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ELECTORAL MOBILIZATION AND VOTER TURNOUT IN POST-  
AUTHORITARIAN COUNTRIES: THE CASE OF PARLIAMENTARY  
ELECTIONS IN IRAQ (2005-2018)

By

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Eric M. Davis

and approved by

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## **ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION**

### **ELECTORAL MOBILIZATION AND VOTER TURNOUT IN POST-AUTHORITARIAN COUNTRIES: THE CASE OF PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN IRAQ (2005-2018)**

**By ABBAS FADHIL MAHMOOD ALKATESHI**

**DISSERTATION DIRECTOR**

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This study investigates the relationship between voter mobilization and turnout in post-authoritarian countries by tackling the puzzle that addresses the causes and consequences of the decline in voter turnout in the Iraqi parliamentary elections since the first founding national elections in October 2005. It attempts to address the question of why voter turnout has declined dramatically from 76.6% in the elections of 2005 to 44.5% in the national elections of 2018 in Iraq. After 13 years of regime changes and four national elections cycles, voter turnout fell by 35.1 percentage points. This identifies two possible causal mechanisms behind this declining trend: first, the influential role of the formal institutions such as the role of electoral law, party system and second, the structure and performance of the elections administration. We argue that the decline of public trust in these formal institutions affects to great extent the level of voter turnout. The second causal mechanism is the impact of informal institutions on voter turnout. In this regard, we argue that the role of religious leaders, ethnicity, religion and electoral violence in mobilizing Iraqi votes can be considered responsible for the dramatic decline in voter turnout in the elections of 2018.

In terms of formal institutions, the purpose of the current study is to investigate the effects of electoral system, elections management body and political parties on voter turnout. It argues that the high turnout in the first three elections (79.6%, 62.39% and 61.76%) respectively was because of high mobilization efforts of religious leaders and the impact of electoral violence. It is also caused by intensified polarization around sectarian and ethnic identity. While these efforts have contributed to increasing the turnout in the early three elections, it is also a major contributory factor in dropping the voter turnout to (44.5%) in the fourth national elections in May 2018.

The individual data that we use in this dissertation are drawn from merging four public opinion surveys. These surveys are the second wave of Arab barometer (2010-2011), the third wave of Arab barometer (2012-2014), the World Value Survey on Iraq (2013), and the Arab Transformations Project (2014). The total number of individual observations that have been randomly distributed among Iraqi provinces was about 5281. In terms of the qualitative data, this study systematically reviewed the laws and procedures as well as the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) executive orders regarding the electoral law, party system and electoral administration. To test our hypotheses, we employed binary logistic regression to estimate the effects of explanatory variables on voter turnout.

An implication of this is the possibility that Iraq is heading toward a new era of a competitive authoritarian regime in which the main objective of holding elections is not to change the institutions peacefully but to maintain the status quo of post-American invasion and occupation political order.

It is recommended that further in-depth experimental research be undertaken in the following areas: vote-buying and clientelism, voting behavior and individual and group

mobilization, the rise of competitive authoritarianism, socioeconomic factors and voting patterns, institutional forbearance and distributive politics, elections integrity and last but not least voting behavior and the future of democratic transition in Iraq. The findings should make an important contribution to the field of voting behavior and political behavior in post-authoritarian countries in general and in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) in particular.

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# Table of Contents

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION .....  | ii  |
| Acknowledgement.....  | v   |
| Table of Contents .....   | vi  |
| List of Tables.....   | ix  |
| List of Figures .....   | x   |
| 1. Introduction.....  | 1   |
| 1.1. Background.....  | 1   |
| 1.2. The significance of the Study .....  | 12  |
| 1.3. Case Study: Why Iraq? .....  | 14  |
| 1.4. The Puzzle of Voting Behavior in Iraq.....                                       | 19  |
| 1.5. Main Research Questions .....  | 21  |
| 1.6. Data.....  | 25  |
| 1.6.1. The Arab Barometer Project (Second and Third Wave) .....                       | 25  |
| 1.6.2. World Values Survey Iraq, 2013.....  | 27  |
| 1.6.3. The Arab Transformation Project (ATP) 2014.....                                | 28  |
| 1.7. Mixed Method Research Design .....   | 29  |
| 1.8. The Argument.....  | 35  |
| 1.9. Path-Dependent analysis and Voter Turnout in Iraq .....                          | 39  |
| 1.10. What is meant by Formal and Informal Institutions? .....                        | 41  |
| 1.11. Plan of the Study.....  | 45  |
| 2. Formal Institutions and Voter Turnout.....   | 50  |
| 2.1 Introduction .....  | 50  |
| 2.2 Electoral System and Voter Turnout.....   | 54  |
| 2.3 The CPA Executive Order (96) in 2004 and the First Electoral System in Iraq ..... | 66  |
| 2.4 The First Amendment of the Electoral System and the Elections of 2005 .....       | 76  |
| 2.5 The Second Amendment of the Electoral System of 2005 .....                        | 81  |
| 2.6 The Electoral System Number 45 of 2013 .....                                      | 84  |
| 2.7 The Third Amendment of the Electoral System Number 45 in 2018 .....               | 88  |
| 2.8 Conclusion.....   | 90  |
| 3. The Elections Management Body and Voter Turnout .....                              | 93  |
| 3.1 CPA Executive Order 92 of 2004 and the First Election Commission in Iraq ..       | 99  |
| 3.2 The First Electoral Commission Law number (11) of 2007 .....                      | 104 |

|       |   |     |
|-------|---|-----|
| 4.    | Political Parties and Voter Turnout.....  | 106 |
| 4.1   | Introduction .....  | 106 |
| 4.2   | Voter Turnout and Party Mobilization .....  | 109 |
| 4.3   | The Legal and Organizational Structure of Political Parties in Iraq Since 2003<br>114 |     |
| 4.4   | The CPA executive order (97) of political parties .....                               | 117 |
| 4.5   | The Political Parties Act 36 of 2015 .....  | 120 |
| 5.    | Quantitative Analysis of Trust in Government Institutions and Voter Turnout ..        | 127 |
| 5.1   | Introduction: Trust and Voter Turnout.....  | 127 |
| 5.2   | Theory .....  | 129 |
| 5.3   | The Dependent Variable.....   | 134 |
| 5.4   | Models and Independent Variables .....  | 135 |
| 5.5   | The Hypotheses .....  | 137 |
| 5.6   | Socioeconomic Factors and Voter Turnout Model 1 .....                                 | 140 |
| 5.7   | Deceptive Statistics .....  | 141 |
| 5.8   | Logistic Regression Results .....   | 147 |
| 5.9   | The Results: - .....  | 148 |
| 5.9.1 | Age and Voter Turnout.....  | 148 |
| 5.9.2 | Income and Voter Turnout.....   | 149 |
| 5.9.3 | Education and Voter Turnout .....   | 150 |
| 5.9.4 | Gender, Marital Status, and Voter Turnout .....                                       | 152 |
| 6.    | Trust in Government Institutions and Voter Turnout Model 2.....                       | 153 |
| 6.1   | Descriptive Statistics .....  | 154 |
| 6.2   | Logistic Regression Results .....   | 157 |
| 7.    | Trust in Election Commission and Voter Turnout Model 3 .....                          | 159 |
| 7.1   | Descriptive Statistics .....  | 160 |
| 7.2   | Logistic Regression Results .....   | 162 |
| 8.    | Trust in Political Parties and Voter Turnout: Model 4 .....                           | 165 |
| 8.1   | Descriptive Statistics .....  | 166 |
| 8.2   | Logistic Regression Results .....   | 172 |
| 9.    | Informal Institutions and Voter Turnout.....  | 174 |
| 9.1   | Introduction .....  | 174 |
| 10.   | The Role of Religious Leader in Mobilizing Voters Model 5 .....                       | 179 |
| 10.1  | The hypothesis .....  | 198 |
| 10.2  | Logistic Regression Results.....  | 202 |

|      |  |     |
|------|--|-----|
| 11.  | Religion, Ethnicity and Voter Turnout Model 6..... | 205 |
| 11.1 | The hypothesis.....                                | 211 |
| 11.3 | Descriptive Statistic.....                         | 212 |
| 11.3 | Logistic Binary Regression Results.....            | 216 |
| 12.  | Violence and Voter Turnout in Iraq Model 7.....    | 221 |
| 12.1 | Introduction.....                                  | 221 |
| 12.2 | Descriptive Statistics.....                        | 236 |
| 12.3 | Logistic Binary Regression Results.....            | 238 |
| 13.  | Conclusion.....                                    | 241 |
| 13.1 | Predicting Iraqi Voters Choice.....                | 242 |
| 13.2 | Lessons Learned.....                               | 244 |
| 14.  | Reference List.....                                | 255 |

## List of Tables

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Table 11 Formal and Informal Institutions .....  | 44  |
| Table 2 Elections General Information in Iraq 2005-2018.....   | 126 |
| Table 3 Summary Statistic for the Dependent Variable “Voting in Elections .....                                    | 135 |
| Table 4 Summary and Descriptive Statistics for all Independent Variables .....                                     | 137 |
| Table 5 Descriptive Statistics Model 1 Voter Turnout by Socioeconomic Factors.....                                 | 142 |
| Table 6 Logistic Regression Results: Voter Turnout by Socioeconomic Factors .....                                  | 148 |
| Table 7. Corruption in Iraq 2003-2018.....   | 150 |
| Table 8 Descriptive Statistics Model 2 Voter Turnout by Trust in Government Institutions .....                     | 155 |
| Table 9 Partial Correlation Coefficients Trust in Government by Trust in Parliament..                              | 156 |
| Table 10. Binary Logistic Regression Results: Voter Turnout by Trust in Government Institutions Model 2 .....      | 158 |
| Table 11. Descriptive Statistics: Model (3) Voter Turnout by Trust in Elections Commission .....                   | 161 |
| Table 12 Descriptive Statistics: Model 3 Voter Turnout by Trust in Elections Commission .....                      | 163 |
| Table 13 Logistic Regression Results: Voter Turnout by Trust in Political Parties Model 4.....                     | 173 |
| Table 14 Government Decisions and Religious Leaders .....  | 201 |
| <b>Table 15</b> Logistic Regression Results: The Role of Religion Leaders in Mobilizing Iraqi Voters Model 5 ..... | 203 |
| Table 16 Descriptive Statistics: Religious denominations, Ethnicity, Praying .....                                 | 215 |
| Table 17. Partial Correlations between Shia and Sunni.....   | 217 |
| Table 18 Logistic Regression Results: The Impact of Religious Leader on Voter Turnout among Sunniti Model 6a ..... | 219 |
| Table 19 Logistic Regression Results: The Impact of Religious Leader on Voter Turnout among Shiite Model 6b.....   | 220 |
| Table 20 Voter Turnout in Governorates of Iraq in the Elections of 2005 and 2010 .....                             | 233 |
| Table 21. Turnout in Governorates of Iraq in the Elections of 2005 and 2010 .....                                  | 235 |
| Table 22 Descriptive Statistics: Dependent Variable and Independent Variables Model 7 .....                        | 236 |
| Table 23 Partial Correlations Coefficient between Sectarian Violence and Terrorist Attacks .....                   | 239 |
| Table 24 Logistic Regression Results: Electoral Violence and Voter Turnout in Iraq Model 7 .....                   | 241 |

## List of Figures

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Figure 1.1. Voter Turnout in Iraq 2005-2018 .....   | 2   |
| Figure 1.2. Iraq Population Pyramid 2019 .....  | 15  |
| Figure 1.1.3 The Funnel of Causality of Vote Choice in Iraq .....                           | 24  |
| Figure 1.1.4 Iraqi National, Provincial and Kurdistan Region Elections 2005-2018 .....      | 49  |
| Figure 2.1 Electoral Integrity in Iraq 1 .....  | 58  |
| Figure 2.2 Liberal Democracy and Iraq .....   | 60  |
| Figure 2.3 Elections Integrity in Iraq 2 .....  | 65  |
| Figure 2.4 Number of Candidates, Seats and Political Parties (2005-2018) .....              | 73  |
| Figure 3.1 Number of Voting Fraud Claims in Iraqi Elections (2005-2018) .....               | 102 |
| Figure 4.1 Number of Political Parties (2005-2018) .....                                    | 109 |
| Figure 5.1 Voter Turnout By Age 2005-2018 .....   | 143 |
| Figure 5.2 Voter Turnout By Education .....   | 144 |
| Figure 5.3 Voter Tunrout By Income (2014-2018) .....  | 145 |
| Figure 5.4 Voter Turnout By Gender in Iraq Elections .....                                  | 147 |
| Figure 5.5 Model 1 Logistic Regreesion Results: Voter Turnout by Socioeconomic Factors..... | 153 |
| Figure 6.1 Voter Turnout by Trust in Government.....  | 154 |
| Figure 7.1 Logistic Regression Results: Voter Turnout by Trust in Elections Commssion ..... | 164 |
| Figure 8.1. Number Of Political Parties, Candidates And Seats (2005-2018) .....             | 167 |
| Figure 8.2 Party Identification in iraq (2003-2018).....                                    | 169 |
| Figure 8.3 Trust in Political Parties .....   | 170 |
| Figure 8.4 Voter Turnout by Trust in Political Parties .....                                | 171 |
| Figure 9.1 "Religious leaders should not interfere in voters' decisions in elections." ...  | 200 |
| Figure 9.2 Religious leaders should have influence over government decisions. ....          | 201 |
| Figure 9.3 Iraq Ethnic and Relgious Groups .....  | 210 |
| Figure 9.4 Sunni-Shia Relations in Post ISIS War .....                                      | 214 |
| Figure 9.5 Voter Turnout By Ethncity.....   | 216 |
| Figure 10.1 Civilian Death in Iraq 2003-2018.....   | 231 |
| Figure 10.2 Worries : a war involving my country.....                                       | 237 |
| Figure 10.3 Worries from increasing Secterian Violence and Terrorist Attacks.....           | 237 |

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Background

The central topic of this dissertation examines the impact of mobilization efforts on voter turnout in post-authoritarian Iraq. It considers the implications of the dramatic decline in voter turnout in Iraq from 76% in the elections of 2005 to 44.5% in the elections of 2018. The pivotal role of formal and informal institutions in this mobilization process is undeniable. Thus, it aims to explore how citizens have been mobilized by these institutions to vote in the Iraqi national elections since 2005. What drives them to the polls? The role of informal institutions such as ethnicity, religion, and electoral violence are generally assumed, in the Iraqi context, to play an essential role in this process. There is a tendency among scholars to describe democracy in Iraq today as an "ethno-sectarian democracy" instead of "liberal democracy" or "participatory democracy." In the same vein, the level of trust in formal government institutions such as the electoral system, election management body and political parties have contributed significantly in decreasing and increasing voter turnout since the first founding elections in 2005.

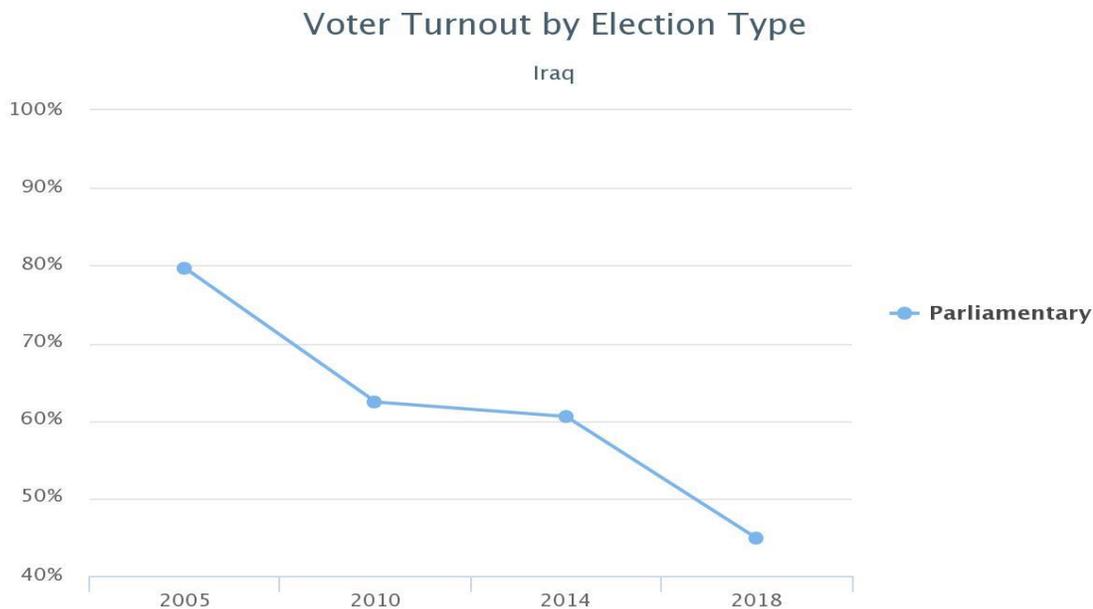


Figure 1.1. Voter Turnout in Iraq 2005-2018

This dissertation seeks to describe, explain the causality and predict the origin of Iraqi voting patterns. It argues that holding periodic elections under "ethno-sectarian democracy" could lead to undermining the transitional process and the elections could turn out to be meaningless because it leads, over time, to increase and intensify the political and ethno-sectarian polarization. There are obvious difficulties in accepting the notion that the main deriving force for voting and participating, in Iraqi elections today, was fulfilling civic duties by voluntary voting. This means that competitive elections would not affect achieving institutional change. As far as these types of elections are concerned, the outcomes of these elections could not shape the future of the country but instead, maintain the status-quo. One of the greatest challenges facing elections in Iraq today is that it turns into an "event" instead of a process of institutional change. In general, therefore, it seems that the competitive elections, that have been held every four years in Iraq since 2005,

could play an important role in transitioning Iraq, gradually, from a full-scale dictatorship to a full-scale competitive authoritarian regime. However, the most crucial goal of holding elections, in this case, as mentioned above, is to maintain the post-2003 status quo.

Considering low turnout in the recent elections held in May 2018, it is becoming challenging to ignore the importance of voter turnout in consolidating or undermining the emerging democracy. This shows a need to understand, on the individual level, the relationship between voter mobilization and political participation in Iraq to validate this proposition. This study, therefore, seeks to assess the effect of mobilization efforts from the perspective of formal and informal institutions. A reasonable approach to tackle these issues could be to address them as a path-dependent process inherited from Ba'ath Party dictatorship and exacerbated by the legacy of the American-led invasion of Iraq in 2003.

A few months after the Iraq War in 2003, one of the most significant critical junctures or turning points in modern Iraqi history was President George W. Bush's administration's establishing of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) in July 2003, headed by senior American diplomat L. Paul Bremer, as a transitional administrative body in Iraq. Then, the CPA appointed an ethno-sectarian political body, namely an institution whose members were chosen according to their ethnic or religious identity, called the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) as the provisional government for Iraq. In 2004, the CPA and IGC drafted and ratified the "Law of Administration for the State of Iraq for the Transitional Period" or "Transitional Administrative Law" (TAL) which was considered an interim constitution. This law was "signed on March 8, 2004 by the Iraqi Governing Council. It came into effect on June 28, 2004 following the official transfer of power from

the Coalition Provisional Authority (a division of the United States Department of Defense) to a sovereign Iraqi government.”(Wikipedia, 2019a) The CPA was comprised of powerless Iraqi exiles who claimed to represent the three main Iraqi ethno-sectarian groups, Sunni (20%), Shia (52%), Kurds (20%) and minorities (8%). This body worked to implement the set of foundational orders issued by the CPA to rebuild the new state in Iraq.

The CPA issued over 100 executive orders which aimed to rebuild the state and transition government institutions from authoritarian to democratic structures. The most important examples of these orders were the dismantling the Iraqi army, de-Ba'athification, restructuring the Iraqi economy from a planned economy to a free market economy, reorganizing the mass media and communication sector, and reorganizing the state bureaucracy. Many other degrees established the new rules of the political game in Iraq. With regards to a democratic transition, we will focus on three crucial executive orders which constitute the cornerstones of the democratic project in post-2003 Iraq. These are the electoral system executive order number (96) of 06/15/2004, the political parties executive order number (97) of 06/15/2004 and the election management body executive order number (92) of 05/31/2004.

Subsequently, the CPA cooperated with the IGC and the United Nations to appoint the Iraqi Transitional Government led by Ayad Allawi and Transitional National Assembly 2004, comprised of 100 members divided as follows: 40 Shia, 25 Sunni, 25 Kurds, 6 Turkman, 2 Christians, one Yazidi, and one Sabaeen. They also appointed the Iraqi Transitional Government, which was led by a Shiite interim Prime Minister, a Sunni tribal leader as a president of Iraq from 2004 to 2005, and a Sunni as speaker of parliament. Every

head of these posts has two deputies titles of the deputies from a different ethnic and sectarian group.

Subsequently, Iraq held its first national election on January 30, 2005, after more than three decades of dictatorial rule by the Ba'ath Party. During this election, voters elected 275 representatives to the new parliament. Those representatives are responsible, according to the new interim Iraqi Constitution, for nominating the Iraqi prime minister and his cabinet and the president of the Republic of Iraq and drafting a new permanent constitution. Since 2005, Iraq has held four national elections in 2006, 2010, 2014 and 2018. Iraq's constitution, which is supposed to represent the formal rules of the country's national political system, was drafted very quickly by an incompetent constitutional committee dominated by Kurds and Shi'a. The Sunni community, which boycotted the first transitional elections of January, 2005, were underrepresented in this committee but were later granted some seats on this vital committee (Feldman, 2004), (Arato, 2009), (Afrin, 2009), (Z. Al-Ali, 2014). This committee was formed on May 2, 2005, by the Iraqi Interim National Assembly.

The TAL Committee wrote the Iraqi constitution in less than four months under intense pressure from the Bush administration and a spate of daily car and suicide bombings. The Iraqi people ratified the constitution in a general referendum on October 15, 2005, after most Sunni groups had rejected it. It was approved by Kurds and the highest Shi'a religious authority represented by Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Husseini al-Sistani. Sistani had an extremely significant role in mobilizing and encouraging people to vote for the new constitution, and his role was important in the first and second national elections in 2005

as well. He helped organize Shi'a groups into a political coalition called the United Iraqi Alliance (UIA) list. The role of religious leaders in mobilizing voters to participate or boycott the elections will be discussed further when analyzing the relationship between informal institutions and voter turnout.

The decline in voter turnout from 61% in the 2014 national election to 44.4% in 2018 has been explained by two possible hypotheses. Those who abstained from voting might have sought to punish the incumbents, or they are no longer were willing to accept the consequences of the post-2003 ethno-sectarian political process. That is to say, another possible explanation for the 2018 electoral outcome might be that there was a significant decrease in voter mobilization efforts by religious leaders and an increase in mobilization efforts by political parties and party leaders. While these outcomes could be viewed as a positive sign by moving away from the post-2003 ethno-sectarian political order, one could argue that that voters' failure to vote might lead to undermining the legitimacy of the emerging process of a transition to democracy, both in the short and medium term. Hence, one major drawback of low turnout in an emerging democracy is that it sends an alarming signal for the whole political process and future of democracy. Limited voter participation might be viewed as an indicator of the rise of the patron-client relations as the core component of the new political system or the development of what Levitsky and Way describe as "competitive authoritarianism." Thus, we argue while the level of voter turnout probably does not matter in a well-established democracy, as long as it is a short-term deviation from the norm, but it is a matter of concern in countries which are building a new democracy.

