outlined were military force, which coincides with repression above; policing which Cronin also included in repression; splintering, the groups split and join other established organizations, which is an area Cronin did not examine; and the final two are victory and politics, which match directly with what Cronin described. The RAND Corporation separated military force and policing into two separate paths to end terrorism because they found that military force rarely ends terrorism while policing has been the most effective to end groups unable to make a transition to nonviolence on their own.

Cronin states that the first pathway to kill or capture the leader of the group does not always end the group but examples of groups exist that have rallied around the leader, which have collapsed. If a group is more organized and not focused around the leader, it is less likely to collapse with the arrest or death of the leader. Cronin states that considerable evidence is available that capturing a leader is more effective at ending the group than killing the leader.[118] If Muqtada al-Sadr were to be assassinated by either the U.S. troops or Iraqi troops, then the Sadr II Movement would most certainly be reignited and be more deadly than in the past. Al-Sadr's father and father-in-law were both martyred under the order of government, and if Muqtada were to suffer the same fate, the movement would not die. Many supporters would step forward to ensure al-Sadr is martyred and his movement continues. His death would be especially devastating regionally as he has gained support from Iran, and after the recent visit to Turkey, he has become a regional actor.

The second pathway, repression, has been successful in the past but there are also examples of when it has and continues to fail: Israel against the Palestinians, the United States against al-Qaeda and Russia crushing Chechnya. Repression is also very costly not

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[118] Cronin, *Ending Terrorism: A Strategy for Defeating Al Qaeda*, 28-29.

just in monetary terms but in lives lost.[119] The cost of human life in Iraq through large military campaigns against al-Sadr has already been seen. Separating the military and police actions under this heading of repression as RAND did is the best approach. Military action is normally large-scale and crude in tactics not to mention a foreign force does not take the time to get to know the locals and has no intention of staying long term through reconstruction so they will not gain the trust and support of the locals. Therefore, a police force is the best way to end terrorism. It comes from the local population so that it can empathize with them and because it has a similar demographic with the same beliefs, and thus, the civilians are more likely to confide in it and pass along intelligence that could lead to the arrest of terrorist members or possibly prevent an attack. In Iraq, as more and more civilians lost their lives because of the indiscriminate fire, support for the United States diminished while support for the enemy strengthened. History has already shown that trying to defeat al-Sadr using violence does not work; he simply calls a ceasefire and regroups or he calls for his movement to resort to different tactics such as using IED's or mortar attacks. Since his militiamen can so easily blend into the surrounding environment, it is very difficult to capture or kill them. The author, for the aforementioned reason, thinks repression is not the way to demilitarize al-Sadr as violence begets violence.

The next two pathways apply to al-Sadr and these will be most successful in demilitarizing him. Terrorism ending as a result of successfully achieving their objective and moving towards a legitimate political process are similarly successful in the case of al-Sadr. Since the outset of the conflict, al-Sadr has called for the United States to leave the country and let them rebuild. As the United States prepares to withdraw troops, al-Sadr could view it as a success. He has already been involved in the political process in Iraq and has traveled to neighboring countries trying to gain support for the new Iraq. Al-Sadr is becoming a more legitimate political figure and has been gaining regional support. It is important that the Iraqi government utilize the support he is gaining and the United States must also acknowledge that he is legitimizing and becoming an important resource for Iraq. The United States must put the battles of Najaf and the violence caused

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[119] Cronin, *Ending Terrorism: A Strategy for Defeating Al Qaeda*, 32-33.

at the hands of his men behind them. It was war and al-Sadr did not act any different than Americans would against an occupying force in its own country. He seems genuine in his nationalistic beliefs and has made great strides towards peace in Iraq.

The final two pathways from above are unlike to occur. Al-Sadr has made such a name for himself and has worked to reduce his movement to a core of individuals and a small core militia that the likelihood of his movement imploding, especially given the approaching U.S. withdrawal, is not likely to occur. The final pathway, moving towards other malignant forms will not occur under al-Sadr's order. Members of his militia had turned to crime and were either killed, arrested, or stricken of al-Sadr's support. Al-Sadr knows how important it is to take care of the Shia because they are his support-base and it would be foolish to allow them to be robbed and killed in his name.