Many scholars have considered elections the most central aspect of political participation in which citizens have a right to vote periodically in “fair and free” elections. We argue that elections matter in *promoting* political stability, formation of effective political institutions], and creating a meritocratic and representative government. The first step in building a democratic state is elections, which are the only legitimate basis of increasing popular support for the political process and making and implementing effective public policies. Elections are not an easy process, and involve a series of activities which require a long process of mobilization.

In the pre-election process, the candidates, whether they run as individuals or as members of a party or political coalition, must convey their economic and political programs to their constituencies. In many well-established democracies, voters make their voting decision based on their education level, because education causes them to view voting as a crucial part of their civic responsibilities. While in well-established democracies citizens, in making their voting decisions, are also influenced by formal institutions such as their level of their political knowledge, partisanship, and income level we argue that in emerging and post-conflict democracies, such as in Iraq, voters have mostly relied on the cues and shortcuts provided by formal institutions such as ethno-sectarian and tribal affiliations and religious leaders.

Political institutions, such as well-established parties and non-governmental organizations, create platforms through which candidates can deliver their political messages and discuss their programs to persuade voters to vote for them. The weak formal institutional structure in post-authoritarian Iraq has encouraged informal institutions to

shape the past, present, and future of elections in Iraq. However, the findings of the current study supports previous research that has found that “informal structures shape the performance of formal institutions in important and often unexpected ways.” (Helmke & Levitsky, 2004, p. 726) (Helmke & Levitsky, 2006a)

Over the past forty years, Iraq has suffered from very complicated economic, social, and political problems. The critical aspects of these problems are as follows:

1. The longest and most devastating regional war in the Middle East, the Iraq-Iran war (1980-1988).
2. The severe economic sanctions imposed on Iraq by the United Nations after Saddam’s invasion of Kuwait in 1990 which ended with the American invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003.
3. The Iraqi civil war (2005-2007) that erupted because of increasing ethno-sectarian tensions between the two main Muslim sects, Shi’a and Sunnis, and intensified after the bombing of a holy Shi’a shrine in a Sunni governorate north of Baghdad.
4. Iraq’s rentier economy has created an endemic economic crisis because of its complete dependence on oil and the volatility of global oil prices.
5. The ongoing existential terrorist threats and political instability have created an environment that allowed new and brutal terrorist organizations, such as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), to emerge in 2014. The war

against this terrorist organization continued three years from June 2014 to December 2017.

6. The extreme lack of state capacity which is the result of all the above-mentioned problems as well as the authoritarian legacy.

However, all these problems have a significant influence not only on political participation and the electoral process but also upon shaping the legislative, executive and judicial branches of Iraq's nascent democracy. For instance, Iraq today suffers from a dramatic decrease in voter turnout. In the first transitional national election which held on January 30, 2005, after the overthrow of the authoritarian Ba'athist regime, the turnout was about 76.36%, while in the fourth national parliamentary elections the turnout was approximately 44.5%. This decline can be attributed to the failure of the post-2003 political order which was designed based on ethno-sectarian and tribal affiliation instead of national identity and a meritocratic bureaucratic structure which adheres to the formal rules of game. This political order, after sixteen years of regime change has no power to overcome all these problems because its cornerstones are sectarianism and tribalism which have developed a self-reinforcing path-dependent process. These problems that inherited from Saddam authoritarian regime and exacerbated by US blunders in Iraq have been promoted by unintended consequences of the regime change such as endemic and rampant corruption, a cumbersome and dysfunctional and nepotistic bureaucracy, lack of schools, lack of electric power and clean drinking water, poor sanitation, and a degraded health system and infrastructure, such as poor roads and bridges. In conclusion, taken together, these problems have contributed to the decline in voter turnout over the past 13 years.

However, as will be detailed in following chapters, this dissertation argues that what makes these problems worse over time, and which cannot be overcome easily through elections, is that the electoral laws and procedures have become questionable. Hence, we argue that one of the main objectives of holding elections in Iraq today is maintaining the status quo and promoting and maintaining the privileges of current political elites. This suggests that a strong correlation does exist between voter mobilization and political participation. That is, one significant advantage of holding elections in Iraq today is to maintain and institutionalize the ethno-sectarian based political system. For instance, since 2003, many political elites have used ethno-sectarian rhetoric which increases the polarization and ethno-sectarian conflict which in turn increases voter turnout. The big question is why certain segments of the Iraqi populace especially the Shi'a agree with this sectarian discourse, namely finds that it resonates with them. The simple answer is that their participation in the first and second election might come as a result of decades of grievances and marginalization by what perceived to be Sunni-dominated governments.

While in the early two founding elections, the role of religious leaders in mobilizing voters was indispensable, their role has declined significantly from direct and indirect interference in supporting particular political factions to be politically neutral and ultimately to almost boycotting the political process. This is undoubtedly true in the case of highest Shia leader Sayyid Ali al-Sistani and Abdu-Malik Al-Sa'di, who is one of the most prominent Sunni scholars. While both scholars played a significant role in legitimizing the current political process in its early days, they have, since 2012, closed their doors and refused to meet with any politicians or even local bureaucrats in al-Najaf Governorate. This means that their role has changed from supporting and legitimizing the

political process to criticizing the failure of the political class in fulfilling their promises. Thus, the religious leaders support to the political process became conditional on citizen satisfaction toward the governments' performance.

However, citizens' disenchantment and anger with the incumbents, in particular, and the entire political process, in general, can be understood by researchers as an effort to undermine the popular legitimacy of the democratization process. We argue that this disenchantment contributed significantly to declining voter turnout in the elections of 2018. This was also evident in the elections of 2005 and 2010 when the tribal leaders whose power and influence increased significantly as a result of their role in countering and defeating the insurgency, and mobilizing voters to take part in an election. We notice that the voter turnout increased or at least maintained an acceptable level. Their disenchantment and anger with the incumbents in particular and the whole political process, in general, can be understood as an effort to undermine the popular legitimacy of the elections which in turn resulted in a decrease in the turnout in the elections of 2018.

Therefore, a possible explanation of the dramatic decline in voter turnout in the elections of 2018 might be that the retreat of religious and tribal leaders in mobilizing voters and supporting the current political elites. This is evident by the Grand Ayat Allah Ali al-Sistani position toward the election of 2018. In this elections, al-Sistani implicitly urged voters to boycott all the Iraqi politicians when he refused to meet them or speak to them face to face. We argue that this step, which can be considered a turning point in the role of the religious leaders in mobilizing voters and legitimizing the political process, contributed to the decline of voter turnout in 2018.

This dissertation also argues that, when the corruption associated with oil price increases, voter turnout will also increase and vice versa. Therefore, when the oil revenue declines, and incumbents lose access to oil revenues which they can distribute to their constituents in the form of material benefits, voter turnout declines. Consequently, one can argue that there is a relationship between the government performance and trust in government, on the one hand, and voter turnout in Iraq, on the other. For instance, while many commentators agree that Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi's government performance (2014 to 2018) was acceptable in fighting terrorism, de-escalating the ethno-sectarian tension between Shia and Sunni and Kurds and Arab, and reducing the patronage power of his predecessor's network, voter turnout during the last year of his term (2018) dropped dramatically to 44.5%. By the same token, while there was a consensus that the former Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri Al-Maliki's two terms, 2006—2014, contributed in increasing corruption, escalating the ethno-sectarian tension which ended up with the rise of The Islamic State in Iraq and Sham (ISIS), and building a widespread patronage network, voter turnout decreased from 76.63% in 2006 to 61.76% in 2010.

## **1.2. The significance of the Study**

Although extensive research has been conducted on Iraqi politics since regime change in 2003, no study exists which focuses on the relationship of electoral mobilization and voter turnout. The importance and originality of this study are built on the assumption that there was a strong correlation and causal mechanism between voter mobilization and voter turnout. This relationship can be seen clearly in voter turnout volatility in the elections of 2005, 2010 and 2014 and the dramatic decline in voter turnout in the recent May 2018 national elections.

Hence, the significance of this study is twofold, (1) The decline in voter turnout can pose a threat or challenge to the future of a democratic transition in Iraq because it undermines the legitimacy of the current political regime. The higher the turnout, the more legitimate the political process is viewed by citizens. This might lead to the rise of competitive authoritarian regime in which elections serve the interests of the incumbents and can be meaningless because the main goal of holding such elections is to maintain the status-quo not bring substantial institutional change. (2) Previous studies have not been able to analyze voting behavior in Iraq using individual-level data. At the same time, these studies are unable to provide quantitative answers or evidence explaining how Iraqi voters make their electoral decisions. Hence, while this study establishes a quantitative framework for investigating voting patterns and voters' choices, it does not underestimate the importance of qualitative data in understanding how people have been mobilized to vote and participate in elections.

However, it is beyond the scope of this study to highlight the problems that have accompanied the elections in Iraq. These problems include non-transparent electoral procedures, lack of voter registration record, the electronic voting system that Iraq used for the first time in the elections of 2018, electoral fraud, electoral manipulation, vote-buying, foreign meddling of the elections, corruption, and campaign financing. This study is unable to analyze in detail the lack of organizational rules and procedures which are intended to regulate the electoral process, and, last but not least, the impact of outside meddling in the elections.

We contend that explaining these dilemmas lies in the role which formal and informal political social institutions play in motivating voters to participate in elections. Therefore, this study considers that the nature or the quality of elections is very complex and cannot be explained and measured without acknowledging and understanding voters' motivations that ultimately will make the democratization process work effectively in Iraq with a high or at least moderate level of political participation. However, we argue that these problems should not deter us from trying to investigate the core issue in emerging democracies, which is elections and voting behavior. To conclude, this study will utilize an historical institutionalist approach in studying voting behavior in Iraq. This approach has been defined as “a research tradition that examines how temporal processes and events influence the origin and transformation of institutions that govern political and economic relations”(Fioretos, Falleti, & Sheingate, 2016, p. 2) It has also encouraged us “to go back and look” if one wants to explain the character of contemporary political institutions—rather than through backward induction from apparent functions the institution may serve today.”(Thelen & Conran, 2016, p. 84)

### **1.3. Case Study: Why Iraq?**

We selected Iraq as a case study for several reasons. Most importantly, Iraq is an exceptional in the Middle East and North Africa countries. It has been an object of historical, cultural, and institutional research for decades. Iraq is in the birthplace of human civilization and one of the most of the world's religion. It holds one of the most strategic and geopolitical positions which affects the economic, political and security stability of the world. It is the only post-authoritarian country in contemporary world politics in which a new regime was installed through foreign military intervention and occupation which

began in 2003 and ended in 2011. The US occupation forces imposed the current political regime. There is a hotly contested debate over whether the American occupation has failed not only to obtain the legal grounds for imposing such a regime but also to accomplish its commitments in building a prosperous, democratic and stable Iraq in the heart of the Middle East.

Iraq's population, like the rest of the Middle Eastern countries, is also still growing. It has increased dramatically from about 23 million in 2003 to 38 million in 2018 and expected to be 51 million in 2030 - predominantly youth ages 14 to 26 who are resident in urban areas. Iraq will experience a “youth bulge” for the foreseeable future with 70% of the population being under the age of 30

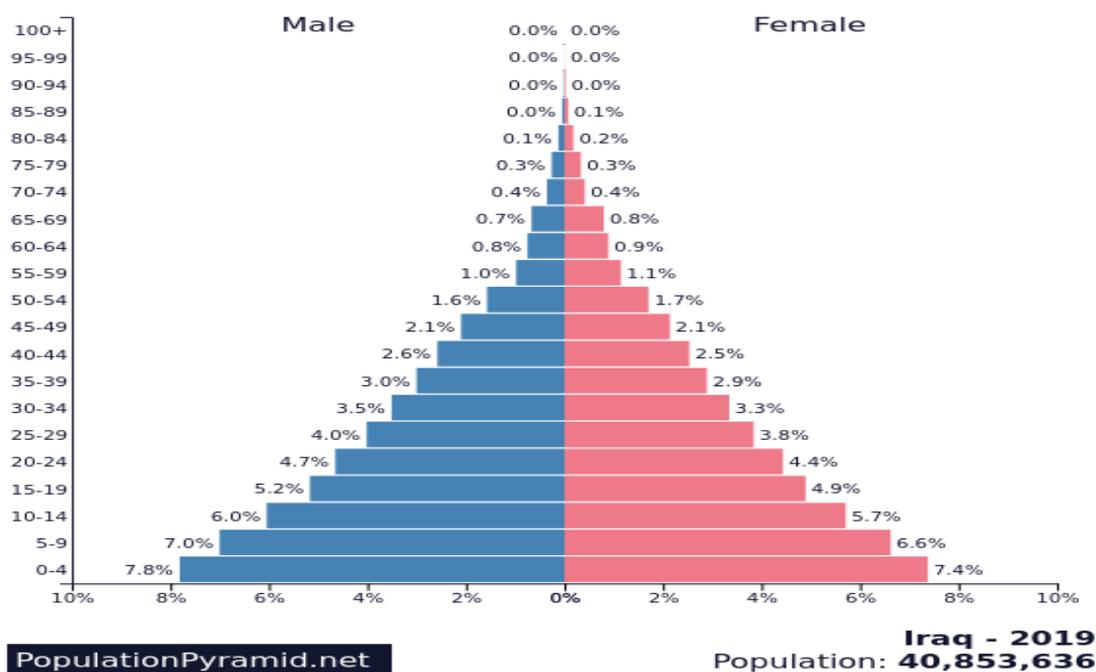


Figure 1.2. Iraq Population Pyramid 2019

Iraq has been colonized historically by the British and recently by the United States. The two countries have ruled Iraq directly and left their legacy on the institutional building

process. Thus, there clear evidence that colonial and neo-colonial legacy has produced a path dependency that influenced the process of the state-building and nation-building processes. The ongoing violence and war on terror complicated the process of democratic transition and make it more difficult to create a “prosperous and democratic in the heart of the Middle East”. The geopolitical and economic importance of Iraq is very crucial for international and regional actors because it is located, as mentioned earlier, in the center of one of the most strategic areas of the world in terms of oil-production and witnessing many wars and domestic conflicts since the second world war.

However, Iraq is similar to other rentier states in the Arabian Peninsula in a number of dimensions. Structurally, the vast majority of the Iraqi population lives in urban areas. As in the other rentier countries in the Persian Gulf, the modern state of Iraq, since its creation by the British after the War World I, has had limited state capacity in terms of taxation in which taxes are very low and the state unable to collect them, or both. The evolution of formal and informal institutions has been evidently embodied across the societal and political structure.

Historically, Iraq emerged as an independent state on October 3, 1932, after 18 years of direct British occupation which included Iraq’s Great Revolution of June-October, 1920. This revolution forced the British occupation forces to install a British-style monarchical regime. The king was a non-Iraqi native brought from the Arabian Peninsula and was installed for being known for his loyalty to Britain and his animosity toward the Ottoman Empire. This regime, which was broadly considered a pro-western regime, was overthrown in a coup d’état by a group of anti-western officers led by Abd al-Karim Qasim

on July 14, 1958. Those officers declared the First Iraqi Republic in the wake of the coup d'état. Iraq's first Republican government was overthrown in February 1963 by members of the Ba'ath Party and pro-Ba'athist military officers which, in turn, was ousted by the Iraqi Army in November 1963. The Ba'ath Party seized power again in July 1968 and a dictatorial regime ruled Iraq for the following 35 years. The Ba'athist era ended after the American invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003 which played a significant role in installing the current political elite and system.

The US occupation of Iraq, through its first administrative body, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), established a federal or decentralized state based on an ethno-sectarian parliamentary system of government, known as the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC). This use of sect and ethnicity was the first time such criteria were used to choose political representatives in Iraq. The CPA created the new rules of games which included the electoral system, elections supervisory body, political parties' law and many additional laws and regulations which were contained in more than 100 executive orders designed to restructure the state in Iraq. This body has developed through elections into an ethno-sectarian legislature, executive with house seats and ministers and their deputies as well as the top level bureaucrats distributed proportionally among three ethnic and sectarian groups: Sunni Shi'a and Kurds.

Another possible reason why we selected Iraq as a case study is because of diverse voter mobilization strategies on issues like ethnicity, sectarianism, tribalism, and clientelism. For instance, ethnic identity has been highly salient since the first national elections in January 2005 among Kurdish voters in the Kurdish majority provinces (Erbil,

Sulaymaniyah, and Duhok) and the three mixed Arab-Kurds provinces (Kirkuk, Nineveh, and Diyala). Similarly, the sectarian cleavage between Shi'a and Sunni voters in central and southern Iraq is salient and relevant in mobilizing the electorate. Political elites usually mobilize voters through these cleavages since the first national elections in 2005. This ethno-sectarian frame is well suited to examine important part of our theory regarding the relationship between ethnic and sectarian mobilization and voter turnout.

This study seeks to investigate the elections in post-authoritarian nation-states using models of voting behavior to help us predict the success or failure of the process of a transition to democracy. It is an attempt to suggest new ways of studying the factors which impact voters' decision-making process in post-2003 Iraq by analyzing four national elections. This will offer a valuable theoretical, and empirical ground for generalizing results to other Middle Eastern countries such as Egypt, Lebanon, Libya, and Yemen.

My personal experience of Iraqi politics has prompted this research. Thus, I believe that the findings of this study will contribute substantially to the study of the comparative politics of the Middle East. Studying voting behavior in the Iraqi context will raise questions of great interest in a wide range of areas. It will help other researchers in the region to expand their scholarly work and apply it in their countries. It will also help us better operationalize the concept of "democracy" by focusing on the process of voter mobilization and how to recruit voters to take part in "fair and free elections." Therefore, this dissertation will generate fresh insights, which can be generalized and applied, as mentioned earlier, not only in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region but in post-authoritarian countries in other regions of the world as well.

However, Iraq, one of the most important and unstable countries in the world, and situated in one of the most troubled areas in the Middle East, has attracted the attention of political scientists who are interested in studying ethnic conflict, war and peace theories of conflict resolution, foreign policy and military intervention, nation- and state-building, and national and identity politics. Voting behavior and electoral politics in Iraq have yet to be adequately addressed in the literature since the regime change of 2003.

In conclusion, the study offers valuable insights into how we can study electoral mobilization and voter turnout, within the Iraqi context, using a mixed-method approach to analyze Iraq's elections since 2005 and predict the outcome of the future elections. This is an initial attempt to fill the gap in the Iraqi politics literature by focusing on the factors that influence the voting decision-making process. It can be expanded by testing voting behavior models and systematically categorizing Iraqi voters in the future work.

#### **1.4. The Puzzle of Voting Behavior in Iraq**

In its focus on understanding how the role of formal institutions and informal institutions influenced voters' motivations to vote for a particular candidate, party and coalitions, this project addresses a series of interrelated puzzles about voter mobilization in post-2003 Iraq. These puzzles will address the main question of this dissertation, which is why did voter turnout dramatically decline in the fourth national elections in May 2018? Can the level of trust in formal institutions such as an electoral system, election commission, and political parties, and informal institutions such as religion and ethnic and electoral violence, be used to explain this decline? Thus, examining voters' motives provides us with analytical and empirical tools into predicting the election outcomes in

post-authoritarian countries where voters make their decisions based on the costs and benefits, they expect to receive when they decide to vote in elections. However, group pressure and coercion analysis can also be considered as an important motive behind participation in elections.

Hence, we will attempt to show that in the first, second and third elections cycles (2005-2014), identity-based voting was a dominant model of determining voting behavior. The voter turnout during these elections ranged from high to moderate. In the fourth election cycle in 2018, we witnessed a dramatic decline in voter turnout. We argue there was a dramatic shift from Identity-based voting to Issues-Based voting. While this appears to be a positive development indicating a move toward more informative voting decisions, but it is unclear that this development is more akin to those who participate or those who boycott the elections. Thus, we assume that abstentions from voting, who they constitute about 65%, was based on issues-based approach, while those who they vote in elections build their voting decision based on identity-based voting. Hence, the low turnout suggests those who boycotted the elections might have more political wisdom than those who do vote. Thus, it would be interesting to compare the experiences of individuals who have utilized their group membership in the first three national elections to decide for whom to vote with the same individuals who participated and those who did not participate in the fourth national elections. We expect that the group-membership model of voting and non-voting will be the dominant model to explain voting behavior in the short and intermediate term in Iraq.

However, we argue in the early elections in Iraq after 2003, the authoritarian past and ethno-sectarian grievances as well as the mutual fears exacerbate the problem of moving smoothly towards building a democratic state in Iraq. These factors had a significant impact on shaping voter preferences. This was no longer the case in the 2018 elections when corruption and basic needs such as power, health, and education shaped voter preferences. Thus, the state failure and the political elite's incompetence led to voters' disappointment which ultimately resulted in a decrease in voter turnout in the 2018 national elections.

However, the relationship between electoral violence and voter turnout provides a complicated puzzle for understanding whether or not electoral violence can be considered as a driving force affecting the level of voter turnout. We will use violence measured by death toll as an indicator that can be used to measure the level of violence. We argue that when the violence level is high, voter turnout will increase. It is worth noting here that violence found to be influencing voter turnout level have been explored in several studies. We will divide the fourth elections into two groups. Group one includes the election of 2005, 2010 and 2014 in which the death toll varied between high and moderate. The second group focuses on the 2018 or post-ISIS elections in which the death toll, as we shall see in the chapter on electoral violence and voter turnout, was relatively high. We will compare and analyze the impact death toll has on voter turnout in these two-time frames.

## **1.5.Main Research Questions**

One of the most significant aspects of studying elections and voting behavior in post-2003 Iraq is to answer the question of how voters decide, and which motives have

influenced them in making their electoral choices. In other words, what factors motivate Iraqi voters to vote for a particular candidate, party, and coalition? How has this process evolved over four national election cycles to ensure that every election result reflects the will of Iraqi voters? Previous studies of democratization in Iraq have not dealt in much detail with the impact of voters' motivations and voter turnout dilemma. Therefore, the primary concern of this study is to examine the voting decision-making process by answering the question of “Why do people vote and whom do they vote for?” What are their motivations and how do they get mobilized by socio-political factors? Researchers analyzing Iraqi voters' motivations have not carefully examined and addressed systematically, on the individual level, the effect of formal institutions and informal institutions.

However, the sub-questions raised by this study are how do formal institutions such as electoral system, the structure of election management body and political parties influence voting behavior in post-2003 Iraq? What are the impacts of religion and ethnic leaders in mobilizing voters in 2005, 2010, 2014 and 2018 elections? Throughout this dissertation, we scrutinize the motivations that affect voters' decision-making processes in Iraq. However, while there were enormous number of studies focused on Saddam Husayn's authoritarian regime, Iraq's wars, Iraq as a rentier state, and national identity and historical memory, researchers have not analyzed elections and voting in Iraq in much detail.

One major issue that deserves in-depth analysis and needs to be taken into consideration is how we can predict and model Iraqi voter choices. In the literature on voting behavior, the debate continues about the best strategies for understanding voter

turnout which initially starts at high levels but declines over time, not only in post-authoritarian and East Europe countries but also in well-established and western democracies. In conclusion, understanding how the decline in voting in the Iraqi context is a timely topic and serves to unpack the complexity of the future of the process of a transition to democracy in post-authoritarian Iraq.



## **1.6.Data**

There is a consensus among social and political scientists that in studying voter turnout and voting behavior we need to utilize experimental surveys and interviews to provide an accurate explanation of this crucial phenomenon. While these sources of data are instrumental in studying electoral politics and elections in western democracies and some Latin America countries, it has not been widely used in the Middle East and among Middle Eastern scholars. Hence, the core of this study is using publicly available surveys to enable us to unpack the factors which have affected voter turnout in Iraq since 2005. These surveys have been generated by a “nonpartisan research network that provides insight into the social, political, and economic attitudes and values of an ordinary citizen” in Iraq such as the International Republican Institute (IRI), The National Democratic Institute (NDI) The Arab Barometer Project (ABP), The World Value Survey (WVS) and The Arab The Transformation Project (ATP). These surveys were conducted in Iraq from 2004 to 2018. To the best of my knowledge, these projects have a good academic reputation.

While the IRI and NDI surveys are not publicly available in SPSS or Excel files, we use their results to support our hypotheses quantitatively, the ABP (Second and Third Wave), WVS and ATP surveys will be the core datasets we will use in testing this dissertation's hypotheses. The following is a brief description of these four datasets.

### **1.6.1. The Arab Barometer Project (Second and Third Wave)**

The goal of the Arab Barometer Project measures Arab public opinion toward different salient issues such as human rights, democracy, international relations, and media

by carrying out “reliable public opinion surveys ... since 2006.” Iraq has been excluded in the first wave (2006-2009) because of the security concerns. In the Second Wave (2010-2011), and Third wave (2012-2014), the decision was made to include Iraq in the Surveys. Unfortunately, Iraq has been excluded again from the fourth wave (2016-2017) because of the rise of ISIS, the acronym that has been used widely to describe the terrorist organization known as the Islamic State in Iraq Sham or Levant. This terrorist group controlled large swaths of Iraq (2014-2017) and Syria (2012-2019) and created security threats that prevented researchers from conducting public opinion surveys in Iraq.

As far as the second and third wave is concerned, these two separate surveys were conducted using face-to-face interviews. They were carried out by joint teams from the University of Michigan and Princeton University in collaboration with a local Iraqi facilitator. The surveys have been funded by the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), the Canadian International Research and Development Center (IDRC) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

The questionnaires were designed to measure Iraqi public opinion toward democracy, the performance of political institutions and political attitudes, security, citizens’ participation in the elections of 2010 and 2014, democracy, media and freedom of speech and other religious, cultural, and social topics. The number of observations in the second wave survey of the Arab Barometer was 1,234, and 1,215 in the third wave, with a random sample that covered almost all of Iraq’s provinces. Data were collected between February 20 to March 12, 2011, in the Second Wave, and between June 6–29,

2013, in the Third Wave. The response rate of the surveys was about 80% in the second wave of (2011) and 82% in the third wave of (2013).

These two surveys represent “a national probability sample design of adults 18 years, and older” and the stratification process were based on governorate and urban-rural areas. In the third wave, the respondents were selected randomly from 840 urban area households and 375 households in rural areas. The sample weights were constructed based on the probability of selection. In the second wave, the respondents’ houses were also selected using simple random sampling. The respondents were divided into two groups according to “833 interviewed in urban areas and 351 in rural areas”\*

### 1.6.2. World Values Survey Iraq, 2013

This survey was carried out by the World Values Survey (WVS) from November to December, 2013. It was conducted using face-to-face interviews in nine Iraq governorates through local facilitators using the Arabic Language. The number of interviewees was (n=1200). The sample was drawn randomly to include all segments of Iraqi society “in the term of gender, age groups, educational level,” using households as the sampling frame. The response rate was 85% and missing data that including refuse to answer and “Nobody at home after 3 attempts, denied access (security, gate locked), respondent away or unavailable” was only 15%. The questionnaire covered various aspects of Iraqi public opinion such as voting, corruption, political interest, religiosity, economic issues, trust in institutions, organizational memberships, obedience, coexistence, post-

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\* (<http://www.arabbarometer.org/>).

material issues, youth empowerment, human rights, women rights, and many demographic variables.

### 1.6.3. The Arab Transformation Project (ATP) 2014

This public opinion survey was made publicly available by the University of Aberdeen at Scotland. This dataset is part of the Arab Transformation Project. The European Union developed this survey to obtain a better understanding of the political, economic, social, and cultural transformations which have occurred in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia. Arabic language and local facilitators are the primary tools to manage and carry out this survey. The questionnaire investigates the attitudes, values, and behavior of Iraqi citizens and is organized around five central themes which are “democracy, development, security, migration, gender,” and Iraqi international relations. The study was conducted in the form of a survey, with data being gathered after the 2014 national election in Iraq. That is to say; it was conducted after the fourth national parliamentary elections in 2014. In this survey, the unit of analysis was an individual voter. The number of observations were 2000 individuals which covered “13 out of 19 provinces, with probability proportionate to size.”\* Due to practical constraints imposed by the control of much of Iraq’s territory by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIS), also known by the Arabic acronym, *Da’ish*, this survey did not include the provinces where there was open fighting or an immediate threat of violence. The response rate was 87.5%, and data was collected in the field from May 4th to June 22nd, 2014. \*

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\* <https://www.arabtrans.eu/work-packages/>

\*(<http://www.arabtrans.eu/>)

Because there is no general agreement about the extent to which quantitative data might mislead researchers in answering their research question, the most effective way of improving our statistical analysis is to increase the number of respondents to minimize the coverage, non-response, sampling and measurement error term. Hence, we have merged the above four datasets into one to obtain an accurate estimate of the dependent variable and independent variables. Last but not least, this study will also use in force Iraqi laws and regulations, Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) executive laws and orders, personal memoirs and personal interviews, online news stories, international election observation and official governmental reports. These qualitative data will help to supplement our analysis of Iraq voting behavior.

### **1.7. Mixed Method Research Design**

This dissertation employs a case-study research design, with an in-depth analysis of qualitative and quantitative data. In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in using Multi-Method Research (MMR) such as case-study approach, and middle range theory or medium-N. Scholars have encouraged researchers to use these approaches, and they have placed a great deal of emphasis on the impact and consequences of mixing qualitative and quantitative in one approach. Although, the groundbreaking and highly criticized book *Designing Social Inquiry* and significant academic contributions in the field are about reconciling the two traditions, the volume did not pay enough attention to the distinctive features that both quantitative and qualitative offer. The supplementary hypothesis proposes that both methods compliment each other and needs to be interpreted with caution. Evan S. Lieberman (2005) in his article, “*Nested analysis as a mixed-method strategy for comparative research,*” proposes that an operational method for mixing

quantitative and qualitative method use a nesting analysis approach. According to the author, this method aims to “unified approach which joins intensive case-study analysis with statistical analysis.” by running regression analysis on standardized variables and concrete theory, followed by small-N analysis with specifying the model to assess the findings.

According to Lieberman, accepting the compatibility of qualitative and quantitative modes of analysis is conditioned with a model specification of Model-testing Small-N Analysis or “Model-building Small-N Analysis.” Through illustration study, Lieberman (2005) shows that “a nested research design implies that scholars will pose questions in forms such as: What causes social revolutions?, while asking questions such as: What was the cause of social revolution in France? The nested analysis helps scholars to ask focused questions when analyzing their data and to be resourceful in finding answers” (Lieberman, 2005, p. 436).

In their useful analysis of “Case Selection Techniques,” Jason Seawright and John Gerring (2008) develop criteria of case selection from many observations depending on seven procedures reported in their, “Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options,” which are “typical, diverse, extreme, deviant, influential, the most similar, and most different cases.”. While the authors agree epistemologically and ontologically with George and Bennett (2005) that applying statistical analysis to the single case might undermine the usefulness of case study research, and with Mahoney (2010) who emphasizes that “case studies bring distinctive sources of leverage that are simply not found in quantitative

research,” they disagree with Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, & Sidney Verba that the logic on inference rules are the same in both methods.

While David Collier (1993) points out that “the school of comparative historical analysis has played an important role in legitimating a focus on a small N.,” Lijphart (1971) links historical analysis to geographical analysis to achieve one goal. This approach tends to use quantitative research to supplement qualitative research through “hypotheses [that] are carefully planned [qualitatively], and the statistical analysis as the second stage, in which these hypotheses are tested in as large a sample as possible.”(Lijphart, 1971, p. 685). Ragin (2013), traces the development of the comparative method and case-oriented research. He finds that the comparative method differed from the statistical analysis, and variable-centered quantitative approach. Ragin highlights the shortcomings of quantitative research when “they fail to conform to the predictions of a certain model.” The author also explores how we can conduct qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) by using a small-N approach where “individual cases acquire significance as cases only relative to general patterns displayed across many cases, not relative to the specific historical, cultural, political, substantive, or theoretical concerns of the investigator.”(Ragin, 2013, p. 166).

It is possible that quantitative data can be analyzed using the concept of critical historical juncture. It is also thought that the triangulation of data from quantitative and qualitative sources is important in developing the research design and our investigation. David Laitin (2000) shows how the tripartite method is important in bringing the quantitative and qualitative approaches together. Laitin puts more emphasis on the multi-method research as the best way of fruitful research designs and to operationalize

methodological pluralism in comparative politics. According to Laitin, a tripartite method combines: 1) statistical rules that should be regulated “across a large number of similar units, 2) qualitative analysis that “provide a logically coherent account of outcomes...[and addressing] questions of how historically there has been a translation of values on independent variables onto values on dependent variables.” and 3) formal modeling to reduce errors and to endogenize “the core variables that are of concern to political analysts” (Laitin, 2000, pp. 2–5). The theory of tripartite methodology provides a useful account of how data, theory, and narrative elaborate and formalize this methodology. These components have an increasingly significant role in making comparative studies more interesting by interactively involving moving back and forth from theory to data, and “thus making theory while testing it” (Laitin, 2000, p. 3).

In their comprehensive study *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, Bennett and George (2005) were able to show that “process tracing takes the form of detailed narrative or story presented in the form of chronicle that purports to throw light on how an event came about” (George & Bennett, 2005, p. 250). The authors describe process tracing in “the form of detailed narrative.” We believe that using process tracing, without relying on functional theory, would not allow us to identify which causal mechanism or how the independent variable(s) interacts with other intervening variables which are believed to be linked to the dependent variable. In this dissertation, the process tracing strategy will be used to describe and explain the development of electoral system, elections management body and political parties in Iraq during the four founding national elections (2005, 2010, 2014, and 2018).

For David Collier, process tracing refers to “an analytic tool for drawing a descriptive and causal inference from diagnostic pieces of evidence- often understood as part of a temporal sequence of events or phenomena” (Collier, 2011, p. 824). He points out many advantages of using process tracing in comparative politics such as “(a) identifying novel political and social phenomena; (b) evaluating prior explanatory hypotheses; (c) gaining insight into causal mechanisms; and (d) providing an alternative means- compared with conventional regression analysis and inference based on statistical models” (Collier, 2011, p. 824). Collier argues that drawing accurate description or valid inference should be built on a theoretical/conceptual framework that “involves sets of interrelated concepts, often accompanied by general ideas of how the concepts can be operationalized” (Collier, 2011, p. 824).

For instance, in the case of explaining the voting behavior, civil war and war on terror in Iraq since 2003, researchers should be using the regime change of 2003 and subsequent transition from an authoritarian regime to democratization as a point of departure or critical juncture. Nevertheless, researchers should also address many independent variables to identify the causal factors which have led to the current situation in Iraq. The failure of the American invasion and occupation in imposing liberal democracy in a country which suffered from lack of infrastructure and basic needs for decades should be used as a critical juncture to analyze the consequences of the invasion. We argue that one of the main underestimated consequences of this invasion is the territorial ambitions and geostrategic struggles among regional and international powers that undermined the process of state-building and democratization in Iraq. There are also many factors which have contributed to this failure such as the complexity of religious and ethnic diversity, the

rentier economy and oil revenue and its negative impact not only on undermining the democratization process, but also promoting and consolidating authoritarianism in the Middle East countries.

In the same vein, James Mahoney (2015), in his recent articles, “Process Tracing and Historical Explanation” and “After KKV: The New Methodology of Qualitative Research” (2010), repeatedly talks about two different uses of process tracing and Causal Process Observations (CPOs) which are all about theory development and theory testing. While he differentiates between a wide use of Data Set Observations (DSOs) in quantitative research and Causal Process Observations (CPOs), he found the latter more appealing “for theory development [and it] is widely appreciated by both quantitative and qualitative scholars” (James Mahoney, 2010, p. 125). In theory testing, caution must be applied, as the distinction might be between three types of theory-testing CPOs which are “differentiated according to whether the key piece of information provided for theory testing concerns the independent variable, a mechanism, or an auxiliary outcome” (James Mahoney, 2010, p. 125). Thus, Mahoney reported (2016) that robust analysis of process tracing “contributes to causal inference primarily through the discovery of CPOs.” The author claims that the process needs to be done using three pillars: “(1) a good knowledge of the history of the case, (2) a good knowledge of relevant preexisting theories and generalizations, and (3) a strong capacity to carry out sound logical reasoning by combining facts about the case with more general knowledge” (James Mahoney, 2015, p. 202).

The mixed methodological technique which will be used to test the hypotheses is process-tracing and binary logistic regression. Regarding the quantitative approach, binary

logistic regression and predict probability, which assume that the dependent variable should be a dummy a binary variable with only two value 0 (No vote) and 1(Vote) with no natural order. This statistical technique will be used to highlight and recognize the correlation coefficient between voting in an election and the set of independent variables. In terms of process tracing, this study will trace the historical development of the legacy of the post-2003 American invasion and occupation and its impact on the electoral process in particular and the democratization in general.

### **1.8.The Argument**

This section presents a set of arguments that can be used to explain the relationship of voter mobilization and voter turnout. These arguments unpack some aspects of electoral politics in post-2003 Iraq. The main argument is that the interaction between informal and formal institutions within the voting decision-making process has enough explanatory and predictive power to explain how do Iraqi voters decide? That is, this dissertation argues that the electoral process in Iraq has been built on weak formal institutions, such the constitution, the electoral system, laws and regulations, and relatively complex and stable informal institutions, such as ethnic and sectarian norms, and tribal rules and customs. These institutions have contributed significantly to accentuating the process of building a stable, prosperous and functional state in post-2003 Iraq. In light of the recent national elections in May 2018, it is difficult to ignore the high level of electoral abstention in those elections.

While the formal institutions are exemplified by the electoral system, trust in elections supervisory body, trust in political parties, trust in government institutions, the

informal institutions include the role of religious leaders in mobilizing voters, the ethno-sectarian quota system and the impact of electoral violence on voter turnout. Hence, understanding the interaction between these two sets of institutions helps to explain why these factors can be useful in mobilizing voters. It is worth mentioning here that this argument is built upon several personal observations about Iraqi voting behavior since the first post-2003 national elections.

While the causes of voter turnout decline have been the subject of intense debate within the literature on comparative electoral politics, this dissertation, for the first time presents a causal story for the dramatic decline in Iraqi voter turnout in the elections of 2018. This can open a new avenue in studying voting behavior and voter turnout in the Middle Eastern context. It argues that the mobilization strategies which had been used to strengthen and consolidate dictatorial regime from 1998-2003 such as ethno-sectarian politics, tribalism, and sectarianism, poorly constructed formal rules, have also been utilized by the incumbent widely to consolidate the ethno-sectarian political order in post-2003 and maintain the status quo. These strategies varied in ways that influenced the outcomes of the elections. This might include the use of vote-buying, voters' intimidation by using the rhetoric of direct threat from the old dictatorial regime, the sectarian and ethnic hegemony and electoral violence, and the threat from international and regional interference.

There are a number of personal observations which can explain how formal and informal institutions influence voter turnout in Iraq. One of the main considerations was that, since the first founding national election in 2005, voters in all parts of Iraq tend to

value their ethno-sectarian and tribal identities at the expense of their national identity. However, it has been observed that the majority of Iraqi voters underestimate the impact of formal institutions, such as the electoral system, integrity of electoral management process and political parties in determining the election results. This means that when they vote in elections they do not take into consideration the fairness of electoral system, the transparency of elections and elections management body and the discourses and programs of political parties because voters tend to select candidate within the same ethnic, sectarian and even tribal groups. This appraisal has been accompanied with high, moderate and low voter turnout over four elections cycles since 2005.

However, while voting according to ethnicity and sectarian identity has characterized the elections since 2005, it might also have contributed to the decline the of voter turnout from 79.63% in 2005, to 61% in 2014 and 44.5% in 2018. We argue that one possible explanation for this might decline turnout could be that the divisive issues which motivate voters to cast their ballots has shift from identity-based voting such as the issues of sectarianism and ethnicity to issues-based voting, such as the issues of unemployment, endemic corruption, lack of schools, health care, lack of clean water sources, or degraded infrastructure. While the identity-based issues have motivated ethno-sectarian voters to vote for their patrons, the issues-based agenda have motivated the cross-sectarian and cross-ethnic voters to boycott the elections.

In other words, the reason why voter turnout has declined is the overwhelming failure of post-2003 governments to solve the above-mentioned problems. Another reason might be the retreat or withdrawal of religious and tribal leaders from intervening directly

in elections. These two reasons have a substantial impact on voter turnout. Aside from the impact of ethno-sectarian and political elites, there was the additional reason of why voters tend to value their ethno-sectarian identity at the expense of national identity. First, most Iraqi voters have suffered from both the brutal dictatorship of the Ba'ath Party in 1963 and then again from 1968 to 2003, and the daily terrorist attacks since 2003. Thus, they believe that the best way to prevent the recurrence of this tragedy is to vote for the candidates or leaders who provide them with security. Hence the prevalence of violence, assuming that all forms of violence might have electoral goals and objectives, has become a key instrument in mobilizing voters to vote for the incumbents. Therefore, one of the main objectives of participation in elections is to bring stability and security not promote democracy. It is worth noting here that one of the most noticeable observations in every elections season is the dramatic increase in the level of violence committed by terrorist groups.

While politicians who make promises regarding solving simple problems, such as electricity and clean drinking water, lack of schools, lack of housing, and sanitation systems, are generally not credible, they have been effective in maintaining the status quo. Their role alongside the tribal leaders has increased over time as the state's capacity decreased in solving many societal problems. Power over executing public policy has been decentralized, to some extent, in the hands of non-state actors such as tribal sheikhs and militia leaders.

## **1.9. Path-Dependent analysis and Voter Turnout in Iraq**

How do the above arguments relate to a critical juncture and path-dependent analysis? Central to the entire discipline of political science methodology is the concept of historical institutionalism. While this concept embodies a multitude of ideas, throughout this dissertation, the term ‘historical institutionalism’ is used, as we mentioned earlier, to refer to “the role of temporal phenomena in influencing the origin and change in institutions that govern political and economic relations.”(Fioretos et al., 2016, p. 19) Taking into our consideration the fact that Iraq doesn’t have strong political institutions and stable informal institutions, we argue that the causal mechanisms of institutional change and institutional transformations involves an increase in the informal institutions such as ethnicity, sectarianism and tribalism. For instance, the ethno-sectarian quota system that govern most of the formal institutions in post-2003 Iraq indicates that all state actors “abide by unwritten rules and allow informal institutions to flourish, either directly or indirectly.”(Tsai, 2016, p. 354) Therefore, recent trends in studying historical institutionalism have underlined the importance of the criteria of “formal institutions should not be analyzed in isolation from informal ones, and that informal institutions merit dedicated attention without presuming them to be pathological.”(Tsai, 2016, p. 353). Hence as Kellee S. Tsai points out that “informal institutions may be complementary, accommodating, competing, or substitutive vis-à-vis formal ones.”(Tsai, 2016, p. 345) Thus, it is important to bear in mind that the first elections in 2005 and the recent national elections in 2018 can be considered a turning point or “critical elections” in the democratization process in Iraq. The widespread use of the term “critical elections” is sometimes equated with the elections that create a path-dependent process that has a particularly striking outcome such as the decline of ethno-

sectarian discourse and religious leaders in mobilizing voters. This is evident in the case of enacting and enforcing new “public policies and distributions of political authority.” One of the greatest challenges in every “critical election” that we argue Iraq has experienced in 2005 and 2018, is that “winners get to impose their policy preferences on losers. Often, this means imposing arrangements to which losers must adjust even if their side wins future elections.”(Pierson, 2016, p. 171)

One of the most significant current discussions in studies of democratization is the impact and legacy of the old regime on the new government. For instance, in post-2003 Iraq, the legacy of patronage politics inherited from the old regime has been consolidated by the ethno-sectarian political order which has been built around the patron-client networks.

The CPA solidified ethno-sectarian boundaries by institutionalizing indigenous Iraqi social cleavages through establishing the first political body based on ethno-sectarian criteria, the Iraq Governing Council (IGC). The politicizing of these cleavages, therefore, has become a path-dependent process of managing the power relationship between Arab Kurds on the one side and between Sh<sup>c</sup>ia and Sunni on the other. The political system has rebuilt state-society relations based on patron-client networks instead of ideological loyalty. When there is a lack of ideological political parties and widespread citizen mistrust of current political movements, the relationship between voters and politicians will be built based on patronage linkages, not on political party and ideological linkages. To conclude, our main contribution is not just to explain not only patterns of voting behavior, but also to

examine the often neglected study of patronage politics and “patronage democracy” in the Middle East and North Africa post-authoritarian settings.

### **1.10. What is meant by Formal and Informal Institutions?**

There is a growing body of literature which recognizes the importance of the role of formal and informal institutions in studying voting behavior both as the dependent and independent variable. A primary concern of many scholars is how these institutions influence political outcomes and how these institutions emerge, evolve, work, function and ultimately change. The stages in an institution's life cycle can involve incremental changes which means moving gradually from one phase to another through a historical development process.

In 2007, Craig Parsons published a seminal study in political science methodology entitled, *How to Map Arguments in Political Science*, in which he defines institutions as “formal or informal rules, conventions or practices, together with the organizational manifestations these patterns of group behavior sometimes take on” (Parsons, 2007, p. 70). He states that, while in the field of social science, various definitions of institutions can be found, they all agree that in general, institutions involve an active interaction between a set of rules and human behavior to consider “why only some of the claims that invoke institutions do so in what can usefully be called an institutionalist way.”. Parsons’ definition of the institution is close to that of Douglass North (1990) who define institutions as “the rules of the game in a society or, more formally, are the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction.” (North, 1990a, p. 3)

Drawing upon this definition, North draws our attention to the important role of “structure incentives in human exchange, whether political, social, or economic.” He writes that, “institutional change shapes the way societies evolve through time and hence is the key to understanding historical change.” (North, 1990a, p. 3). While a variety of definitions of the term institutions have been suggested, this essay will use the definition suggested by Mahoney and Thelen, (2009) who define it as the “relatively enduring features of political and social life (rules, norms, procedures) that structure behavior and that cannot be changed easily or instantaneously.”(Streeck, Mahoney & Thelen, 2005, p. 4) Having defined what is meant by institutions, we will now move on to discuss historical institutionalism to enhance our understanding about the ways that institutions can be shaped and changed or/and even constrained by the choices of political actors.

Political research which explains and analyzes the historical development of particular political phenomena has a considerable impact on mapping research designs in political science, on the one hand, and improving our understanding about the role of a significant historical event in shaping the institutions, discourses, and policy priority, on the other. Linking the past to the present and future is one of the most common goals of political science research. In this process, understanding the interaction between human beings’ behavior, on the one hand and institutional setting, on the other, can be explained by political scientists within what is called historical institutionalism. Through taking major historical events seriously, the historical institutionalism paradigm can play an important role in addressing not only social science inquiry but enhancing our understanding of the study of institutional change through historical transformations and mutual influences among political actors, historically significant events and institutions in

making particular policy decisions. The first step in this study's historical institutionalist analysis was to determine that institutions involved in the research project should be understood as dependent or independent variables? or both dependent and independent variables.