For the purposes of this thesis, the author examined Muqtada al-Sadr as a terrorist and the leader of a powerful insurgency. According to RAND, an insurgency is defined as "an internal conflict in which (1) a group or groups are trying to overthrow the government or secede from it, (2) more than 1,000 have died over the course of the war, and (3) more than 100 have died on each side."[120] The author does not believe anyone would argue that al-Sadr's militia has been fighting an insurgent war since the first U.S. opposition in Najaf in 2004. When the militiamen were able to hold off the U.S. forces, it instilled a sense of power within the men and their opposition to the United States increased.

B.   IS MUQTADA AL-SADR A TERRORIST?

Muqtada al-Sadr has been labeled a terrorist by many coalition leaders and in many newspapers and articles in the last six years. His militia, the Mahdi Army, was at the forefront of the confrontation with coalition forces since the outset of the conflict. As a terrorist, how can al-Sadr be demilitarized and stop the insurgency by his army? What must first be determined is whether al-Sadr is in fact a terrorist or simply the leader of a group of thugs? As stated above, the author believes that al-Sadr's organization is largely

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[120] Jones and Libicki, "How Terrorist Groups End: Lessons for Countering al-Qa'ida," 9.

an insurgent group that uses terrorist techniques to achieve its political goals. The use of indiscriminant weapons has incited fear into the public and has resulted in thousands of people fleeing their homes in search of safer cities. Much of the fear felt by the locals was due to the heavy fighting between his army and coalition troops that resulted in thousands of innocent lives being lost. In the past, he has used his army as a leveraging tool to try to coerce the government to change policy in his favor. This is clearly a terrorist technique and one that has been used by terrorist organizations for thousands of years. Al-Sadr never tried to hide his feelings about the American forces as an occupying force that should leave immediately and his army has thus clashed with the troops many times as a result. He has also had harsh feelings towards any group or persons who have cooperated with the coalition forces and intra-Shia fighting was not uncommon.

As an insurgency, al-Sadr and the Mahdi Army in the beginning were a disorganized group of poor Shia who wanted to feel a part of the opposition to the coalition forces. As the army engaged in more conflict, they became more structured but as the war wore on, they became less interested in fighting the coalition forces and more interested in corrupting the locals. Many of the Mahdi Army members extorted funds from business owners for protection and sold fuel at incredibly inflated prices. Al-Sadr claimed that these men were not acting on his orders but were renegade bandits using his name to elicit fear and cooperation. As the insurgency continued, al-Sadr greatly influenced local police enabling his militia freedom of movement throughout the cities and they were able to transport weapons and place IED's more easily.[121]

Al-Sadr has also been referred to as a 'kingmaker' because of his influence in the political arena. In 2006, he was attributed with the selection of Ibrahim al-Jaafari as the interim prime minister.[122] Although he was given the title as kingmaker, it was not necessarily a compliment because of the way he was able to ensure his selection. He made his demands with threats of violence if al-Jaafari was not selected and this was an example of the use of a terrorist threat to get what he wanted. At this time, he was first

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[121] "Iraq's Civil War, The Sadrists and the Surge," 5-10.

[122] Robert F. Worth and Sabrina Tavernise, "Radical Cleric Rising as a Kingmaker in Iraqi Politics," *The New York Times*, February 16, 2006, http://www.nytimes.com/2006/02/16/international/middleeast/16sadr.html (accessed May 9, 2009).

beginning to become involved in Iraqi politics and was still very much involved in action against the coalition forces not to mention the country was still in turmoil and the government was still very disorganized.

Even when al-Jaafari was voted out as the prime minister and Nuri al-Maliki was voted to replace him, al-Sadr gave his support, at least in the beginning. In 2007, al-Sadr became less supportive of al-Maliki in protest to his hesitance to eject the U.S. military from Iraq.[123] Even though Al-Sadr was not aligned with al-Maliki at that point, and al-Maliki had ordered the arrests of many of his militiamen and raided his strongholds in Basra and Amarah, al-Sadr showed restraint by not attempting to assassinate al-Maliki. The author believes al-Sadr realized that al-Maliki was the best leader for Iraq at the time and to kill him at that point would have been a huge setback for the country. Since the raids on his strongholds, the two have been in communication to reform the Shiite alliance.[124] Al-Sadr has been very outspoken against al-Maliki and has contested many of the decisions he has made about the future of Iraq but has been quiet in the last year; a sign that he is becoming more supportive or it could be a quiet before the storm.