In their ground-breaking article, "*The New Institutionalism: Organizational Factors in Political Life*," March and Olson (1984) highlight the importance of taking into account new actors in studying political and economic institutions. The authors note that the way of reducing institutions in most political theories to "arenas within which political behavior, driven by more fundamental factors, occurs" should be expanded across "the major actors in modern economic and political system"(March & Olsen, 1984, p. 734) Put differently, it is a widely held view that individual preferences have a significant impact on changing institutional features because institutions often establish rules and policies "to serve the interests of those with the bargaining power to devise new rules."(North, 1990, p. 16) The historical institutionalism approach has been better identified as "neither a particular theory nor a specific method. It is best understood as an approach to studying politics and social change." (Steinmo, 2008, p. 118) What is insightful in historical institutionalist analysis is that scholars can engage in explaining observable outcome without ruling out alternative explanations.

However, historical institutionalism also has a serious advantage in which "the emphasis on intermediate institutions that shape political strategies, the ways institutions structure relations of power among contending groups in society, and especially the focus on the process of politics and policy-making within given institutional parameters."(K. A.

Thelen, Longstreth, & Steinmo, 1992, p. 7) Therefore, historical institutionalism, in the way of defining institutions, encapsulates “the importance of institutions in shaping political behavior and outcomes”(Tsai, 2016, p. 340) Those institutions can be both formal organizations such as the Constitution laws and regulations that organize the bureaucratic structure of the state, and such as religion, ethnicity, corruption, violence, kinship, tribal affiliation, and even gangs. However, there is evidence to suggest that “informal institutions are part of every political system; their relationship with formal institutions is difficult to decipher. Predicting the effects of informal institutions becomes easier by classifying informal institutions with the help of typologies and by systematically thinking through their relationships with formal institutions.”(Lauth, 2015, p. 66)

Table 11 Formal and Informal Institutions

| <i>Categories</i>          | <i>Formal institutions</i>                               | <i>Informal institutions</i>                         |
|----------------------------|--|--|
| <i>Formally codified</i>   | Yes  | No   |
| <i>State sanctions</i>     | Yes  | No (social sanctions)                                |
| <i>Legitimation</i>        | Sovereignty of the people (democracy) or state authority | Self-creation (social acceptance)                    |
| <i>Modus of change</i>     | Action of political decision makers                      | Change of incentives / public discussions / by force |
| <i>Timing of change</i>    | Short-term   | Long-term (mostly)                                   |
| <i>Coordinating center</i> | Yes  | No (or seldom)                                       |

Adapted from: Lauth, H.-J. (2015). Formal and informal institutions. In J. Gandhi (Ed.), *Routledge handbook of comparative political institutions*. Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, NY: Routledge

This dissertation treats the regime change of 2003 as one of the most crucial critical junctures in modern Iraqi history. This change established many formal rules of games, such as the new constitution, electoral law and a new form of the national economy. At the same time, this change has stimulated the informal institutions to play a crucial role in shaping the future of the political process in the new Iraq. In the following sections, we will examine the impact of formal institutions such as the electoral system, the elections

management and the political parties on the outcomes of the electoral process. In the second part, we will highlight the role of informal institutions such as religion and social structure, that is, sectarianism and tribalism, in motivating the Iraqi voters to participate in elections and shaping the electoral process outcomes in Iraq since 2005 until today.

### **1.11. Plan of the Study**

The overall structure of the study takes the form of three parts and nine chapters. While part one encompasses the first chapter which presents the introduction of the dissertation, part two highlights the key theoretical and empirical perspectives about the relationship between trust in formal institutions and voter turnout. This part contains three theoretical chapters and one empirical chapter. These chapters discuss the issue of the electoral system and voter turnout, election supervisory body and voter turnout and, and political parties and voter turnout. The empirical chapter presents the quantitative analysis about the relationship between socioeconomic factors and voter turnout (Model 1), the relationship between trust in government institutions and voter turnout (Model 2), the relationship between trust in elections management body and voter turnout (Model 3), and the relationship between trust in political parties and voter turnout (Model 4)

The third part of this dissertation will enhance our understanding of how informal institutions particularly the role of religious leaders, ethnicity and religion, and electoral violence affect voter turnout in post-2003 elections. Generally speaking, it will empirically test the relationship between informal institutions and voter turnout. This part is divided into three chapters: The first covers the influence of religious leaders on voter turnout. The second tests the impact of ethnicity and sectarianism on voter turnout since the first

elections in 2005. The third will attempt to assess whether violence has an impact on voters' decisions.

To this end, we use qualitative data obtained from Law and Legislation Database,\* one of the largest online databases on Iraq that covered the period from 1918 to 2018. Regarding, the quantitative data, the research is based on four datasets, as mentioned earlier. We have merged these datasets in an effort to construct one dataset that covers the timeframe of the study from 2005 to 2018. This dataset will be used to test the hypothesis about the relationship between voter mobilizations and voter turnout in four foundlings national elections. We complement our analysis with descriptive statistics tables and charts from several surveys that have been conducted in Iraq from 2004 to 2018.

The empirical and theoretical findings of part are divided into two sections: first: the legislation legacy of the CPA regarding the electoral process, election administration, and party system are still present and influential on elections in Iraq, even with efforts made by the Iraq legislatures to abolish this legacy. This legacy, represented by the ethno-sectarian quota of governmental high positions, the formation of election supervisory body, proportional representation, single-member district, has become path-dependent and extremely difficult to change, in the short and medium run, in any substantial way. Second: there is a weak relationship between trust in institutions and voting in elections. A possible explanation for these results may be attributed to voter mobilization strategies. We argue that these strategies still stem from ethno-sectarian and tribal considerations which have had a more profound impact on elections since 2005 than formal institutions.

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\* [http://www.iraqld.iq/main\\_ld.aspx](http://www.iraqld.iq/main_ld.aspx)

The overall structure of part two takes the form of three chapters. We review some of the most important pre-election religious sermons or edicts (fatwā) delivered by Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Husseini al-Sistani. We found these sermons and religious edicts have had profound impact on the level of voter turnout since 2005. We then test this finding empirically by using survey data which offers support for this relationship.

The findings of this part of the study did not confirm quantitatively what many researchers have found, namely that there is a strong relationship between religion (Sunni vs. Shia) and voting in elections. It is instead found that that ethnicity (Arabs vs. Kurds) has more impact on voting decision-making process. We dropped the impact of tribal affiliations in mobilizing Iraqi voters because of a lack of quantitative data available that can be used to test this relationship.

In the concluding chapter, this dissertation addresses the implications of formal and informal institutions in shaping and predicting the outcome of future national elections in Iraq. We argue that the role of religious and ethnic leaders and underestimation of the influence of formal institutions such as the electoral law and political parties might be a crucial problem facing a future democratic transition in Iraq. Therefore, the rising influence of religious leaders and weakness of formal institutions can lead to reinforce the competitive authoritarian regime instead of consolidating an emerging democracy. The continuing decline in voter turnout since 2005 might imply that Iraq is heading toward a consolidated competitive authoritarian regime. One of the most significant and undeniably challenging problems facing the future of Iraqi governments is how to increase the level of voter turnout which ultimately increases the legitimacy of the post-2003 state-building

process in Iraq. Shortly, with a continuing dysfunctional political order, this might be extremely difficult. The goal of the study was to show how voter turnout determinants become a path-dependent process which impedes any attempt of cross-sectarian, cross-ethnic and even cross-tribal voting. This study expects to find that Iraqi society, generally, becomes deeply polarized during election seasons and afterwards.

In contrast to other theories of the relationship between group membership and voting, we show that Iraqi voters are more inclined to prefer candidates of their own ethnic group when casting their ballots. Those candidates should be one of the most trusted or those who maintain a close relationship to their ethnic, religious and tribal leaders or, in the best-case scenario, they might be their bosses and close friends. In other words, it becomes more difficult for independent candidates who enjoy cross-ethno-sectarian support to win the elections. This process can be a real threat to the future of democracy as well as the political and social stability in Iraq. The study contributes to our understanding of how voter turnout in Iraq has become limited, over time, to individual voters functioning as “obedient clients” who are part of patron-client networks. Several questions about voting behavior, patronage politics, clientelism, tribalism, and the rise of competitive authoritarianism in Iraq remain answered. This would be a fruitful area and highlight directions for future research.

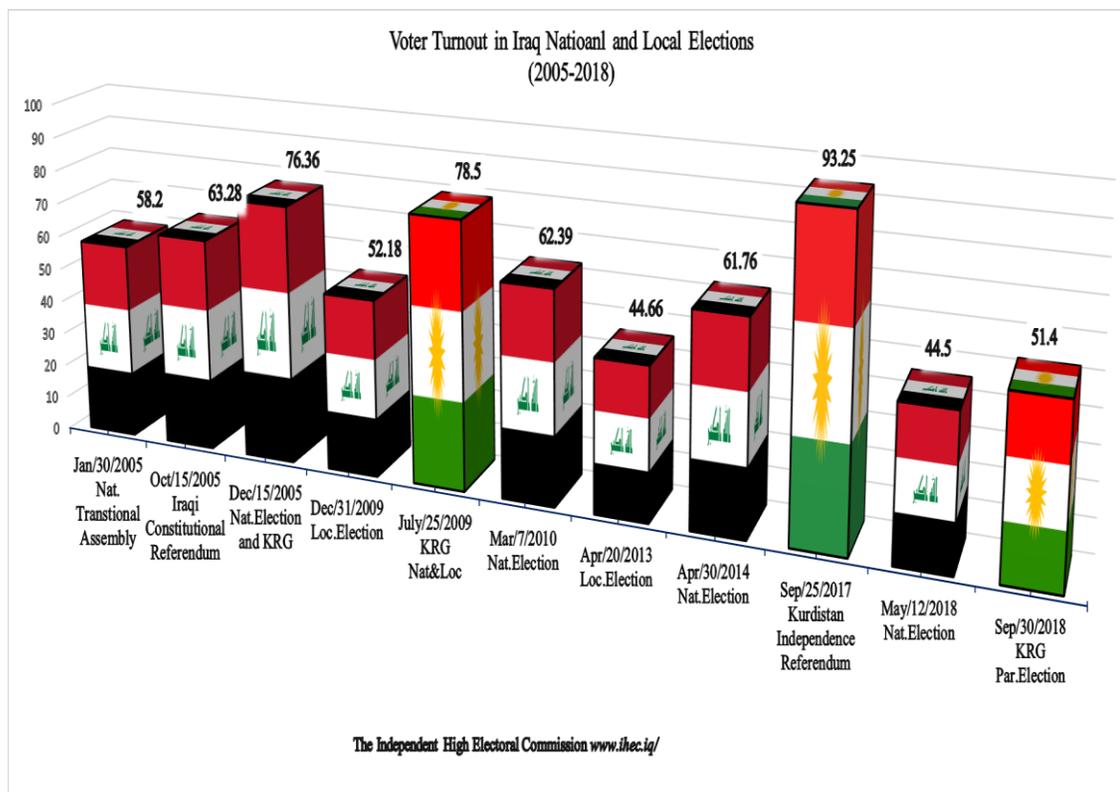


Figure 1.1.4 Iraqi National, Provincial and Kurdistan Region Elections 2005-2018

## 2. Formal Institutions and Voter Turnout

### 2.1 Introduction

In 2005, Iraq held three elections after the overthrow of Saddam Husayn's Ba'th Party regime by the American-led invasion and occupation starting on April 9, 2003. This invasion ended 35 years of one of the most brutal dictatorships in the World. The year of 2005 perceived perhaps as one of the most significant years in the democratization process in Iraq because three important elections were held. The first electoral process conducted in mid-January of 2005 elected 275 members to the Transitional Assembly (TA). These elections was boycotted by the entire Sunni community. The second one was a constitutional referendum held in mid-October 2005 after the hasty process of drafting and writing a new constitution within 3 months. The third one was the first national parliamentary elections since 1953 and elected 275 members for full-term parliament. This election was accompanied by elections of the local governing council in 18 provinces and elections of members of Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Parliament. In all these elections, Iraq adopted proportional representation system based on Iraq as a one-member district.

This system was designed by the American-led Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) headed by an American veteran diplomat, L. Paul Bremer III. This administration's policy was based on the consociational model of power-sharing theory that applied in post-conflict countries and sought to end the legacy of excluding particular religious, ethnic and sectarian groups from participating in power. According to this system, ethnic and national entities, political parties and individuals compete with each other to secure their share of

seats in the Iraqi Parliament. This Parliament in turn is responsible for electing the Prime Minister, the President of the Republic and the Speaker. While the constitution and the electoral system do not specify clearly that every one of these posts should be held by ethnic and sectarian representatives, the informal rules, legacy of authoritarian rule and foreign influence have shaped and determined the way that these posts are divided among the three main ethnoconfessional segments of Iraqi society (Sunni, Shia, Kurds).

In, the third national elections of 2014, Iraq applied a new electoral formula which was used to translate votes into seats. This formula which is called Sainte-Laguë was developed by using “a highest quotient method for allocating seats in party-list proportional representation used in many voting systems. It is named in Europe after the French mathematician André Sainte-Laguë and in United States after statesman and senator Daniel Webster.”(wikipedia, 2019) In Iraq, this formula has been amended to meet the interest of incumbents. According the Iraqi electoral system, the size of the constituency is based on Iraq’s as one-member district. The ballot structure follows the list system which composed the closed list for political parties and open lists for the candidates. The electoral system in Iraq changed from a one-member district in the elections of 2005 to a mixed-member district with every province as a district receiving an estimated member of seats based on its population size. Every seat in parliament is equivalent to 100,000 Iraqi citizens. (Article 49, Iraq Constitution 2005)

The proportional relationship between votes and seats is the current method used by the electoral commission to assign seats to the winners. In the first parliamentary elections, the member of parliament votes for the President of the Republic, a ceremonial

position which informally given to the Kurds, the second largest ethnic group in Iraq. In this session, legislators vote to choose the Speaker, who is perceived as less important than the prime minister and normally is given to the Sunni community, the second largest ethnoconfessional group in Iraq. The parliamentarians also vote for the appointment of the candidate of the largest parliamentary bloc to form a government in a maximum of 30 days (Article 76, Iraq Constitution 2005). According to the informal post-2003 power-sharing agreement, this post, which is the most important and influential post in the Iraqi parliamentary system, must be given to the Shi'a, the largest ethnoconfessional group in Iraq. Party leaders must decide upon all these appointments prior to the first session, normally involving intensive negotiations which can take months after the election results are announced.

In other words, these positions have been distributed customarily and informally along ethno-religious lines as follows: the prime minister's office must be held by a Shi'a Muslim, the majority population in the middle and southern part of Iraq, the presidency must be held by a Kurd, drawn from the ethnic minority dominating the 3 northeastern provinces of Iraq. Last but not least, the speakership of the parliament must be filled by a Sunni Muslim, drawn from the religious sect which dominates the middle and western provinces of Iraq.

Over the sixteen years of their new political system, the ethno-religious, moderate and secular political parties have dominated Iraqi politics. Iraq witnessed two of the most vicious and devastating civil wars in its recent history. The first one occurred between 2005-2007 and the second between 2014-2017. It also held four national elections (2005,

2010, 2014, and 2018) and three provincial elections (2005, 2009 and 2013). While the first provincial elections in 2005 were combined with national elections, the other two elections were held separately in 2009 and 2013. The turnout was (51.18%) and (44.66%) respectively. The same electoral system and procedures that applied in the national elections were applied in the provincial elections.

In the 2018 national parliamentary elections, voter turnout dropped significantly from 79.36% in 2005 to 44.5%. These elections were followed by dramatic violence, exemplified in the burning of the ballot warehouse in Baghdad. Commenting on this incident parliament speaker Salim al-Jabouri said “The crime of burning ballot box storage warehouses in the Rusafa area is a deliberate act, a planned crime, aimed at hiding instances of fraud and manipulation of votes, lying to the Iraqi people and changing their will and choices,”.(Aljazeera, 10 Jun 2018 2018) In this study, as far as the formal institutions are concerned, we focus on three crucial formal institutions which have had a significant impact on generating government institutions to make the system function effectively. These institutions are the electoral system, the elections management body, and the political parties. These three major areas have been instrumental in our understanding of the procedures of forming a new government and drawing new policies that impact significantly security, economic development, internal problems, and foreign relations. The impact of formal institutions on voter turnout which has been addressed in the following pages of this dissertation will be divided into four themed chapters.

The first chapter deals with the impact of the electoral system on voter turnout. The second addresses the influence of the elections supervisory body and the electoral

administration upon voter turnout. The third will be devoted to the role of political parties in mobilizing Iraqi voters to turn out and participate in the national elections. The fourth chapter tests empirically the impact of trust on government institutions, the elections supervisory body and political parties upon voter turnout. It will also present descriptive statistics on some important demographic variables such as age, gender, income, and marital status. The binary logistic regression will be utilized.excellent

## **2.2 Electoral System and Voter Turnout**

In voting behavior and voter turnout literature, scholars have been arguing that one of the basic approaches in explaining voter turnout volatility is using formal and informal institutions as an independent variable. The formal institutions can be understood here as sets of rules which have been codified in constitutions, laws, and regulations. A useful example of these institutions is the electoral system that widely proved to have had an essential impact on shaping voting behavior. Thus, there is a consensus among scholars who have scrutinized the process of democratization and voting behavior that trust in the electoral system has a significant impact on either decreasing or increasing citizens' participation in elections.

Questions have been raised about the fairness of Iraq's electoral system and the decline of voter turnout in the elections of 2018. This chapter presents an answer to these questions which is mainly concerned with the impact of the electoral system on voters' decision-making process. Generally speaking, the electoral process in post-2003 Iraq has been built on mobilizing Iraqis to cast their ballot in every national election based on their ethnic, sectarian and tribal affiliations. Thus, this chapter argues that the general lines of

the current electoral system which were inherited from the CPA were designed carefully to maintain the status quo and to serve the self-interest of the incumbents and large political blocs and coalitions.

Voter turnout can be defined numerically as the number of eligible voters who cast their votes on election day. One of the primary challenges researchers have is how to measure and evaluate the motivations which drive citizens to participate in elections. However, a major problem with defining the term voter turnout are the multiple answers to the following question: “Did one take the ratio of the number of voters to the entire population, to the population of voting age, to the eligible population or to the number of people registered to vote?”(Geys, 2006, p. 638) Intuitively, the term “voter turnout” is generally understood to mean the level of conventional political participation which is voting and that will be used to describe this phenomenon in this dissertation. This term is also closely related to citizens’ satisfaction and the level of trust in the incumbents. For instance, the level of turnout is likely to be high or at least moderate when the level of government performance, citizens’ satisfaction, and trust in government is also perceived to be high or moderate and vice versa.

Many scholars hold the view that voter turnout as a central concept to study voting behavior and democracy can be defined easily by the number of eligible voters who participate in an election, but it is very complicated to measure. This complexity usually relates to particular cultural, social, economic and political characteristics of every polity in the world. Hence, voter turnout level can play an important role in addressing the issue of measuring the health of the electoral process and civic participation. No single electoral

system can be applied to all countries. Every country has its historical, institutional and cultural circumstances and considerations that need to be taken into account when designing its electoral system. Generally speaking, the efforts of the national and international community to promote elections and democracy should aim to ensure equal rights for all voters and the ability to run for the legislature and executive power to all citizens without any discrimination, based on color, religion, sex, economic status and other variables.

In most emerging and well-established democracies, voter turnout has been calculated by dividing the correct number votes in the ballots by eligible and registered voters above 18 years old. Because of the lack of accurate census data, voter turnout in Iraq is obtained by dividing the numbers of correct and non-correct votes by the number of registered voters and non-registered voters of the entire population, without excluding the invalid voting. Lacking detailed information about Iraqi voters and lacking census data, Iraq has relied on the data which had been generated and updated by the Ministry of Trade to distribute food subsidies during the economic sanctions to organize and generate voters' records.

Thus, the method used to calculate the voter turnout rate in Iraq is applied through dividing the numbers of valid and invalid votes by the entire eligible registered and non-registered voters who are above 18 years by the number of those who do vote on election day. Regarding the electoral system, Iraq has employed the proportional representation system in four election cycles: 2005, 2010, 2014, and 2018. This system has created a path-dependent effect which leads to, in one way or another, increasing the electoral failure

according to the Perceptions of Electoral Integrity Project. This project has evaluated Iraq's electoral system by asking a group of elections experts who are familiar with the electoral process in Iraq since 2005.

While there are many questions regarding district boundaries, electoral authorities, voter registration, campaign financing, voter intimidation and media coverage, the question regarding the electoral system consists of three parts. These parts are: "electoral laws were unfair to smaller parties, electoral laws favored the governing party or parties, elections laws restricted citizens' rights." (Norris, 2018, p. 34) In the Iraq context, the impact of electoral system was evaluated by the experts more negatively with scores of 33%

Do elections in Iraq meet the minimum international standards for a fair and free election? According to the recent Election Perception Index published in March 2018, the elections in Iraq are still not free and achieved very low overall scores; 38 %. The graph below illustrates a number of variables that have been measured by the Elections Integrity Project in Iraq in comparison to the Global score. As can be seen, Iraq achieves very low scores in most of these indicators which measure electoral integrity worldwide.

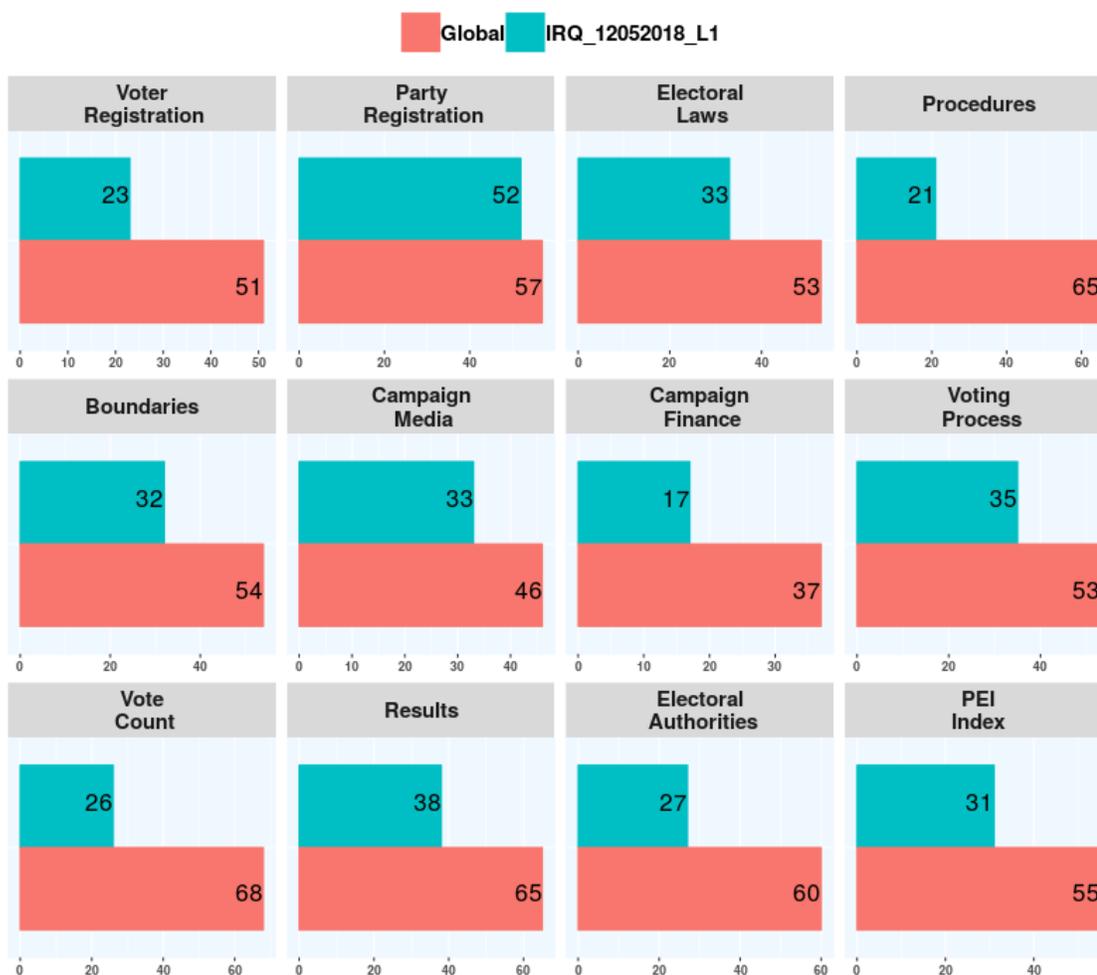


Figure 2.1 Electoral Integrity in Iraq 1 \*

The Electoral Integrity Project has been conducted cross-nationally by a team of researchers led by Harvard Professor Pippa Norris. This team interviewed independent elections experts from all over the world. It has been constructed face to face “to provide a comprehensive, systematic and reliable way to monitor the quality of elections worldwide.” The 3,253 elections experts drawn from countries all over the world were asked to evaluate elections in 164 countries. The questionnaire consists of “49 indicators, grouped into

\* Norris, Pippa, Thomas Wynter and Sarah Cameron. 2018. The expert survey of Perceptions of Electoral Integrity, Release 6.0, (PEI\_6.0), March 2018: [www.electoralintegrityproject.com](http://www.electoralintegrityproject.com).

eleven categories reflecting the whole electoral cycle”. The answer to these close-ended questions are on a scale from strongly disagrees to strongly agree on scale of 100 points.

In this expert survey, the respondents were asked “to assess the quality of national elections in eleven sub-dimensions: electoral laws; electoral procedures; district boundaries; voter registration; party registration; media coverage; campaign finance; voting process; vote count; results; and electoral authorities”<sup>†</sup> Regarding the electoral process in Iraq, the most surprising aspect of the data, as shown in the above graph, is the low score of voting procedures (21%), voter registration (23%), campaign financing (17%) and vote count (26%). These results, which represent the overall culmination of experts’ response to the survey, provide strong evidence that elections in Iraq are not fair and free. Considering all of this evidence, it seems that the problem lies in both Iraq’s constitutional framework and electoral system, that is, the formal rules of game. A full discussion of these criteria and indicators lies beyond the scope of this study. In conclusion, one of the more significant findings to emerge from this study is to confirm that elections in Iraq are not free and that there is a general trend towards undermining the democratization process instead of consolidating the emerging democracy in Iraq.

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<sup>†</sup> (<https://www.electoralintegrityproject.com/>)



the legitimacy of the text itself. Nevertheless, the referendum results indicate that most Iraqis are willing to adopt the text if it means a step on the road towards normality and, above all, stability.” (Jabar, 2005., p. 6)

In the same vein, the electoral system including the district magnitude and electoral formula was drafted hastily with no understanding of or concern for the complexity of Iraqi society. This system was originally drafted by the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) in cooperation with the United Nations electoral assistance team, as we shall see in the next section. It has also contained or encapsulated all the complexity of the constitution drafting process. As Nussaibah Younis has noted, the electoral system and constitutional framework in post-invasion Iraq was set-up to fail and “the future of Iraqi politics depends significantly on the ability of its politicians to make the necessary changes to the Electoral Law and Constitution.”(Younis, 2011, p. 18) At the time of this writing, the electoral system is one of the most problematic and contested topics in Iraqi politics, and there are increasing public demands for changing and reforming this system.

However, more research on this topic needs to be undertaken empirically, in the Iraqi context, to investigate the impact of the electoral system on the transition process from dictatorship to democracy. Carles Boix’s article “Setting the Rule of The Game: The Choice of Electoral Systems in Advanced Democracies,” provides a valuable and generalizable insight into the impact of the electoral system on voter turnout. After Boix studied the history of the electoral system in industrial countries, he noted that, “As long as the electoral arena does not change and the current electoral regime benefits the ruling parties, the electoral system is not altered. As the electoral arena changes (due to the entry

of new voters or a change in voters' preferences), the ruling parties modify the electoral system, depending on the emergence of new parties and the coordinating capacities of the old parties.” (Boix, 1999, p. 609)

Thus, the proportional representation (PR) system that applied in Iraq and other post-conflict countries has been manipulated to serve the self-interest of the incumbents and newly emerging political parties by forcing voters to vote for party and candidate at the same time. One of the greatest challenges in emerging democracies is determined by the effects of electoral systems. Many scholars hold the view that the proportional representation (PR) system fosters voter turnout. This was the case, for instance, in New Zealand, after applying the PR system for the first time in 1993. Researchers who study the relationship between voter turnout and the PR system in New Zealand have found that in the “first election held under PR, voters who were on the extreme left were significantly more likely to participate than previously, leading to an overall increase in turnout.” (Karp & Banducci, 1999, p. 363) In the same vein, Henry Milner in his effort to answer the question “Does Proportional Representation Boost Turnout” demonstrates that the type of electoral system does not seem to affect voters indirectly. He notes that one of the most determinants of voter turnout is the level of political knowledge. Milner points out that, “...knowledge had nearly four times the impact in boosting voter turnout in the younger and less educated population than among older and more educated eligible voters” (Milner, 2009, p. 1).

Other scholars have found that the PR system has no significant impact on voter turnout because the level of turnout can be determined more by the level of civic

participation than the electoral system. They indicate that, "...the effect of proportional representation and multiple parties in reducing the net benefit that any one party could expect from increased turnout"(Kohler & Rose, 2008, p. 3) Defending the class interests is one of the most driving forces behind the development of proportional representations system. (Rokkan, 1970; Boix, 1999; Cusack, Iversen, & Soskice, 2007) This can lead to a significant increase in income inequality and the gap between rich and poor. Thus, they did not find a direct relationship between the electoral system and, in particular, Proportional Representation and voter turnout. They note that, "...in countries where the right was divided by religious and other non-economic cleavages, and unable to coordinate, they chose proportional representation as a defensive move to prevent electoral elimination by a rising left." (Cusack, Iversen, & Soskice, 2007, p. 373)

The open-list proportional representation system has been found to impact voter turnout more than the closed-list system by one to two percentage points. Using population size as a control variable within the context of Spanish local elections, Carlos Sanz (2016) found that "...open-list systems, which introduce competition both across and within parties, are conducive to greater voter turnout" (Sanz, 2016, p. 5). To date, there is a consensus among comparative politics and electoral system experts that the high turnout is linked to the PR system which uses an open-list system. Scholars also indicate many disadvantages of this system such as "...weak geographic representation, much power given to political parties, accountability issues, [which] can lead to the inclusion of extremist parties, [and] inability to throw a party out of power" (Reynolds, Reilly, & Ellis, 2005, p. 119).

Nevertheless, there is abundant evidence to suggest that, “electoral systems have a direct, proximate impact on turnout rather than simply an indirect effect. It may be that what encourages electoral participation is not the degree of disproportionality but the mere fact that voters have an electoral procedure that assures some proportionality between votes and seats. This suggests that it is the ‘symbolic effects’ of electoral systems rather than either their consequences for seat-vote relationships or the number of parties, that matter to potential voters. PR does foster higher turnout.”(Blais & Carty, 1990, p. 179)

It has also been reported that the level of voter turnout is influenced primarily by exogenous factors, particularly among marginal voters. Some of these factors are the weather on election day, religious and national holidays, the level of citizens’ satisfaction with the government’s performance and with democracy in general, social capital and citizens’ participation, and community and religious festivals. (Rokkan, 1970; Fowler, 2013; Bol, Blais, Gillard, Nunez Lopez, & Pilet, 2018) In emerging democracies, the electoral system offers important insights into how the process of democratic transition developed to create a more effective governmental structure.

Many analysts now argue that the electoral system is one of the most important prerequisites of the prosperous polity. Jørgen Elklit (1999), for example, overlooks several important factors that affect the relationship between the electoral system and institutional change in new democracies. He focused on first and second elections in emerging democracies and found that “...that the electoral system is a crucial factor behind the unsatisfactory course of the democratization” (Elklit, 1999, p. 28). He was also able to directly show that, “The electoral institutions matter for the democratization process and

so does electoral institutional change, be it an improvement or the opposite... It is within the context of the preconditions stated above that the various elements of the electoral institution matter, and that includes a truly independent and impartial electoral commission, the character of the seat allocation system, and the registration rules and their implementation.”(Elklit, 1999, pp. 47–48)

In the following sections, we trace the evolving of the electoral system in Iraq since 2003 and its impact on voter turnout. We believe that the electoral system represents the cornerstone of the rules of games in post-2003 Iraq and we assume that it has a significant influence in encouraging or discouraging informative voters to participate in elections.

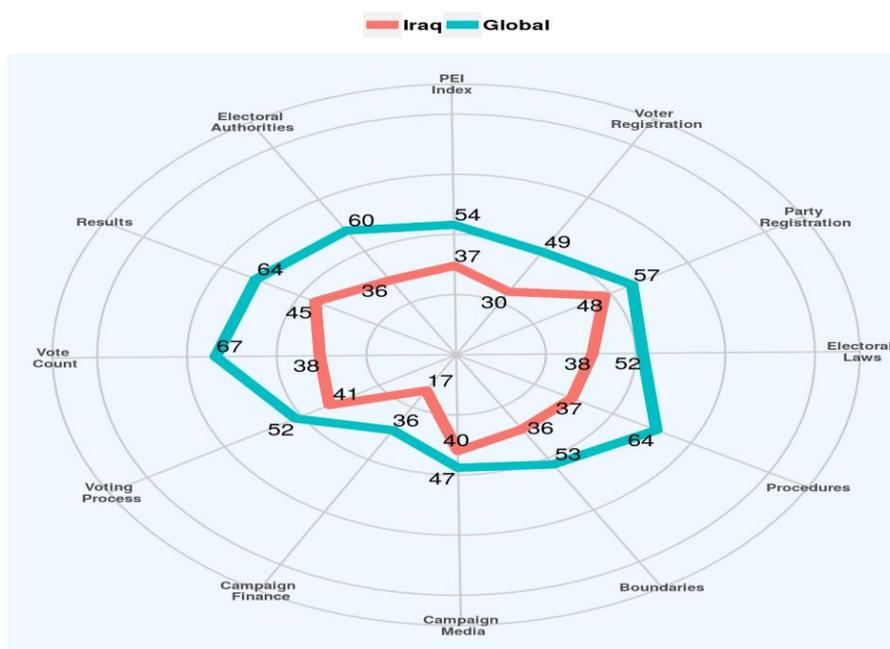


Figure 2.3 Elections Integrity in Iraq 2 ‡

‡ Norris, Pippa, Thomas Wynter and Sarah Cameron. 2018. The expert survey of Perceptions of Electoral Integrity, Release 6.0, (PEI\_6.0), March 2018: [www.electoralintegrityproject.com](http://www.electoralintegrityproject.com).

### **2.3 The CPA Executive Order (96) in 2004 and the First Electoral System in Iraq**

Electoral systems have emerged as powerful arenas for studying new democracies. Evidence suggests that designing and adopting a new electoral system is among the most important factors for influencing “the success of political reform because they are among the principal institutional structures that mediate between popular demands and policy outcomes” (Birch, 2003, p. 4). Thus, the electoral system is a cornerstone of building a functioning state and government. (Farrell & Carter, 2010, Colomer 2004; Norris 2004; Sartori 1997) Farrell and Carter, (2010) studied the relationship between the electoral system and election management and found that, “the influence of historical colonial links is very evident if we glance at countries around the world: over half of the former British colonies use SMP; over a third of the former French colonies use runoff systems, and a further 20 percent use a list system, and two thirds of Spain’s former colonies also use list PR.”(Farrell & Carter, 2010, p. 34)

As far as the Iraqi electoral system is concerned, it is worth noting that the electoral system and democratic institutions, such parties, media, and the state bureaucracy, were initially designed and imposed by the United States through the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). After fourteen months of the American invasion and occupation of Iraq, the CPA decided to hand over political power to the Iraqis. On June 2004, the CPA took the first step by cooperating with United Nations Electoral Assistance Division (UNEAD) and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) to establish and appoint the members of Independent Electoral Mission in Iraq, alongside enacting Executive Order 96

which issued by the CPA and implied detailed guidance on how to establish the first steps toward democratization process.

A number of unelected Iraqi exiles cooperated with the CPA and the UN in developing the “road map” to democratization. This road map determined the general lines of the electoral and party system in post-2003 Iraq. Nevertheless, the post-authoritarian electoral system in Iraq was built on the set of the premises. One of the most important pillars of this system is derived from Iraq being a multi-ethnic and multi-sectarian society. On June 15, 2004, Carina Perelli director of the UN’s Electoral Assistance Division and non-voting member in the Iraq Independent Electoral Commission, in cooperation with Jeff Fisher an international elections expert who provided advices and supports to developing the first electoral system in post-2003 Iraq submitted a recommendation to the Coalition Provisional Authority Administrator L. Paul Bremer. In this recommendation, they suggested that Iraq should be treated as “a single electoral constituency, with seats allocated through proportional representation (PR) based on national lists.” (Rubin, 2004) They argue that, “Treating all of Iraq as one district bypasses questions of internal boundaries and simplifies ballots.” This assumption has been criticized by Michael Rubin He insisted that this system would create many problems for parliamentary elections and the formation of new governments in Iraq because “under a PR system, parliamentarians are not tied to a specific district, but rather to a party list. Instead of being responsible to a town’s voters, representatives will be loyal to party leaders.” (Rubin, 2004)

However, the decision by the US and United Nation Elections experts to adopt a PR system in Iraq as an ethno-sectarian-conflict and war-torn country has been vigorously

challenged by several facts. One of them is that Iraq never experienced an ethno-sectarian conflict even under the Saddam brutal dictatorship. Iraq had never experienced ethnic or racial violence between Kurds and Arabs or sectarian violence between Sunni and Shia. Hence, what applies to post-conflict countries cannot necessarily be applied in post-dictatorship countries.

Electoral Law 96 was issued based on Article Two of Iraqi interim constitution or Transitional Administrative Law (TAL). The drafters of this document were a group of Iraqi exiles who were headed by CPA Administrator, L. Paul Bremer III. Part IV, Article (57B) of the Interim Constitution identified fixed dates for three democratic elections in one year which could not be modified or delayed. The goal of the elections was to choose the Interim National Assembly, drafting and ratifying the new permanent constitution, and holding a first national election in post-authoritarian Iraq. It also specified the number of members of the first Parliament as 275, and defined the female quota and the minority rights of fair representation and the procedures for replacing, due to dismissal or death, of any member of the new parliament. It also determined the voting age as 18 and the right of every Iraqi without exclusion to participate as a voter or candidate in fair and free elections every four years. In general, this electoral law specified that the elections should be direct and by secret ballot. This meant that the 275 members of parliament were to be elected by periodic direct election and secret ballot.

It might have been reasonable, in 2005, to treat Iraq as one-district because there was no census data which could have been used to divide Iraq into multi-member districts. Iraq's last census in 1987 did not include a question on sectarian or ethnic affiliation, and

it was extremely politicized to meet the Bacth Party dictatorship's needs for security surveillance and societal Bathification. While hypothetically, the solution to most of the Iraqi problems would be to organize a new census, this is now one of the most problematic and contentious issues in Iraqi politics.

To date, the incumbents and the political elites believe that the process of conducting a new census is a real threat to their power. Thus, they have put much effort into canceling or delaying any general census in post-2003 Iraq. Their arguments are based on allegations that the new census results will lead to the eruption of a new civil war because of many inherited unsolved problems, such the disputed territories between Arabs and Kurds in the North, specifically in the oil-rich areas in Kirkuk and north of the Nineveh and Mosul governorates' boundaries. In addition, the entire ethno-sectarian post-2003 political order would need to be changed. In short, Iraq would face serious political difficulties if a new census were conducted. Given that Iraq is a multi-ethnic and multi-sectarian society, the (96) order adopted a proportional representation electoral system to ensure that all the sectarian and ethnic groups are represented in the parliament.

The method of counting votes and distributing seats was specified based on the highest average method or significant residual of the rate of voting. This method worked as follows. After dividing the total number of votes by the total number of seats to specify how many votes every candidate should secure to win. In the second step, divide the total number of correct votes for every list by the number of votes allocated for every seat. The final step decided how many seats go to every list based on the number of votes. This law gives the party or list leaders the freedom to rank candidates based on their self-interest,

personal relationships and loyalty level to the party leaders, on the condition that every list should contain (25%) of women.

The overall structure of this system takes into account that Iraq is a “post-conflict country” and this system “best achieves the goals of inclusiveness and equity that are so important in such contexts.” (Fisher, 2008). Fisher, one of the leading American experts on the electoral system in post-conflict countries and participated effectively in proposing and drafting this law argued that “In post-conflict environments, such a system has the advantage of enticing former combatants and violent rivals to participate in elections because the bar for obtaining representation is fairly low.” (Fisher, 2008)

The interim Iraq constitution called the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL), the core document that expanded later into to the Iraqi new permanent constitution in 2005 accentuated adoption of the PR system. The first Iraqi Independent Electoral Commission had been chosen to represent all segments of Iraqi society such as Sunni, Shia, Kurds and the Christian minority in Iraq. The criterion of appointing the first electoral council was the same that was used in appointing the first ethno-sectarian Iraqi Governing Council. These principles were shaped by the UN and CPA based ethno-sectarian and ethno-religion. According to Farid Ayar, one of the first electoral commission representatives of the Christian minority, states that the CPA appointed nine members as the cornerstone of the institution that is supposed to be responsible for building a new democratic regime in Iraq; three Shias (two men and one woman), two Sunnis (Turkman and one man), two Kurds and one Christian. The selection process was designed carefully to represent the

segments of Iraqi society based on the ethno-sectarian quota not on the merit system. (ĀYĀR,2018, p. 43)

In his efforts to handover the power to the Iraqis, in the mid of 2004, Ambassador Bremer, issued two important executive orders: the first order number (92) entitled “The Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq” was issued on May31,2004. The second order issued on June 3, 2004, appointed the members of the independent electoral commission. According to these orders, the members of the electoral commission should work to implement the duties that were specified in the CPA executive orders number (97) and (92) that established the electoral system and political parties and entities.

According to these orders which aimed to establish a democratic government in Iraq, Iraqi citizens have the right to form parties and political entities and to join electoral lists to run in the elections. Regarding the electoral system Executive Order 92, this order encompassed many electoral procedures which are still in force today, such as the voting age, the procedure of forming political parties and political coalitions by submitting a list which includes the signatures of 500 qualified citizens aged 18 years and older. The order places no limit on the number of political parties. Therefore, over the last four elections cycles, hundreds of political parties and coalitions and individuals have participated in the elections for electoral purposes and then disappeared after they lost the elections.

There is no doubt that the legacy of the US invasion and occupation of Iraq have created some path-dependent processes. These processes have adversely affected elections in Iraq. For instance, the root of the electoral law and De-Bathification which were enacted by the CPA and have not been terminated, and have been salient issues in every elections

cycle since 2004. In 2008, Blais et al. reported an empirical and conceptual finding that demonstrate that “One-round voting and Two-round voting generate significant path dependent effects” (p.2)

As mentioned earlier, in the transitional and first national elections (January and December, 2005), the CPA laid out the first electoral system by adopting a proportional representation system (PR), and using a closed list and a single member district. This system was amended by the Iraqi parliament in 2009 to become a mixed electoral law (proportional representation system) and majoritarian voting, open-list ballot, and single-member district. This system is a combination of proportional representation and the majority or plurality system that allows any candidate to run in elections in any of 18 Iraqi provinces. In the transitional and first national elections in 2005, Iraqis voted in closed list ballots in which each party had a specific number and symbol. This system changed in the second national elections of 2010 to open-list ballots in which voters were required to choose the party or coalition’s number and then check the number of their preferred candidate. According to this electoral law, which is still used today, Iraq has been treated as a single-member district.

Iraq’s permanent constitution inadequately specified the right to vote and run for office by insisting that all “Iraqi citizens, men, and women, shall have the right to participate in public affairs and to enjoy political rights including the right to vote, elect, and run for office.” Article (20). It also includes an article that specified the number of parliament seats to be linked proportionately to the entire population “at a ratio of one seat per 100,000 Iraqi persons representing the entire Iraqi people.” Article (49). However, this

article becomes cannot be enforced because of two reasons. First, there has been no census since 1988 which shows the current number of people eligible to vote. Second, this article has added a new financial burdens to the Iraqi federal budget since 2005. For instance, while the number of parliamentary seats in the first election cycle in 2005 was 275 seats, this number increased dependent upon the population estimate of 329 seats in the 2018 national elections. It is worth noting here that the closest approximations of the Iraqi population, according to the Ministry of Planning/Central Statistical Bureau is 38,124,182. That means we have over 6 million Iraqis who are not represented constitutionally in the current parliament.

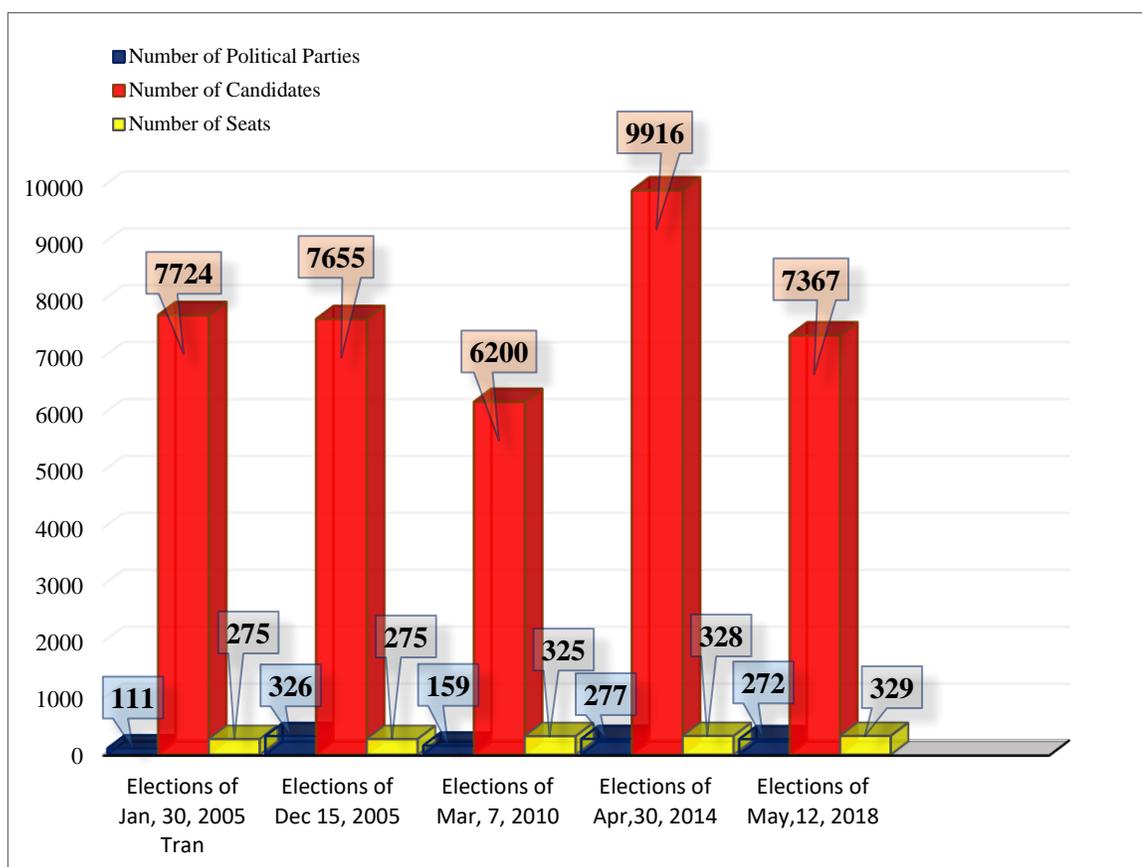


Figure 2.4 Number of Candidates, Seats and Political Parties (2005-2018)<sup>§</sup>

<sup>§</sup> Iraqi Independent High Electoral Commission [www.ihec.iq/](http://www.ihec.iq/)

Clearly, the electoral system plays a crucial role in pre- elections in mobilizing voters and post-elections in facilitating the government formations process. It is not only useful in translating the votes into the seats of the parliament but also in regulating and facilitating the process of government formation. There is no doubt that the electoral systems have an important role in influencing voters' choices. Accordingly, in any representative political system, legislators have proposed and even passed electoral laws which might best serve their self-interest and provide the basic and essential guarantees to represent the will of voters. Hence, many social and legal foundations should be taken into consideration in the process of designing the electoral system. A full discussion of these foundations, in the Iraqi context, lies beyond the scope of this study.