Al-Sadr's behavior and the silence from his organization in the last year could be a sign that his militia is regrouping or that al-Sadr is simply biding his time until the U.S. troops pull out of Iraq. His recent trip to Turkey is evidence that he is reaching out to gain support for his organization as well as Iraq. He is not acting out of selfishness; he is making great strides towards the good of Iraq. It is also proof that he is pursuing political interests and intends to be part of Iraqi politics in the future. The question is whether he will act within the law or will he threaten violence to ensure his wishes are made policy?

Al-Sadr has gone to great lengths to ensure his militia remains out of the spotlight in Iraq. After the attacks targeting Shiites in April and May, the Mahdi Army has not retaliated nor is there any evidence that al-Sadr has given any order to avenge the deaths. It would appear that the ceasefire is continuing. The attacks could be a way for the

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[123] Reuters, "Iraq's al-Sadr Ready for Alliance with al-Maliki," *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, February 14, 2009, http://www.rferl.org/content/Iraq_Sadr_Ready_Alliances_Maliki/1493201.html (accessed May 2, 2009).

[124] Ibid.

Sadrists to reemerge as security in predominantly Shiite areas continues to erode. After the bombing in Sadr City in April that killed approximately 40 people, some citizens wanted the Mahdi Army to resume security patrols and to take over the checkpoints as they feel the government security forces are too corrupt to ensure safety.[125]

Al-Sadr's militia has been very influential over the years. Much of their success has come from the assistance they have received from outside Iraq. Iran has been their largest contributor having given assistance in the form of money, munitions, training, and bomb making materials.[126] The main focus of al-Sadr's insurgency was to drive the occupying forces from their country and to attack any group that supported them. Muqtada al-Sadr and his army have acted no differently than many American citizens would if the United States were invaded by a force that wanted to change the government.

Although the Mahdi Army appeared to be structured at first, it was in fact very disorganized and many who claimed to be acting on behalf of al-Sadr were actually simple criminals. As the months and years of fighting wore on, it became more and more apparent that the Mahdi Army was unstructured and instead it consisted of many small insurgent groups acting without higher order. Factions in outlying areas began to perform actions outside of the orders and policies set by al-Sadr. The criminal activity began to erode the support, and not just that the local militias received from the villages they once protected but overall support for al-Sadr. They became more like criminal gangs than a structured army.

Whether one classifies the Sadrists as terrorists or insurgents, the steps to de-militarize or to legitimize the organization are the same. Above, Muqtada al-Sadr is the main area of focus for disbanding the Mahdi Army. If al-Sadr becomes a legitimate political actor in Iraq, he will be forced to distance himself from any illegal activity. It could be argued that since he has been in politics since 2005, he has still been engaged in

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[125] Sam Dagher and Suadad al-Salhy, "Baghdad is Shaken by a Series of Bombs," *The New York Times*, April 30, 2009, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/30/world/middleeast/30iraq.html (accessed May 4, 2009).

[126] Katzman, "Iran's Activities and Influence in Iraq," 2-4.

radical activities. Although it is true that he has always been in close contact with his militia, which has also been engaged in anti-governmental activity, the author thinks it is due to the lack of direct inclusion by the Prime Minister and parliament in the political process that has given al-Sadr the excuse he needs to continue his violent behavior. The continued lack of social services, electricity, clean water, and in some areas, food have all been great concerns for al-Sadr, and until the resources are available to the poor Shia, he will continue to be antagonistic. Security is another concern for him especially since the recent attacks of April and May. If the government cannot provide better security to the Shia, and the citizens of those neighborhoods continue to request his assistance, his militia could be revived. Thus far, al-Sadr has continued to observe the 2007 ceasefire and has not given any indication he plans to absolve it; however, the government must continue efforts to secure and provide for the citizenship.