Although differences of opinion still exist, there appears to be some agreement that employing proportional representation (PR) with multi-member districts will lead to increase the voter turnout level. This is because the PR system enforces the criteria of transparency, which is evident to all voters, candidates, and parties participating in elections based on inclusiveness and justice without exclusion and other necessary conditions for building legitimate democracy. The critical issue with this and other electoral systems is that they must work in organizing fair and free elections and give all participants an equal chance to win the elections. With the complexity of the Iraq case, the solid legal framework of political participation that is supposed to be framed and addressed through the country's electoral law is still one of the most challenging topics in Iraqi politics today and it is an ongoing process.

Scholars have agreed that both turnout and absenteeism can be considered an effective way to operationalize the concept of political participation. They have also agreed that electoral laws and procedures have important implications for increasing and decreasing the level of voter turnout. For instance, there is ample evidence that suggests that countries that adopted a proportional representation electoral system have experienced “higher turnout rates” (Andre Blais & Carty, 1990, p. 167). (André Blais & Aarts, 2006).

Nevertheless, previous studies have succeeded to show that the main advantage of the PR electoral system is that it works on reducing “the proportion of votes that are wasted, giving voters a stronger incentive to participate and parties a stronger incentive to mobilize voters.” (Karp & Banducci, 1999, p. 363)

Arend Lijphart, one of the leading scholars of the field of comparative politics, elections and voting systems, studied in detail the electoral systems such as majoritarian, plurality and proportional representation. He argued that “the typical electoral system of majoritarian democracy is the single-member district plurality or majority system; consensus democracy typically uses proportional representation” (Lijphart, 2012, p. 143) The author argues that a well-crafted electoral system which meets the needs of the society and represents all the people equally is a necessary condition for political stability. However, one of the most objective means of enhancing or consolidating democracy and elections is formulating electoral laws and procedures to achieve electoral justice. The latter can be achieved by translating the votes into the seats in the parliament.

## **2.4 The First Amendment of the Electoral System and the Elections of 2005**

As we noted in the previous section, Iraq's interim constitution specified three important democratic processes which needed to occur in 2005. The first was electing the transitional national assembly in January 2005. One of the main objectives of this assembly was appointing a constitutional committee which would be responsible for drafting a new constitution and submitting it to a general referendum on October 15, 2005. This was the second democratic process. The third was holding the first national elections on December 15, 2005, based on a PR system enacted by the CPA Executive Order 96. This election led to the creation of the first full-term Iraqi parliament.

However, the first transitional elections in January 2005, held according to the CPA electoral system, witnessed the complete boycott by Sunni who considered that any democratic practice held under the direct military and the occupation by the United States was illegitimate. Thus, the transitional assembly was composed of Shi'a and Kurds and some secularists. In the early days after this election, the constitutional committee was formed only by Shi'a and Kurds. After direct intervention by the UN and long negotiations, Sunni representatives were convinced to join the constitutional committee in May 2005.

On May 10, 2005, the Transitional Assembly passed a new electoral system which abolished or, more accurately, amended Executive Order 96 of Iraq's electoral system. This new electoral system addresses issues related to voting age (18), voter eligibility, and the day elections would be held. This law was legislated and published in *Alwaqae Aliraqia* (the official gazette of the Republic of Iraq) under the number (16). The main reason for

adopting this law was to shift from treating Iraq as a single-member district to a multi-member district to ensure fair representation for all the Iraqi people. This new shift was not based on population numbers but on the number of Iraqi provinces or governorates (18). It was enacted based on the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL). The system confirmed the following:

1. The House of Representatives or Chamber of Deputies consists of 275 seats. Each deputy represents 100,000 Iraqi citizens. According to this law, Iraq. The entire 18 Iraqi provinces, according to this law, has become a single constituency. This means if a Kurdish person lives in south, midst or west of Iraq the vast majority of Arabs lives, he/she can vote for his/her preferred candidate from the North of Iraq and vice versa. The same can be applied to any citizens who lives in particular province and wants to vote for his/her preferred candidate from other province. This is the same rule that is applied by the CPA executive order number (96)2- The candidate for the House of Representatives is required to be a full- Iraqi citizen
2. Everything related to the definition of the eligible voter and candidate and procedural issues related to the elections will be regulated later by a parliament-appointed elections commission
3. Re-emphasis on quota representation of women in the Iraqi parliament.
4. The need for enacting new legislation which governs the mechanism of replacing and dismissing the members of Parliament.

5. Emphasis on the illegality of combining the membership of the House of Representatives and any other full-time employment.

However, one of the most significant contributions of the new electoral system was to divide Iraq into (18) electoral districts instead of a single-member district. This division is based on two criteria: first, every governance is treated as an electoral district; second, the number of seats is not fixed, and it can be increased or decreased based upon population estimates which is generated by data used by the Ministry of Trade during the UN economic sanction of 1991-2003. For instance, while the number of seats allocated to Baghdad, the capital of Iraq, during the 2005 elections was 59 seats, this number increased to 72 in the elections of 2018. In all Iraqi provinces, this increase is based on estimates generated by the Ministry of Trade, not on a statistically significant general census.

Article 15 of this law indicated that every province is a standalone electoral district within its official borders. The major problem with this law, in general, and this article, in particular, is there were many inherited border disputes from the old regime among almost all Iraq's provinces. For instance, the ethnically disputed areas of Kirkuk, Mosul, Diyala, and Salah-al-Din between Arabs and Kurds is one of the major problems this law fails to mention. The lack of current census data made this law extremely difficult to implement and bring political stability to Iraq.

The electoral system has distributed the electoral districts as follow: 80% of the 275 seats which means about 230 seats go to those who are directly elected from Iraq's 18 provinces. The 20% of the 275 means about 45 seats go to the national share of each party or coalition which participated in the elections.

Regarding the replacement and dismissal regulations of the members of Parliament, the 2005 amendment to the electoral system clearly emphasizes the following three rules:

1. If a member of parliament loses his or her seat because of sickness and death, or has been appointed to a ministerial or executive position, the one who is below him/her in the party or coalition list can replace him/her without considering the number of votes. It seems to this author that this rule has been enacted to promote the interests of the party and coalition leaders who are responsible for ranking the candidates based on their loyalty.
2. It is not necessary to have an alternate from the same gender unless the new member will affect the female representation according to the quota system.
3. If the empty seat has been allocated to an individual who is not affiliated with any party or coalition in the parliament, his/her seat will go to those who have the least number of votes and seats in the parliament.

This system has allowed first-time candidates to compete in the elections. However, the law gives the Independent High Electoral Commission more authority in approving the parties' lists of candidates, and no change is permissible after its approval. The competition in more than one district at the same time is prohibited. The minimum number of candidates in every party or coalition list must be three and must not exceed the number of seats allocated to each province or electoral district.

The proportional representation formula which was adapted to translating votes to seats according to the system is divided into two steps: (1) the first step divides the number of correct votes nationally by the number of seats allocated to every district to obtain the electoral denominator. (2) In the second step, the number of correct votes for every party or coalition is divided by the electoral denominator to determine how many seats are allocated for those who participate in the elections. (3) The highest average method was employed to distribute compensatory seats. According to this method, the denominator will be the total number of seats, 275, and the numerator the total number of correct votes for every party or coalition and the result is the number of compensatory seats, 45, allocated for every party or coalition.

The reason why this electoral system followed the compensatory seat policy was twofold. First and foremost, the system seeks to increase the power of the incumbents and the party leaders in particular. Second, the aim is to enable those who are underrepresented in the Parliament, such as the ethnic and religious minorities and who do not have the power to compete with other political factions, to be represented fairly. Thus, this electoral system employed both the approximate proportional representation and comprehensive proportional representation which means that this system can be characterized as a “pure” proportional representation system.

In terms of comprehensive proportional representation, the electoral commission counts all the correct votes and then divides them by the total number of seats to generate the national threshold values and then divides the correct votes for every party or coalition on the national threshold to determine how many votes for every seat. In the approximate

proportional representation model, the electoral system grants every province or electoral district the right to elect its representatives to fill 230 seats. In general, this system, to a great extent, is identical to the CPA's Executive Order 96 regarding the quota for women and Iraq as a multi-member district without neglecting the "advantage" of the one-member district for the incumbents. The pivotal contribution of this system is consolidating and strengthening the path-dependency of the proportional representation and single-member district.

## **2.5 The Second Amendment of the Electoral System of 2005**

After three-months of lengthy and intensive discussions among the political factions, the deadlock concerning enacting a new electoral system which should organize the provincial elections in 2009 and the second national elections in 2010 and national elections had not been solved. Every political block or coalition, especially the larger ones, tends to maintain its privileges which it has enjoyed according to the old system which has resulted in exacerbating political differences.

The controversial issues about the proposed new electoral system are centered on issues related to updating voters' registration records, holding national elections in Kirkuk based on the Electoral commission registration record in Baghdad and replacing the candidates closed-lists system with the candidates open-lists proportional representation system. The political blocs agreed to amend the existing electoral system. This amended system employed in the second national elections in 2010 is considered one of the most controversial issues in post-2003 Iraq. This amendment was passed by the Council of

Representatives on December 9, 2009, under the name of “Law Amending the Elections Law No. (16) for the year 2005” This amendment encompassed the following changes:

1. It emphasized that the number of members of the Council of Representatives must be proportional to the population based on the ratio of 1\100.000 taking into consideration the annual ratio of population growth by (2.8) percent for every province.
2. It partially abolished the compensatory seat system and replaced it with specific quotas for minorities on the condition that the quota system does not affect their participation in any national list. This quota system ensures the following: Five seats have been allocated to the Christian minority in Baghdad, Mosul, Kirkuk, Duhok and Erbil. One seat has been allocated to the Yazidi minority in Mosul. One seat has been allocated to the Sabian minority in Baghdad. One seat has been allocated to the Shabak minority.
3. It allocated five seats in the Parliament distributed proportionally to all parties and coalition participating in the elections.
4. The amended law allowed candidates to run for elections in any of Iraq’s 18 provinces.
5. The amended system adopted open-list candidates with proportional representation. The correct votes obtained by the part list or coalition shall

be counted and then divided by the electoral denominator to determine the number of seats allocated for each.

6. The distributing of the seats is based on the number of votes and the candidacies list must be re-ranked based on that figure. The candidate who receives the highest votes will be ranked first and so on so forth. The percentage of women must not be less than 25% of the winners.
7. The vacant seats are awarded to the winning lists according to the percentage of the votes obtained.

Regarding the allocation policy for the provinces' seats, there were many objections from the provinces' representatives. For instance, the Kurdish political blocs did not believe that the amended system distributed the seats fairly after the Kurds' share was reduced from 16% to 8.5% for the three Kurdish provinces in the North of Iraq. As we mentioned earlier, one of the most pivotal contributions of the amendment electoral system was moving from a complete closed-list voting system in 2005 to adopting mix-list constituted from open-list in terms of the candidate and closed-list regarding the party and collation. Due to some practical procedures, it was extremely difficult to adopt a complete open-list ballot because of the thousands of candidates who run for office in every election cycle.

However, the most significant objection raised by electoral experts regarding the current electoral system was that there is no national voters' database. The system was drawn from the Oil for Food Program data from the 1990s, when the UN sanctions regime

was imposed on Iraq, that is generated and updated consistently throughout the year by the Ministry of Trade. These data have been used by Iraqi Election Commission to update voters' registration records to determine how many seats are allocated for every province. The data show that the estimate of Iraq population is about 32.2 million in 2018. Thus, the number of seats should be 325 seats, with 310 seats distributed to the 18 electoral districts, and 7 compensatory seats went to the winning lists and 8 seats distributed based on a quota system to the minorities as mentioned earlier.

## **2.6 The Electoral System Number 45 of 2013**

The elections of 2014 can be considered as one of the most important turning points in the transition process toward a new political order and the process of enacting or legislating the new electoral system in Iraq. It presented a new framework regarding the method of counting votes which is called the Iraqi-adjusted version of the Webster/Sainte-Laguë method. This method has been adjusted to meet the electoral interests of the incumbents who represent the large ethno-sectarian political blocs. The law's aim is to maintain power for the large political parties and coalitions and block small political parties from winning elections. It is worth noting that this is the first national elections held after the 2011 withdrawal of American occupation troops from Iraq. The new electoral system was passed in the Iraqi Council of Representatives and ratified by the Iraqi President on November 25, 2013.

The parliamentary debate on enacting this new electoral system and the differences among the political fractions were focused on finding a new mechanism which would

ensure the fairness in distributing the parliamentary seats among the winners. The solution was enacting a new electoral system which encompassed a new formula for translating the correct votes into seats. The rationale behind this new system, as stated in the original text, was “the main objective of this law is to ensure holding fair and free national elections, and for genuinely representing the will of the voters and allowing legitimate competition and for preventing the external interference from foreign countries, this law has been enacted.” (“Electoral System, Iraq,” *al-Waqayci Iraqiya (Official Gazette)*, 2013)

The legislatures have presented, in consultation with United Nation election experts, the Sainte-Laguë method as a practical solution to the problem of the appropriate translation of votes into parliamentary seats. This method is commonly used with closed and open-list proportional representation system that adopt the highest average system. In the field of electoral politics, the highest average system refers to a method that is based on “a variety of ways to allocate seats proportionally for representative assemblies with party list voting systems. It requires the number of votes for each party to be divided successively by a series of divisors. This produces a table of quotients, or averages, with a row for each divisor and a column for each party.”(Wikipedia, 2019b) According to many specialists in the field of comparative electoral systems, “there are three types of highest average system in use: the d’Hondt method [in the U.S. this is known as the Jefferson method], which is by far the most common, the modified Sainte-Laguë method most associated with Scandinavian democracies (Denmark, Norway, and Sweden), and the pure Sainte-Laguë method (in the U.S. this is known as the Webster method) which was adopted by New Zealand for the list element of its new MMP electoral system. (LeDuc, Niemi, & Norris, 2010, pp. 29–30).

While the pure “Sainte-Laguë divisors (1, 3, 5) produce the most proportional outcomes,” the electoral system in Iraq has adopted the modified Sainte-Laguë formula in which the divisor starts at 1.7 instead of 1.4 as applied in the Scandinavian countries where the divisors start at “1.4 instead of 1 as the first, so as to temper some of the proportionality of pure Sainte-Laguë.” This mathematical formula was too complicated for the public and many politicians to understand, and it is still one of the most controversial problems of electoral integrity and electoral supervision in Iraq.

There is a consensus among comparative electoral system specialist that the Sainte-Laguë method is appropriate for countries which have established political parties because this method has been designed to serve the self-interest of the incumbent parties. The core component of this method is the divisor used for translating the correct votes into seats. The method has been modified by the Iraqi Parliament to increase the number of the divisor from 1 to 1.7. The larger the divisor, the more seats the larger parties will win. The discussion about using or not using this method continues.

The core issues addressed by the electoral law of 2009 and the electoral law of 2005 and the CPA executive order number 96 and its subsequent amendments which are the PR system and the size of constituency, have not been changed. The 2013 amendment electoral system reaffirmed the previous pillars of the 2010 electoral system such as the proportional representation, one-member districts based on the number of 18 Iraq provinces, 25% women quota, the proportionality regarding the number of seats and the total number of population (1/100.000), the minorities’ seats quota as it was approved and distributed in 2010. However, the main change in this version of the electoral system is submitting the

new modified “Iraqi” version of the Sainte-Laguë method. According to this method, the divisor has been increased from 1.4 as it was applied in the 2010 national elections to 1.7. This new divisor, which technically refers to “highest average,” serves the self-interest of big ethno-sectarian parties and coalitions and does not allow “small parties to gain representation but it nonetheless ensures that the larger parties win the lion’s share of the seats in parliament and hence stand a greater chance of controlling the executive.”(LeDuc, Niemi, & Norris, 2010, p. 30)

A few months before the election of 2018, the Iraq election commission issued the instructions in applying the modified Sainte-Laguë method. These instructions follow:

1. Count the correct votes that every party or coalition wins through its participation in the contest for the seats in every district or province.
2. Re-arrange the winners based on the highest number of votes to the lowest one.
3. Divide the total correct votes for every party or coalition by the starting number of (1.7) and then the division process continues exponentially using individual numbers (3,5, 7,9,11...) until the last the number of seats is allocated for every district.
4. Allocate seats for every party or coalition that obtains the highest output of this calculation. This calculation process continues until all the seats allocated for the particular district are filled.

5. If two parties or coalitions obtain the same number of correct votes in the same district or province that qualify them to win a parliamentary seat the electoral commission employs the lottery method to select one.
6. Re-arrange the candidate's lists for every party or coalition according to the number of correct votes for every winner from top to bottom in the lists and allocate seats for the winners
7. If two winners in the same list obtain the same number of votes, the electoral commission employs the lottery method to select one of them.

## **2.7 The Third Amendment of the Electoral System Number 45 in 2018**

In light of the rise of the Islamic State in Iraq and Levant or Sham (ISIS) and its control of Mosul the second largest province in Iraq on June 14, 2014, it was extremely difficult to ignore the challenges facing the post-2003 political order in Iraq in achieving stability, democracy and prosperity. This security deterioration, considered as an unintended consequence of the Iraq war [2003?], has become the topic which has received considerable scholarly attention in recent years. Nevertheless, the war against ISIS to liberate Iraqi Sunni-majority provinces took almost three years, namely from June 2014 to December 2017, and cost billions of dollars and thousands of casualties resulting in millions of internally displaced people (IDPs) as well as tens of devastated cities and increased polarization between ethnic and sectarian groups.

Given the many challenges facing Iraq, determining the drivers of voting behavior in the 2018 national elections is extremely difficult. In this critical election, the most

significant and dramatic turning points were the transition or shift from identity-based voting to issue-based voting. Excellent In the pre-election circumstances associated with the devastating consequences of the War on ISIS, there was no time for the deeply polarized parliament to enact a new electoral system or even amend the old one. Thus, the decision was made to employ the second amendment of the electoral law number 45 of 2013 with its modified Iraqi version of the Sainte-Laguë method.

On October 31, 2017, the Iraqi Ministerial Council, headed by Prime Minister Haider-al-Abadi, made an important decision to hold Iraq's fourth national elections on May 12, 2018. The most important issue faced by the Iraqi government was to move the country forward after the ISIS war by meeting its commitment to hold elections.

The salient issues in the 2018 national elections were the following: Post-war reconstruction, IDPs who number about 3000.000 Iraqis and 500,000 Syrians, the emergence of new powerful ethno-sectarian militias groups such as the Shi'a-dominated Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), rampant corruption, the government austerity policy because of the collapse of global oil prices, and the lack of basic needs and public services such as electricity and clean drinking water.

However, there are many serious elections violations that happen in the elections of 2018. For instance, while the regular or general voting had been taken place in urban and rural areas in the south and south central Iraq, special voting for unregistered Internally Dispalced People (IDPs) was conducted inside the IDPs campus in some recently liberated cities such as Al Anbar, Nineveh, and Salah-Al-Din provinces in western and north central Iraq. There was other types of voting, such as special voting for military, security forces,

police, and Shi'a-dominated non-governmental militia forces called Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF). Elections were also held for Iraqi expatriates in more than 15 countries, and special voting for prisoners and hospitalized patients, top-level officials who lived and worked in one of the most fortified places in Baghdad called Green Zone where the Iraqi government and parliament buildings located. the Same Day Voter Registration (SDVR) method has been used in all of these kinds of voting.

Intuitively speaking, while having many types of voting on election day conclusively increases the probability of election manipulation and election fraud, the election commission decided to hold the elections on the same day in response to compelling circumstances and continuing pressure from political parties. The commission has no power to change the dates of elections because, as we shall see in the next section, it was not fully independent and was subject to huge political and security pressures. The special voting for expatriates and security forces were mentioned clearly in the current electoral system and its amendments. Thus, we do believe there was a need for pre-election amendment of the electoral system for Internally Displaced People (IDPs) and the new security forces, the PMFs, which were formed after the rise of ISIS in Iraq and its seizure of Mosul, Iraq's second largest city, and much of the northern part of the country in June 2014.

## **2.8 Conclusion**

Today, the public demands for electoral reform have intensified. Many important political actors, such as the high religious authority, represented by Grand Ayatollah Sistani who requested changing the current electoral system, civil society organizations, the Iraq

public and even the political parties themselves. The main reason why they demand a change of the electoral system is because it does not represent all eligible Iraqi voters appropriately and has been designed to reproduce and consolidate the current political system with the same political parties and political elites who have controlled power since 2003. Thus, these neglect of addressing the demands for changing the electoral system negatively affected the turnout level in 2018 and contributed indirectly to its dramatic decline in voter participation from 61.76% in 2014 to 44.5% in the elections of 2018.

The question here is whether a change in the electoral system, if it happens, will boost voter turnout. There is no guarantee that the demanded changes repaired the mistrust in government institutions and political elites. Hence, we argue that one of the leading causes of the dramatic decline in voter turnout is not the electoral system itself, but increasing mistrust of government and the entire post-2003 political process which intensified societal polarization along ethno-sectarian identity in the first three foundational elections (2005, 2010, and 2014). This polarization developed in the national elections of May 2018 to concentrate on the issue of patron-client networks. For instance, when the first amendment of the current electoral system from closed-list proportional representation and single-member district to the open-list system and multi-member districts took place in 2009, voter turnout declined by almost 14 percent.

Many factors explain this dramatic decline, in addition to the leading causes mentioned above which are the mistrust in government institutions and polarization. Some of these factors are the high level of state corruption, unemployment, poverty, lack of basic needs and services, such as drinking water, electricity, education, and health care, and have

also contributed to a decline in voter turnout. In the elections of 2018, the turnout decreased by 32% from the first national elections in January 2005. What is obvious in the 2018 election is not only the retreat of the religious leaders in mobilizing voters to participate in elections but also the boycott by young new voters who entered the electorate in 2018 but felt they had no hope in reforming the current political system. These developments have led to undermining the legitimacy of the post-2003 political order in Iraq.

Through personal observations, we found no robust evidence that the electoral system in Iraq has influenced the turnout level. Generally speaking, the PR system which has been adopted to build a stable and consociational political system has failed profoundly to consolidate the democratization process and build stable political institutions. Thus, there is an urgent need for electoral reform in Iraq by changing the current electoral system with a goal of bridging the gap between citizens and their representatives, on the one hand, and dismantling the pervasive patron-client networks which have been consolidated by the PR system, on the other.

However, the Iraqi Electoral Commission recently conducted a public survey on the evaluation of the current electoral system. The results of the survey showed that the vast majority of the respondents are not satisfied with the current electoral system. A large majority of voters surveyed, 88.6%, said that the current electoral system did not achieve the desired political stability. The survey also showed that 75.7% of the respondents believe that the current electoral system did not create any viable political opposition, and 87% said that the current electoral system does not contribute to creating a cross-sectarian bloc and even cross-ethnic and cross-sectarian voting. Finally, 68.9% of the respondents asked

for a substantial change in the electoral system in Iraq. When Iraq voter have been asked which one is better and more suitable for Iraq: [the single-member districts with PR system with open-list or multi-member districts with PR system and open-list, (65.7%) of the respondents selected multi-member districts for organizing the national elections in Iraq. Thus, they favor many constituency districts within each governorate. (Musawy, 2018)

### **3. The Elections Management Body and Voter Turnout**

The elections commission or the Independent High Electoral Commission in Iraq (IHEC) oral administration is a necessary body, not only for assuring peaceful, fair and free elections but also has a considerable impact in mobilizing voters to get out the vote. It is responsible for voter registration, updating voter record, vote counting, and investigating claims of electoral fraud or electoral manipulation after the elections results are announced. In this chapter, we argue that the more professional and fairer the elections supervisory body is, the more likely voters will have trust and confidence in the electoral process. This level of confidence will encourage them to vote on election day and ultimately increase voter turnout.

Given the critical importance of impartiality in the organization and administration of elections, many scholars have put much emphasis on the importance of the independence of the elections commissions to ensure fairness and that the citizens' votes will go to the representatives they select to serve in the parliament. Thus, there are many conditions which are necessary to insure that elections meet international criteria for a fair and free election. To develop a full picture of the importance on the role of election commissions

in securing free and fair elections, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) issued a handbook entitled, *Electoral Management Design*. In this handbook, the IDEA has specified the pillars or the characteristics of the professional election management body. These characteristics are independence, impartiality, integrity, transparency, efficiency, professionalism, service-mindedness. (Catt, Ellis, Maley, Wall, & Wolf, 2014, pp. 21–24)

In general, the poorly planned aftermath of the invasion of Iraq has left its negative legacy on building democratic institutions of Iraq. There is agreement among academics, journalists and policy-making experts that the US had no clear plan for establishing democratic institutions, including establishing an elections commission, political parties, and executive, legislative and judicial institutions. Hence, the process of rebuilding Iraq's political institutions was initiated, with no prior plan, a few months after the collapse of Saddam's dictatorship.

With the emergence of the CPA in May of 2003, the process of building democratic institutions began on September 5, 2003. CPA Administrator, L. Paul Bremer, with the assistance of the United Nations, developed a "Plan of Action" which established a number of steps for rebuilding the new political institutions based on democratic values and fixed timetable. These steps all had the features of the transitional process that must be done on specific dates according to Transitional Administrative Law (TAL) or Iraqi Interim Constitution, the first legal document which was written by the US Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) in cooperation with the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). These steps established an interim Iraqi government, organized the first

transitional elections to choose the first nationally-elected parliament, appointed the first interim nationally-elected government, drafted and ratified a new permanent constitution by October 2005, and ending by dismantling the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA).

In general, there are two methods of establishing the Independent High Electoral Commission in Iraq (IHEC) are implemented worldwide. These methods are nomination or advertisement. The CPA and the UN decided to implement the second method-- the advertisement—to organize the first elections commission in Iraq. According to this method, the “interested candidates may apply directly to be considered for appointment or be nominated by members of the public. Applications are received and screened (through public interviews) by an independent body. The names of shortlisted candidates are submitted to the head of state for final appointment.” (Catt et al., 2014, p. 116)

The main disadvantage of the public advertisement method is that, “While open advertising and screening mechanisms can provide a broad range of applicants for EMB member positions and promote competence in the selection of members, they do not necessarily guarantee that the most appropriate candidates are chosen. Where the mechanism for screening and appointing EMB members is dominated by one political grouping, competent candidates who are not in favor with this grouping may have lesser chances of selection.”(Catt et al., 2014, p. 116) While what was announced by the CPA and UN is that the advertisement method was followed in recruiting the members of Iraq’s election commission. It seems there were three formal and informal criteria are employed by the CPA and the UN in appointing council of commissioners of the Independent High Electoral Commission of Iraq (IHEC). These criteria are: process: first, professionalism,

second, ethnic and sectarian diversity to represent all segments of Iraqi society, and third, the candidate must not have been a member of the old regime and should be a victim of B'ath regime and not publicly oppose the American invasion. Thus, the first council of commissioners was dominated by Iraqi exiles who were appointed to important and high-level government positions in Iraq by the US following the toppling of Saddam.

According to Farid Āyār, a Christian member of the Iraqi Independent Electoral Commission, the advertisement method used by UN and CPA was very effective in allowing independent candidates to be appointed to the Elections Commission. Āyār, in his memoir, *Intikhābāt al-zaman al-ṣacb - ru'yah min dākhil al-intikhābāt al-cIrāqīyah* said, "On April 2, when he was in London he received a phone call from a friend who works in the United Nations Headquarters in New York who told him that he had been selected to be a member of a commission. This commission, according to Āyār would be responsible for organizing the first transitional and national elections in post-2003 Iraq.

Ayar explained that the process of his selection might have something to do with his previous work as Secretary-General of the Arab States Broadcasting Union (ASBU) based in Kuwait after Saddam's invasion and as a veteran journalist who was well-known at the UN for covering the UN special agencies' activities for many years. (Āyār, 2018, pp. 35–37)

Āyār mentioned that, on May 26, 2004, he had been interviewed by three international judges from Mexico, South Africa and Venezuela at the Al-Rasheed Hotel in Baghdad's Green Zone where the CPA headquarters was located. He continued by saying that two days later Carina Perelli, the director of UN Electoral Assistance Division,

announced that CPA Administrator, L. Paul Bremer, has decided to appoint the eight Iraqis which the UN had suggested. On July 3, 2004, Bremer issued an executive order establishing the new election management body (*Almufawadiyah aliluya almustaqilah lilaintikhabat fi aliraq*) (المفوضية العليا المستقلة للانتخابات في العراق) and appointing its eight members (three Shi'a, two Sunnis, two Kurds and one Christian).

However, from the early days of establishing this body, the ethno-sectarian affiliations model for managing and administrating this vital institution has been applied, and it is still followed today. Thus, it is challenging to consider this body as fully independent in terms of its ethno-sectarian and partisan affiliations. While the first term (2004-2007) of the elections management body was based on the ethno-sectarian quota system, the second term (2007-2011) was characterized by using ethno-sectarian and partisan affiliations. The eight new members of the second term were appointed by Iraqi Parliament as follows: Shi'a (Dacwa Party), Badr Brigade, Al-Fadhila Party, Sadrist Trend), Sunni (Iraqi Islamic Party, the Iraqi Front for National Dialogue), Kurds (Kurdistan Democratic Party, Patriotic Union of Kurdistan), and minority parties (Iraqi Accord of Ayad Allawi). The third term (2011-2017) and the fourth term (2017-present) have adhered to the same criteria (ethno-sectarian and partisan affiliations) of selecting the new members of the Independent High Electoral Commission of Iraq (IHEC).

Nevertheless, ethno-sectarian and partisan affiliations have come to constitute a path-dependent model of selecting not only the top-level of elections administrators, but also the low-level officials of this body. Hence, the transformation in the structure of the Iraqi Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC), can be divided into two main

stages: an independent electoral agency with a diverse ethnic and sectarian composition under the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA); while in the second stage, the commission becomes evidently much more subordinated to the powerful political parties and their ethnic and sectarian leaders.

To conclude this section, the literature indicates that the precise effect of partisanship and the independent nature of the elections management bodies on voter turnout is a highly debated topic. While some argue that election commissions which are “staffed by autonomous, non-partisan experts are best for producing credible [elections and two peaceful transitions of power]” other scholars find that “that election arbiters that embrace partisan strife are quite capable of organizing free, fair, and credible elections in new democracies.”(Estévez, Magar, & Rosas, 2008, p. 257) Nevertheless, the structure and integrity of election management bodies have proven to be one of the most significant sources of citizens' confidence and trust in the democratic and electoral process. For instance, Sarah Birch (2008) has pointed out that “institutional structures that promote a ‘level playing field’ at each stage of the electoral process will enhance the extent to which voters perceive their elections to be fair” (Birch, 2008, p. 305).

In the same vein, partisanship and professionalism matter in measuring the efficiency of the electoral administration and have a significant impact on citizens' perception of an election's integrity. Hartlyn, McCoy, and Mustillo (2008) conclude that there was “an important positive role for professional, independent electoral commissions on electoral outcomes in Latin America, controlling for other socioeconomic and political

factors; formal-legal independence matters when the rules of the game are likely to be respected.”(Hartlyn et al., 2008, p. 73)

Last but not least, the quality and legitimacy of the electoral process can be easily ascertained by looking at the citizens’ general perception of the electoral administration. This view is supported by Jørgen Elklit and Andrew Reynolds (2002) who write that the institutionalization of the electoral process through independent elections management bodies (EMBs) is a necessary condition for democratic transitions and democratic consolidations in new democracies. The authors found it advantageous to have independent elections commissions as a new explanatory variable which should be addressed and included more broadly in the electoral politics literature because it will increase our knowledge on “how election management quality impacts on the processes of legitimation—and through that on the processes of transition and consolidation in new and emerging democracies.”(Elklit & Reynolds, 2002, p. 115) The findings of this section clearly indicate that having an independent and professional elections commission is not only important for democratization process (Pastor, 1999, pp. 3–6) but also “securing the credibility of elections”(Mozaffar & Schedler, 2002, p. 5)

### **3.1 CPA Executive Order 92 of 2004 and the First Election Commission in Iraq**

First and foremost, it is worth noting that the CPA executive orders’ provisions are still legally in force, even after its dissolution on June 28, 2004, and have provided the legal framework of the Iraqi electoral process in general and the election commission structure in particular from 2004 until the present. These provisions [legal framework?]

include the bureaucratic structure, the number of commissioners, and the process of appointing top-level elections officials based solely on their ethno-sectarian background.

The Iraqi elections commission, hereafter we will use its official name of Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC), was established by CPA Executive Order (92). This order was had been issued by the US CPA Administrator of Iraq, Ambassador L. Paul Bremer on May 31, 2004. According to this order, the IHEC constituted (7) Iraqi commissioners and two non-vote members from the United Nations electoral assistance team according to the (Section IV) of the order (92). This order had specified the commissioner's council and electoral administration (al-cidarah al-intikhabia) as the legislative body of IHEC.

Section 3 of Order 92 emphasized the independence of the IHEC by indicating that this institution must be substantially “independent and autonomous, non-partisan, neutral.” In contrast, the order underlined the establishment of the IHEC as a “government office that shall have the authority to promulgate, implement, and enforce regulations, rules and procedures with the full force of law in connection with elections during the Transitional Period. It is independent of the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government, and it shall be the exclusive electoral authority throughout Iraq during the Transitional Period. The Commission shall be made up of the Board of Commissioners (the “Board”) and the Electoral Administration” (Order, 92, Article 3)

However, there are certain drawbacks associated with having an electoral commission that has two separate branches (the commissioner's council and the elections administration) with seven members, because everyone has ministerial rank, and has been

chosen to represent all segments of Iraqi society. This style of elections commission has created struggles and conflicts of power between these two branches. This conflict, according to Farid Āyār, has negatively affected people's trust in the electoral commission. Āyār suggests that it would have sufficient to organize the elections by having only three commissioners, not seven in the council of commissioners alongside the chief administrator who must be hired by this council for a renewable one-year contract.

Āyār also comments on his perspective about shifting the election commission from a non-partisan to a partisan commission. He said that during his conversation with one prominent and anonymous member of Parliament, he was asked: "why has the Parliament expelled us by voting for a forcible early retirement after only four years in service?" This anonymous member of parliament, according to Āyār, praised and thanked the first term of election commissioners for their professionalism and independence during the three democratic processes in 2005 and their role in institutionalizing the democratization process in Iraq. In response to the question posed by Āyār to this member of parliament about why the Parliament and Prime minister Nuri Malaki changed all the commissioners and granted them early retirement and, at the same time, excluded only one member. His answer was "the current political situation in Iraq requires all commissioners to be changed except those who are affiliated with the incumbent political parties." He added that "these parties want to have their share in the election commission and need to know continuously what is going on inside the commission. You as independents and professional commissioners did not allow us to know what was going on behind the closed doors of the elections commission and this is one of the main reasons why we decided in Parliament to get rid of you through early retirement" (Āyār, 2018, pp. 448–449). It is worth noting that

this Commissioner who Āyār refer to supposed to be an independent commissioner, but she is a member of Al-Dawa Party which is the ruling party in Iraq from 2005-2018. Although she hides her. Although she deliberately hid her party affiliation when she applied for this job.

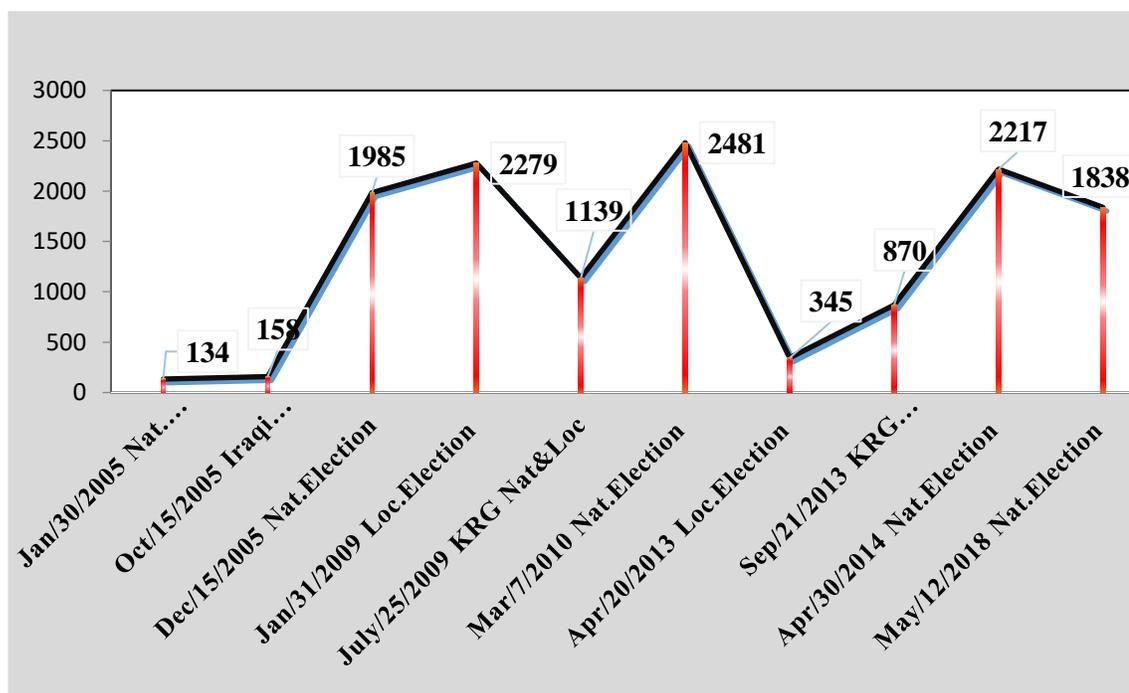


Figure 3.1 Number of Voting Fraud Claims in Iraqi Elections (2005-2018)

Not surprisingly, since it was established in 2004, there has been clear evidence showing the sectarian politics of the Independent High Election Commission (IHEC) which is dominated by Shi'a Islamists. This makes Sunni and other secular and moderate political parties increasingly distrustful of the (IHEC). They complain about fraud, manipulation of votes, and bias in favor of incumbent Shi'a political parties. These claims and accusations against this institution escalate before during and after every election season. With regard to these accusations, Āyār admitted that, in 2004, when he and other commissioners were in charge of interviewing and hiring top-level administrators, contractors, full-time employees, and temporary workers, the vast majority of the applicants were Shi'a, because

Sunnis decided to boycott the institutions that worked under the direct authority and control of US occupation forces.

Āyār explains that by saying “the applications forms did not include any question regarding the religious, ethnic or sectarian affiliation of the applicants, and the main criteria of hiring is based on Iraqi nationality, qualification and merit.” Āyār added during his meeting with tens of interviewees who applied for high-level positions in the IHEC that it was never in his mind to ask them about their religion, or their sectarian and ethnic affiliations.

The main question the IHEC focused on during the interviews was how independent the applicants were from having any political or partisan affiliations. According to Āyār, the IHEC was dominated and controlled by Shi’a “because all the interviews were held in the Green Zone, the headquarters of the US CPA and because the situation in July 2004 [was troubled between the Sunni community and the Americans. Rewrite] Thus, there were only Shi’a who applied for IHEC positions”.

During that time the insurgency reached its peak in the Sunni provinces, and the Battle of Fallujah was still ongoing. Thus, the Sunnis decided to boycott the entire political process, including the transitional elections because they took place under an illegal occupation of Iraq by the US. Āyār indicated that, during the hiring and interview process, all the interviewees would pass and go through US Marines security checkpoints. Thus, the vast majority of Iraqis who were against the invasion and occupation rejected applying for any government positions. The result was, according to Āyār that the IHEC hiring

committee members decided to accept the applications of all persons who were 75% Shi'a. (Āyār, 2018, pp. 76–78)

### **3.2 The First Electoral Commission Law number (11) of 2007**

Law Number 11 of 2007 was the first electoral commission which replaced the CPA Order 92. This law was issued by the Iraqi Council of Representatives on February 26, 2007. It can be considered one of the major turning points in administrating the electoral process in Iraq. This law was designed to change the legal and institutional framework of the election commission in Iraq from a non-partisan to a partisan electoral commission. This new critical juncture made the election commission more subordinate to incumbent political parties. Most of the current elections' commissioners did not hide their partisan affiliations, even though the law indicates they must be independent.

Section One of this law abolished CPA Executive Order number 92. Section Two defines the Independent High Electoral Commission IHEC as a “governmental independent and neutral organization”. The IHEC's responsibilities were copied and adapted from Order 92 such as setting the electoral rules and practices for the national elections, referendums and regional elections in the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG).

Section Three kept the organizational structure of the (IHEC) precisely as it was in the CPA's Order Number (92). The structure is divided into the council of commissioners and the electoral administration. The commissioners' council is composed of 9 commissioners, at least two of them must be lawyers and have practiced law before joining

to the council. This section also states that women's representation must be taken into consideration. The criteria for selecting and appointing commissioners are:

1. Every candidate must be an Iraqi citizen who has permanent residency in Iraq
2. Every candidate must hold at least a university degree.
3. Every candidate must be at least 35 years of age.
4. Every candidate must have clean criminal records to be eligible for this position.
5. Every candidate must be professional and have an administrative background.
6. Every candidate must be independent to be a member of the (IHEC)
7. Every candidate must not have been a member of the Ba'ath Party or have been a subject of The De-Bathfication Law and have been enriched at the expense of the Public [what does this mean? Makes no sense].
8. Every candidate must have good ethical standing and moral integrity.

It seems that the lawmakers manipulated public perceptions about the independence of the electoral commission when they passed this law. While the law emphasizes the importance of appointing nonpartisan members, in practice there is partisanship in

negotiating and fighting to appoint representatives in not only mid- to high-level electoral commissioners, but also in the low-level officials.

There is ample evidence about the partisanship of the IHEC commissioners since Law (11) of 2007 was enacted. This is a clear and deliberate violation of the current election law. Why the government and the parliament tolerate these violations is one of the most frequently stated problems facing the integrity of elections in Iraq and the functioning of the IHEC in particular. As one scholar points out, “politicians choose not to enforce the law, a behavior that [I] call[ed] forbearance, when it is in their electoral interest.”(Holland, 2017, p. 3)

## **4. Political Parties and Voter Turnout**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter seeks to assess whether or not party affiliation influenced voter turnout in Iraq. The relationship between political parties and voter turnout has received considerable critical attention in the voting behavior literature. The theory that partisanship plays a pivotal role in influencing voter turnout has been utilized for years to build a robust social psychological model of voting behavior based on substantial evidence. This evidence suggests that voters who have attached themselves psychologically to a particular political party are more likely to vote for this party in every election. This can be true in the case of having well-established and historical political parties.

In most post-authoritarian countries where partisan life was completely eliminated and destroyed and replaced by a one-party system, as in Iraq under the Bacth Party, it is

not possible to assess the continuity of partisan life in pre and post-dictatorship periods. Therefore, the vast majority of Iraqi people have been introduced to partisan life after the overthrow of the Baath Party in 2003.

This chapter has been built on the premise that it is extremely difficult to characterize the political parties in post-2003 Iraq as historical and well-established national political parties. In the best-case scenario, if such parties existed, they have no grassroots constituency and support among the public. However, if such support exists, it will be only among a small number of party ideologues who lived in exile for decades and returned home after the overthrow of the dictatorship or only among those who maintain strong patronage relationship with party leaders. Thus, developing partisanship and real political life in post-authoritarian countries, cannot be established overnight but will take decades to be built. Generally speaking, partisanship in post-2003 Iraq, has been replaced by some sectarian and ethnic grassroots movements such as the Sadrist Trend, United Iraqi Alliance, al-cIraqiya, State of Law, Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), Hizb al-Fadhila al-Islami or just Al-Fadhila Party, and other types of semi-political parties. While we are not convinced that we can call these movements political parties, in line with the academic research approach, we are going to call them semi-political parties.

Central to the entire discipline of democratic politics and voting behavior is the role of political parties because “they organize voters, aggregate and articulate interests, craft policy alternatives, recruit and socialize new candidates for office, set policy-making agendas, integrate disparate groups and individuals into the democratic process, and

provide the basis for coordinated electoral and legislative activity.” (Reilly et al., 2008, p. 1). Thus, while one of the most crucial goals of holding an election is to make people’s voices heard, the role of political parties in facilitating this process is indispensable.

The question of why people vote for particular candidates or parties is crucial and relevant to comparative politics, political psychology, political sociology, public opinion, and other subfields of political science. Scholars of political and voting behavior have proposed many theories or models to help us understand the factors influencing voting behavior. [This study will use a psychological model of voting behavior to examine the relationship between party mobilization and voter turnout. Additionally, while party identification will be used as a leading explanatory variable to understand the relationship between electoral mobilization and voter turnout, we will use a set of demographic variables such as age, gender, education, and income as covariates to test our hypotheses. “Hence, we do believe this model does not have great predictive and explanatory power in explaining and understanding the sharp decline of voter turnout in the elections of 2018. We also believe that partisanship in Iraq today has become integrated with patronage politics and more specifically with patrons-client networks in which the party leaders are the patrons and their constituencies are the clients.

Thus, we assume that there is no clear party identification to explain the dramatic decline of voter turnout and voter choice in particular in Iraq. Notwithstanding, we will attempt to provide a deeper insight into the relationship between semi-political parties and voter turnout in the Iraqi context. Thus, as a matter of fact, with few exceptions, it is extremely difficult to argue that there are Western-style and well-established political

parties in Iraq today. Therefore, we argue that, since 2003, Iraqi voters have cast their ballots with no clear partisan incentives or partisan cues to help them in making their voting decisions. Also, we argue that the multi-party system has proven to have a significant impact on increasing voter turnout because it gives voters more options to vote for their preferred party. In the following sections, we will highlight the literature that supports the hypothesis that there is a positive relationship between party mobilization and voter turnout as well as the role of political parties in general. In the second section, we will provide a brief overview of the legal framework of political parties since 2003.