Since the 2007 ceasefire went into effect, the violence experienced in Iraq has been at an all-time low. Al-Sadr has been in Qom, Iran continuing his studies to become an Ayatollah and has not been very involved in the politics of Iraq until recently when he visited Turkey. He has been working more towards resolving political issues legitimately through political means instead of through violence. The attacks in the last week of April 2009 that killed more than 150 Shia were not avenged by al-Sadr even though many of his followers and some civilians felt that it was time for the Mahdi Army to reorganize to provide security.[127] Much dissent exists among the Shia in the neighborhoods that were the targets of increased violence in April and May due to corruption within the security forces and not enough security personnel to secure Shia neighborhoods properly. "The Islamic State of Iraq, an umbrella insurgent group that includes Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, [has claimed responsibility for the attacks] describ[ing] the recent attacks as part of a campaign called Harvest of the Good, which it announced in March [2009]."[128]

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[127] Dagher and al-Salhy, "Baghdad is Shaken by a Series of Bombs."

[128] Steven Lee Myers and Sam Dagher, "Storm of Violence in Iraq Strains its Security Forces," *The New York Times*, April 25, 2009, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/25/world/middleeast/25iraq.html (accessed May 2, 2009).

Muqtada al-Sadr has displayed incredible restraint as a result of the increased violence against Shia, a sign of his commitment to the ceasefire and displays a level of maturity that has not been witnessed since the conflict began. It is also a sign of the loyalty his followers have in him as they also resist retaliation. One question is whether he has actually changed or is he simply biding his time until the United States completely withdraws troops from Iraq?

C.   HOW TO INTEGRATE AL-SADR INTO THE GOVERNMENT

From 2003 to 2007, the Sadrists acted as a terrorist and insurgent group but recently al-Sadr has been moving away from the ideal that violence is the best way to achieve his political goals. He has become more involved in diplomacy even reaching out to neighboring countries for support as Iraq begins the long process of restructuring and stabilizing after six years of turmoil. He recently met with the Turkish president and prime minister in Turkey. Although he originated his trip from Iran, he was there to discuss the sovereignty of Iraq and future relations with Turkey to include the Shiites taking control of Kirkuk of which the Turks are in favor. Al-Sadr's trip to Turkey was his first public appearance since June 2007, marking what could be a new era in which he becomes a more legitimate and diplomatic face of Iraq. The meeting was also a step towards legitimizing al-Sadr as he requested Turkey to play a larger role in the Middle East. As more countries in the region acknowledge al-Sadr as a legitimate figure, he prevents the Iraqi government and especially the American government from being able to arrest or assassinate him. His support continues to grow as he continues to try and legitimate himself within the government. As he continues to pursue his studies in Qom to become Ayatollah, he will also be viewed with more respect.

Unless Iraq is stable and the government is functioning on its own, the United States cannot withdraw its forces, even with the new security pact in place. The author believes that if Iraq is still experiencing the violence it is today, the Iraqi government will request an extension to the 2011 deadline for U.S. forces to withdraw. If the United States withdraws too early, before Iraq is truly secure, then troops will likely be back in Iraq

within a decade, or worse yet, Iran will come to their rescue. To ensure a smooth transition, they must include al-Sadr in the turnover process, as much as the U.S. government is opposed to it, and they must appeal to certain demands.

In a recent article in the *Washington Post* by Sudarsan Raghavan, he made clear that Muqtada al-Sadr is not going away and many of his followers remain loyal, although some are growing impatient with the ceasefire. Hazim al-Araji, Sadr's top aide, was cited as saying that "Khazraji [Maj. Gen. Kareem al-Khazraji, commander of the 2nd Division of the national police in Kadhimiyah] and other commanders in Iraq's security forces have exploited the lull in violence to detain hundreds of Sadr's followers."[129] If the accusations are true then Iraq has a serious problem. If the Sadrists feel they are being targeted by the government they helped to shape, they could certainly retaliate with extreme violence. Since the ceasefire, the Sadrists and JAM have remained cooperative following the orders given by Muqtada al-Sadr to refrain from violence but many of them are becoming restless and the continued harassment from security forces could destroy the peace. For peace to continue, the Shiite political leaders must come together and this should include al-Sadr. He still maintains a large support network and retains a great deal of power and influence in Iraq.

For the Iraqi Government to succeed, the UN must get involved with assistance from countries that the Iraqi government trusts such as neutral states that have not been involved in military action.[130] The U.N. would have to be very careful not to appear as though they are trying to influence the politics in Iraq. They must remain in a support role acting as advisors when asked for assistance and give aid to the displaced personnel. The United States must understand that it will take time to stabilize Iraq and that the young democratic government may not be the model that the United States would like to see. Iraq is well on their way to becoming a stable country and the government is already proving they are prepared to and willing to act on their own without U.S. interference. The security pact was an example of their desire for independence and a huge step towards stability and international recognition as a democracy.

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[129] Raghaven, "Followers of al-Sadr Protest U.S. Presence."

[130] Carlos Pasqual, "Iraq in 2009: How to Give Peace a Chance," *The Brookings Institution*, 2008, 5.

Al-Sadr has begun to take further steps to ensure his involvement in Iraq's future by continuing his Islamic education. He had originally made the claim that he would become an Ayatollah by the year 2010, but the author believes that as he continues to work towards being viewed as a legitimate leader in Iraq, he will not rush his studies. The implications from al-Sadr's achieving the second-highest clerical position in Shia religion are remarkable. He would be able to issue his own *fatwa's* and train his clergy, which would also increase his legitimacy and increase his support.[131] It will not be an easy achievement and if he rushes to complete the education, he would probably not be recognized by all other Ayatollah's and Grand Ayatollah's within the Shia community, especially within Iraq. Much of the recognition received by Ayatollah's comes from the years of study, and if completed too quickly, it would be difficult for people to believe he has the wisdom that Ayatollahs acquire.

The government of Iraq must understand that al-Sadr is not going away, and if he were to martyred, it would most certainly have a much worse result than if he were simply integrated into the political process. The Iraqi government must take a three-pronged approach to integrating Muqtada al-Sadr into the political processes: economic, political, and military. The economic approach would include restructuring, welfare programs for poor citizens, and improving infrastructure. The programs would not be only for Shia but for all citizens of Iraq. Welfare programs are how al-Sadr was able to create such a large following in the first couple of years of the conflict. If the government were to take the programs under their control, they would lessen the need for al-Sadr's welfare system. It would also be a good idea to place a Sadrist in charge of the welfare programs, which would prevent the Sadrists from retaliating against the government for taking the programs away. Rebuilding the infrastructure would assist in the prevention of crime and extortion by getting fuel prices under control and preventing the need for generators. The economic would fund the welfare programs such as, food, shelter, education, and employment. Militarily, the government must provide security to ensure safety in the pro-Sadr areas. If the government cannot provide security or it is deemed

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[131] Mohamad Bazzi, "Muqtada al-Sadr's Power Grab," *The Nation* http://www.thenation.com/doc/20080107/bazzi (accessed November 13, 2008).

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that the security being provided is taking bribes to allow weapons and IED's to pass checkpoints, then the Mahdi Army will be mobilized to ensure the safety of the citizens. Increasing the military would also include increasing police work although the two branches would operate independently. The military would work to secure borders and provide security around the cities while police would concentrate their efforts on establishing relationships with the population and to gather intelligence. The military would continue efforts to end the insurgency to include the dissolution of militia's working instead of recruiting militiamen into the service.

The government must be able to support the poor Shiite's the same way al-Sadr has been able to do these last six years. As long as the poor Iraqis feel abandoned by their government, the more they are going to turn to powers that can support them. With the increased attacks on Shia in the last couple of months, people are looking again to the militias for security. The militias are succeeding in taking care of some of the basic human needs better than the government, and thus, they continue to gain support.[132] If al-Sadr is to be a legitimate actor in Iraq, the government must be able to provide the services that he has been so successful in providing. It would be prudent of al-Maliki to sit down with al-Sadr and request his assistance in implementing the policies and to oversee the employment of the services for Iraq's poor to include Sunni.

The government and the military in particular must focus on securing the cities and towns providing a safe place for its citizens to live and work and raise their children. There remains a threat from insurgents especially in the capital city and this violence continues to target Iraqi's non-coalition forces. Until the IA forces are better trained and capable of planning large-scale operations, the civilians continue to rely on the militias in those areas where the insurgent violence is occurring. The militias have created an information network in these cities and towns and are more capable of tracking down and targeting the insurgents. They have as much to gain as the government because like the citizens, they are trying to protect themselves and also live in the cities.

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[132] "Where is Iraq Heading? Lessons from Basra," *International Crisis Group*, Middle East Report, no. 67 (June 25, 2007): 3.

Politics overrides each of the previous two in that no action can be taken without a vote. There must be political oversight in all operations dealing with the economy and military operations. That being said, al-Sadr must be incorporated into politics and he must be consulted on matters that affect areas of which he has control. He should also be incorporated into the decision-making process concerning missions in the areas where he has loyal support.

Not only does Muqtada al-Sadr still retain a great deal of support from within Iraq, he also receives support from Iran. Iran has played possum for the most part since before the war began and has played sides against one another. They support ISCI and Dawa as well as their militias and continue to give aid to al-Sadr. As long as ISCI and Dawa try to distance their groups from Iran and al-Sadr continues to receive support, it could cause greater damage to the still fragile Iraqi government. This is just another reason for the Sadrists to be brought back into politics and given political power.[133]

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[133] The viewpoints in this paragraph are the author's supported by a couple scenarios Anthony Cordesman cites in "The Shi'ite Gamble: Rolling the Dice for Iraq's Future," *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, April 21, 2008.

V.   CONCLUSION

Muqtada al-Sadr emerged as a radical leader shortly before the United States invaded Iraq foreseeing an opportunity to revive his father's movement that started in 1992. Al-Sadr was a part of his father's movement, and when his father and two eldest brothers were assassinated, he took the movement underground. Many of the principles al-Sadr believes in and has executed since April 2003 come from his father. He was able to amass a large following because he anticipated the need for spiritual guidance and the lack of basic needs that would occur as the invasion progressed. He ordered his loyal followers into areas that housed the poorest Shia to create a large support base. This was a very strategic move on his part because he was able to get the jump on his rivals, the ISCI, Dawa, and Grand Ayatollah al-Sistani. He did not gain a lot of popularity with the wealthier Shia but he did become very popular with the poor, at least in the first couple of years.

Al-Sadr comes from a very well respected family. As a result of the success of his father and cousin as leaders of the Shia, the name al-Sadr had become associated with rebellion and influence making his rise less difficult. His father and cousin were both martyred at the height of their power, which increased their popularity with the Shia and their followings grew even in death. When al-Sadr emerged, he had everything going for him to succeed; he had the name, religious credentials, and he had a cause against which to rise. The removal of Saddam Hussein left a void and al-Sadr was ready to fill it.

He studied his father and cousin while under house arrest from 1999 to 2003 and when he emerged, he was prepared to continue the movement his father had started by reinstituting and enforcing the *fatwa* issued by his father. He rallied the poor Shi'a to take up resistance to the recently toppled Baath regime and made a name for himself immediately as a person to be feared. He was relentless in his pursuit as the new leader of the Shi'a community. Like his father, he was not interested in politics at the outset of the conflict but as it progressed and violence was not achieving his objectives, he realized

that politics was the new way of doing business in Iraq. His transition to politics resembled the movement his cousin had started, and thus far, he seems to be more successful.

Unlike his father, he did not have a clear plan and many of the wealthier Shia did not feel he had the credentials required to lead their community. He thought he could take control of the country and force the United States out without having to cooperate with them. This led to increased violence and unrest throughout the country. The citizens of the most violent areas began to flee and denounce the Sadrists. Had Muqtada al-Sadr emerged from house arrest with the intention to engage the United States diplomatically and to assist in the security of the country, he could very well have become the face of Iraq.

The best strategy to demilitarize Muqtada al-Sadr is to include him more in the political process. He has made it clear that he intends on being part of politics in Iraq as he has traveled to other countries in the region and met with those countries' leaders to discuss the future of Iraq and their role. There are steps that must be taken to ensure he maintains his legitimacy and not resume his militaristic campaigns against the government. Al-Sadr must believe the government is doing all that it can to ensure the poor Shia that he has represented since 2003 will be cared for and are a priority for the government. They must provide welfare services, security, and infrastructure that al-Sadr has been providing in the past. By appointing a Sadrist to oversee the operations of those programs and by seeking advice from al-Sadr on the matters would go along way in legitimizing him. The government also must ensure all militias are dissolved in Iraq to include the Badr Organization, the Sons of Iraq, along with the Mahdi Army. If there were an overarching policy for all militias, then al-Sadr would be more inclined to support the dissolution of his militia without protest. Al-Sadr is a complicated individual who has not always been consistent in his rhetoric but it is the author's belief that he truly does want a united Iraq.

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