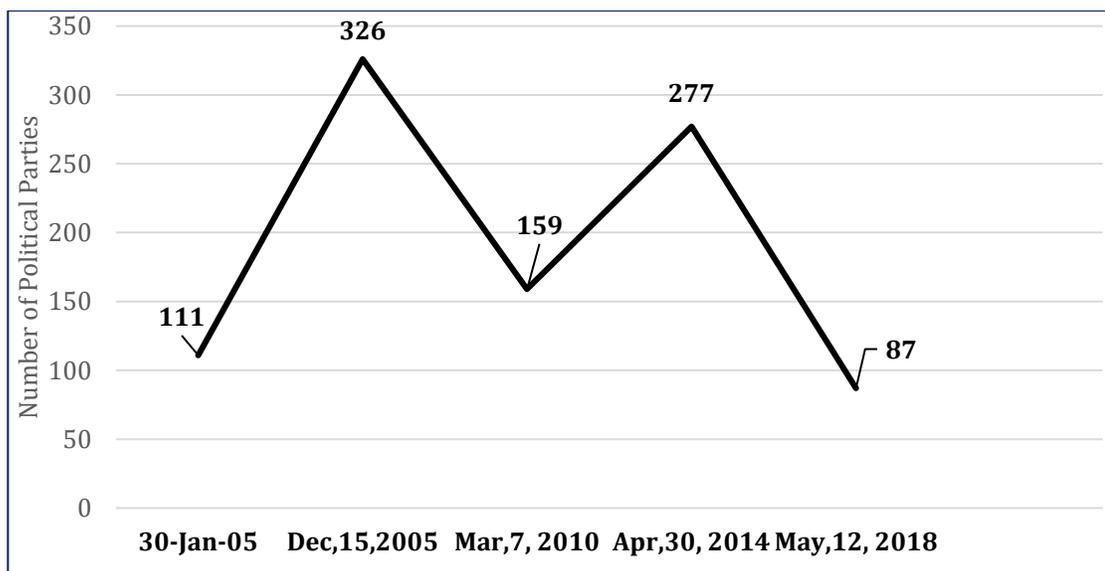


Figure 4.1 Number of Political Parties (2005-2018)

## 4.2 Voter Turnout and Party Mobilization

Political parties play a vital role in mobilizing voters to participate in elections. Party Mobilization has long been a question of great interest in a wide range of fields. Much debate about the role of parties in elections has centered around “what are the intended and unintended consequences of partisan mobilization, both for individual voters

and for the electorate more generally.” This debate has been addressed by Robert Huckfeldt and John Sprague (1992) in their seminal article “Political Parties and Electoral Mobilization: Political Structure, Social Structure, and the Party Canvass.” The authors argue that “First, party efforts at electoral mobilization inevitably depend upon a process of social diffusion and informal persuasion so that the party canvass serves as a catalyst aimed at stimulating a cascading mobilization process. Second, party mobilization is best seen as being environmentally contingent upon institutional arrangements, locally defined strategic constraints, and partisan divisions within particular electorates” (Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1992, p. 70)

Their systematic and generalized evidence based on the context of the US political landscape indicates that “the parameters determining the relationships between parties and voters, and thus determining the success of partisan mobilization, are environmentally contingent. They cannot be understood from afar.” (p.84) Thus, they found that “the efforts of party organizations generate[s] a layer of political structure within the electorate that sometimes competes with social structure and often exists independently from it” (Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1992, p. 70) In accordance with these results, scholars have argued that successful party mobilization stems from the amount of information supplied to voters by the candidates. This has contributed significantly to enhancing and increasing voter turnout. (Tolbert, Bowen, & Donovan, 2009).

Evidence suggests that political parties is among the most important factors for motivating voters. Based on this assumption, there is a consensus among political scientists that “institutions such as political parties are particularly motivated to stimulate turnout,

and to the extent that parties represent a socioeconomic cleavage in society, they are likely to alter the relationship that would otherwise be observed between socioeconomic status and participation.” (Hill & Leighley, 1996, p. 789)

However, class cleavages, media exposure, electoral experience, the number of elections, and the party system have been found among the most important factors influencing voting behavior. This can be true in the case of Sub-Saharan Africa where these factors influence the level of voter turnout. Surprisingly, scholars have found considerable and robust evidence that “the number of elections held in multiparty regimes that matter for turnout” (Kuenzi & Lambright, 2007, p. 684)

In new democracies, political parties have played a critical role in democratic consolidation. Questions have been raised about how this relationship impacts voter turnout. Filip Kostelka in his recent article, “Does Democratic Consolidation Lead to a Decline in Voter Turnout? Global Evidence Since 1939”, (2017) addressed the questions, “why voting rates in new democracies decrease when they do, how much they decrease, and how this phenomenon relates to the voter decline observed in established democracies.”. He notes that, “the voter turnout rate in founding elections is above the level that would be expected in a stable democracy with the same characteristics. After the founding elections, however, these effects vanish, which makes voter turnout decline progressively to the standard level.”. (Kostelka, 2017, p. 655) Finally, he found that political parties implicitly influence citizens’ participation in elections. He concludes that there were three sources of decline: democratization context, democratic consolidation and the general trend of decline “irrespective of the two previous mechanisms.”.

In the same vein, scholars have observed that, “party mobilization may be particularly important in increasing political engagement and participation in new democracies. Overall, citizens in these countries appear to be less engaged in the political process and, on average, reported turnout is about 10 percent lower.” (Karp & Banducci, 2007, pp. 229–230). Turnout volatility has been found to be a product of an unstable party system in new democracies. Thus, in their efforts to consolidate emerging democracies, most countries aim for stabilization of the party system, as an important institutional factor that will lead ultimately to a smooth transition process. This case demonstrates the need for better strategies from elites who “may be more responsible for instability in early stages of party system development than erratic behavior of voters” (Tavits, 2008, p. 537)

The premise that the number of political parties boosts voter turnout is still difficult generalize in new democracies. Nevertheless, the multiparty system does not always lead to “facilitate matching voter preferences with a specific party, increasing turnout” Carew Boulding and David Brown (2015) noted for this causal relationship to be true, we should look at the electoral formula and electoral system first. They argue that “that party system does matter for turnout in developing countries, but the relationship between turnout and the number of political parties is conditional on the electoral formula. Under proportional representation systems, large numbers of parties increase turnout. Under winner takes all systems, large numbers of parties depress turnout.”(Boulding & Brown, 2015, p. 404). In accordance with earlier findings, however, the authors find evidence that, in Brazil and Bolivia, the number of political parties does matter for boosting voter turnout, but this depends on the elections’ rules. Hence, they conclude that “the incentives voters and parties

face in terms of the values they place on each vote alter the impact that the number of parties can have on participation.” (Boulding & Brown, 2015, p. 413)

Party canvassing has been found to be a leading cause of increasing voter turnout. This suggests that this relationship might be explained when we take into consideration the fact that “overall levels of party contact are far greater in candidate-based systems than in proportional representation (PR) systems. Party mobilization, therefore, cannot explain the higher rates of turnout observed in PR systems.” (Karp, Banducci, & Bowler, 2008, p. 91). Successful party mobilization efforts are found to be associated with “the amount of contacting and the effectiveness of this contact in turning out voters.” This can be illustrated briefly by noting that “candidates are more likely to be in touch with their supporters when they have an incentive to cultivate a personal vote. This pattern presents a puzzle for our understanding of turnout since the higher levels of turnout under PR cannot be associated with higher levels of party mobilization efforts under PR.”(Karp et al., 2008, p. 111)

By the same token, the partisan cues may have played a crucial role in shaping voters’ preferences “or to serve as rallying cries, thereby increasing turnout.” Scholars have noted that “consistent with the use of acceptance-rejection heuristics, the campaign calls with partisan cues are more likely to mobilize party supporters than rival partisans.”(Foos & de Rooij, 2017, p. 1)

However, the undeniable facts point to the role of party leaders in mobilizing voters and increasing voter turnout. The causal mechanism here works through the personalization of politics that stems from “the leadership effects on voting behavior.” The

personality of party leaders has been found by Fredercio Ferreriera da Sliva, (2018) to positively relate to the level of voter turnout. The author argues that “the relationship between leader effects and turnout gains relevance considering the generalized decline in voter turnout rates across Western democracies as a symptom of the realignment process, pointed as a key cause of the personalization of politics.” (Ferreira da Silva, 2018, p. 61)

### **4 . 3      The Legal and Organizational Structure of Political Parties in Iraq Since 2003**

One of the significant challenging issues that face political and social scientists is the study of political parties in post-authoritarian Middle East countries. This is not only because the old regime was brutally dismantled and ravaged all political parties but also the new parties that were established or moved after establishment by exiles after the overthrow of the dictatorships were very weak and had no grassroots support. Another reason for these difficulties may be that partisan life has been interconnected and overlapped with many important political and social themes such as religion, ethnicity, clientelism, patronage politics, authoritarianism, conspiracy theory, colonialism, and nationalism.

Political parties and social movements, in Iraq, are a very complex political phenomena, in terms of their organizational and legal structural patterns of leadership, sources of legitimacy, ideology, social composition, practices, political positions, goals and objectives, sources of funding, and their relationship with the ethnic and sectarian groups on the one hand and their relationship with the state on the other. These interrelated dimensions can be summed up into three fields: the party itself (the party as a stand-alone

organization), the party in its relationship with society, and then the party in its relationship with the state. However, the difficulty of studying political parties and movements does not stop at this point but rather can be extended to include the political, economic, social and cultural conditions under which these parties are active on the political and social and even economic scene.

Nevertheless, these are changing conditions from period to period. For instance, the organizational and legal structure of political parties under full-scale dictatorship regimes completely differs from the organizational and legal structure of political parties under competitive authoritarian regimes, and political parties in these two regime types differ from the full-scale and well-established democratic regime. In terms of Iraq, especially after the American invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003, these difficulties have been exacerbated by the lack of institutional capacities in terms of the lack of stable legal frameworks, accountability and even the lack of ideological attachments and commitments.

In general, the political parties in Iraq can be divided into three types based on their ideological foundations: Islamic parties, secular parties, and moderate parties. After the overthrow of Saddam's regime, most of these parties moved back from exile especially from Iran, Europe, and the USA and even from Kurdistan Regional. The Iraqi people started seeing hundreds of new political parties opening their offices in the same buildings and offices that had been used by the old regime prior to 2003. However, while the number of political parties in the first national elections in 2005 were over 300 registered by the Iraqi Electoral Commission to participate in these elections, this number decreased to 272 in the elections of 2018.

Most of the studies carried out on the democratization process in Iraq in post-2003 have only been undertaken using macro-level analysis. They do not examine the impact of party identification and multi-party system on democracy. In this dissertation, we argue that the moderate and secular political parties in Iraq have suffered from a lack of grassroots constituency. In contrast, and most importantly, we have noticed that most Islamic political entities and blocks have dominated and controlled the Iraqi parliament since the first founding election in 2005. While this can tell us that these ethno-sectarian political entities have enjoyed to large extent, public grassroots support, it did not tell us the whole story about the mechanisms and sources of how these parties mobilized their constituencies and followers to vote for them in every election since 2005. For instance, many Islamic movements have been changing their names and some of their policy positions significantly with every election. It is possible that these strategies have been changed pragmatically to manipulate the electorate needs and mood.

However, party defections have become very common during the elections season. Thus, many parties have been established during the elections, and if they did not win, they were dismantled by their founders and disappeared. This is very obvious among Shia and Sunni political factions as well as among the secularists who participated in the elections of 2005 as one block, and now are divided into tens of blocks, movements, and parties.

There is no doubt that the electoral system has encouraged the leaders of big political parties to establish new small parties because it helps them to gain more votes. This strategy helps big parties to win more seats than they expect. The more candidates and parties have in their coalition list, the more votes they win and eventually increase their

chances of winning more seats. We argue that while parties' positions toward the Baath Party and the role of religion and religious leaders in the public sphere have to some extent impacted shaping voters' preferences in the early two founding elections in 2005, this impact has dramatically declined because these issues have become less salient among the Iraqi electorate.

One of the most path-dependent bundles of policies established by CPA is the executive order number (97) in 2004. This executive order, which laid down the cornerstones of new political parties in post-2003, was used as a legal and administrative reference in transitional elections in January 2005, and the first, second, and third national elections in 2005, 2010, 2014 respectively. In 2006, the Iraqi Parliament presented new political parties' law, and after long discussions and negotiations between political parties regarding this law, this law was adopted by the Iraqi Parliament in 2015. In the next section, we will trace the development of the political party in three parts. Part one will present an overview of the executive order (96) and the second part will be devoted to the Transitional Administrative Law in (2004) and permanent Iraqi constitutions in (2005). The third part will discuss the new political parties' law issued in 2015.

#### **4.4 The CPA executive order (97) of political parties**

This order was issued by the American administrator of Iraq Paul Bremer on July 15, 2004, as a legal framework that aimed to organize the process of recognizing and registering political parties. This was considered a core requirement for participating in “fair and free” elections in post-2003. The order defined the political entity as “an organization, including a political party, of eligible voters who voluntarily associate on the

basis of common ideas, interests or views, for the purpose of articulating interests, obtaining influence and having their representatives elected to public office, so long as that organization of eligible voters is officially certified as a political entity by the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq.” (CPA Order 97).

It seems that this definition is confusing and ambiguous because it combines several political actors such as eligible voters, the election commission and political entities. It starts by describing the political parties as an “organization” to include all political entities in this definition. Thus, it does not draw clear distinctions between political parties and political. This order use these two terms interchangeably. However, this definition suffers from shortcomings in addressing the relationship between political parties and the problem collective actions that aim to secure the public, not a private good. This relationship has been addressed thoroughly and comprehensively by John Aldrich in his seminal book, *Why Parties?: The Origin and Transformation of Political Parties in America*. He notes that political parties “ are collections of individuals, so that virtually everything they do involves collective action, and they provide public good for their members, since much of what they do affects many, if not all, partisans”(Aldrich, 1995, p. 31) According to the order of (97) the political entity can be defined as “a person who intends to stand for election to public office, so long as the person is officially certified as a political entity by the Commission.”. (CPA Order, 97) Unfortunately, within the Iraq context and according to the CPA executive orders and Iraqi laws and regulations, the terms like political entity, political coalition, political block, political trend, independent candidates and political party are often used interchangeably and without precision. Thus, a generally accepted definition of political party is lacking.

While the above definition opens up the door for endless political parties to participate in elections, it considers any political party approved by the electoral commission based on specific regulations as legal, political parties. These regulations are left to be determined by the electoral commission which is granted “full discretion to define mechanisms for enforcing its regulations against any political entities.” These regulations include “the total number of eligible voters – as measured by signatures, personal marks, or other identifiable means – required for certification as a political entity, provided that the total number of eligible voters required for certification of organizations or individual persons shall not exceed 500.” (CPA Order, 97)

the CPA executive of 97 of 2004, and the subsequent Political Parties’ Law of 2015, did not address sufficiently the financial resources of the political parties. The executive of 97 order and the 2015 Political Parties Act only forbids all political parties from accepting any direct or indirect funding from armed groups or militia. This gave political parties the freedom to receive funds from outside the country, especially from foreign countries. The order expanded the authority of the electoral commission to impose penalties on those who fail “to achieve full transparency in all financial dealing. In this regard, the Commission may issue regulations concerning financial disclosure”. These regulations have never been applied to any political party since 2004, not only because of the forbearance in implementing laws and regulations which constrained corruption and money laundering which is the main sources of campaign financing.

In conclusion, the CPA Order 97 has been considered the legal framework for establishing political parties in post-2003. Its impact, as a path-dependent process, has

continued until the present day in Iraq. As Jeff Fischer, an international expert involved heavily in the Iraqi electoral process by enacting many laws and regulations issued by CPA and the Iraqi Electoral Commission, stated, “Political finance in transitional Iraq introduces some new issues for consideration. The first issue is the character of the funding source—secular, clerical or criminal.” Fischer explained this fact by saying “the dilemma facing policy-makers is that secular sources of funding are the only sources that are responsive to regulation. Religious sensitivities will not permit any form of supervision or accounting of indirect contributions made by clerical communities. Furthermore, the criminal and transnational elements will remain underground and fuse violence and transnational sources of political financing.” (Fischer et al., 2006, p. 80)

#### **4.5 The Political Parties Act 36 of 2015**

Regarding organizing of political party life in Iraq, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) Executive Order 97 was employed as a legal framework to regulate three national parliamentary elections (2005, 2010, 2014). The new political parties act submitted a proposal in 2006 which was passed by Council of Representatives on August 27, 2015. This act was used for the first time by the elections commission to regulate the elections of 2018.

For more than eleven years, Iraqi political entities, whether religious, secular or moderate, failed to reach an agreement about enacting a new political parties’ law for many reasons. Most of them feared the disclosure of their sources of funding to their constituencies and government authorities. They did not want to disclose the support they

received from foreign countries and supporters outside the country. They also were concerned that the government would finance the authorized parties as stipulated by its law, which might put them under its influence.

Under the pressure of public opinion, civil activists and international actors, the Iraqi Council of Representatives was forced to pass the political entities and parties Act 36 of 2015 that entails (61) articles, which sparked a public debate which continues up until the present. One of the most debated topics is that most of what is mentioned in the Act 36 of 2015 is inapplicable and not worth the paper on which it's written.

For instance, while CPA Order (97) did not mention anything about the citizenship and the nationality of those who apply for establishing or registering their political parties and their foreign branches and their source of financing, the 2015 Act emphasizes these issues alongside the issue of Iraqi citizenship. The law states that “every political party or political entity shall be established based on Iraqi citizenship and in a manner not inconsistent with the provisions of the Iraqi Permanent Constitution of 2005.” The law also emphasizes that every political party or political entity cannot be established based on racism, terrorism, takfir which means 'to declare someone an infidel' or blasphemy, or sectarian, ethnic or national intolerance." It is worth mentioning here that Iraqi citizenship is not clearly defined clearly by the constitution. Thus, the Act refers to some of the controversial articles in the constitution. When we apply these criteria to the prevailing political parties and political entities, we find most of them are from 2003 and are, ideologically, sectarian, chauvinistic or racist parties.

The objection here is there is no clear definition of the terms that mentioned in Article One, section 1,2,3. in the Act 36 of 2015 such as racism and sectarian bigotry as well as terrorism or takfirism. Hence, it is extremely difficult to define Islamic and Kurdish political parties according to this Act as national political parties. Article eight, section 4, stipulates that "the establishment of the party and its activities shall not take the form of military or paramilitary organizations, nor shall it be associated with any armed group." In reality, we have seen many political parties, and political entities, which still have military wings, and they participated in the elections of 2018. These parties were not prevented from participating in the elections. The laxity in enforcing this law and many others has been justified by political instability and the ongoing and existential threat of terrorism.

In addition, Article Nine, section 3 in the Act 36 of 2015, clearly prevents those who have been accused of political, administrative and financial corruption, terrorism, murder, international crimes, and being a member of the Bacth Party holding high rank in the party under Saddam Husayn's regime, from joining existing political parties. Surprisingly, the political parties act does not attempt to determine punishments which should be applied to those who violate this article. In summary, the Political Parties Act 36 of 2015 has many shortcomings and challenges and cannot be used to overcome the problem of political parties which we argue it is a necessary and sufficient condition of establishing and stabilizing the emerging democratization process in Iraq.

There is no doubt that the Iraqi Political Parties Act 36 of 2015 is a turning point in the transition process in Iraq after 2003. One of the important goals of this Act is building a legal framework governing political life in Iraq and the legacy of the American invasion

of Iraq. However, when we read and analyze the act carefully, we find that, while the law seeks to address all the shortcomings in the CPA Order 97 and aims to be a step forward for Iraq, the law contains provisions to promote the incumbents' parties and protects them from being held accountable and monitoring their sources of financing. Clearly, money plays an essential role in sustaining the impact of political parties prior to elections. This money is needed to build and run their headquarters and branches in the Iraqi Provinces. The money is also needed for building their network of supporters and strengthening their social and political aims and enhancing their media and propaganda presence in society.

Even after the elections, parties still need money, either to sustain their electoral victory or to address their electoral failure. Thus, money can be considered the necessary condition for establishing and maintaining the life of every political party. In the Political Parties Act of 2015, this point was not given sufficient consideration, and the Act did not overlook the sources of the financing of the political parties. For instance, in section (8) paragraph (33), the Act addresses the origins of the party's funding insufficiently. These sources are: First: the contributions of its members; second, donations and private and government grants; third, the party investments; and fourth, the financial subsidies from the state budget according to the criteria stated in this law) (Act Number 35 of 2015). It appears that the Act has addressed only the direct source of funding and not the secondary sources of financing

In a country where rampant corruption has far-reaching spillover effects on elections, indirect funding to political parties and the shadow economy has played an increasingly significant role in manipulating the outcomes of the elections. Concerning the

party's members participation, the Act did not specify a specific ceiling for their contributions as stated in Article (35) section (2): "The total amount of contribution made by party's members should not be bound by a certain ceiling." Thus, any donor whether she/he represents a national or international organization recognized or not recognized by the State can contribute an unspecified amount of money without him/her being asked to disclose the source of this money. The Act also mentions other sources of funding such as publications, media, social and cultural activities, banking benefits, investments, and property ownership. In this regard, the Act makes no mention about the source of these investments which means it allows political parties to make investments outside of Iraq and receive funds from foreign donors. These practices contribute to promoting money laundering and corruption which undermine the electoral process in Iraq.

As far as government funding to political parties is concerned, Article 42 states that political parties receive an annual subsidy from the federal budget through the Ministry of Finance. Thus, one problem is that the Act did not specify the amount of this annual subsidy and left the approval to the Ministry of Finance based on a recommendation of the Council of Ministers. This point poses a significant threat to the transition to democracy process because there were tens of political parties formed in post-2003 and, during the economic crisis which that followed the collapsed of oil prices from \$114 to under \$30 the state might not have enough financial capacity to successfully subsidize all these parties. Nevertheless, there is another potential problem with this article regarding the favoritism involving personal relationships and the corrosive influence of increasing or decreasing these subsidies to particular parties because there are no limits for these subsidies according to this Act.

Interestingly, the Act prohibits parties from accepting direct donations from outside the country by indicating that “All donations from foreign persons, states or organizations are prohibited.”. Nevertheless, this act allows political parties to accept donations from anyone on the condition of approval of the Political Parties Affairs Department, which is affiliated with the Electoral Commission, not the Ministry of Justice, as is the case in most countries of the world. This newly established department has no power to oversee and audit the political parties’ source of funding. Hence, the Ministry of Justice has no role in holding political parties accountable for any violations and other issues regarding funding, or establishing and monitoring parties. Currently, despite the Political Parties Act being inactive and merely ink on paper, except for the registration process by the election commission mentioned in the CPA Executive Order number 97, there is a continuing intense debate inside the Iraqi Parliament, Government and NGOs about amending or revoking this Act and issuing another

Table 2 Elections General Information in Iraq 2005-2018

|  | First Elections                                     |   | Second Elections  | Third Elections   | Forth Elections   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | Registered voters                                   | Elections of Jan 30, 2005 Tran<br>14,270,000<br>N=(27.5)<br>Million | Elections of Dec 15, 2005<br>15,568,702<br>N=(27.5)<br>Million          | Elections of Mar 7, 2010<br>19,240.1<br>N=(35)<br>Million | Elections of Apr.30, 2014<br>20,913.96N<br>=(37)<br>Million           |
| Turnout and Valid Votes                  | 8,550,871<br>(58.26)                                | 12,396,631<br>(76.36)   | 12,002.9<br>(62.39)   | 12,388,317<br>(61.76)                                     | 10,364,697<br>(44.5)  |
| Invalid votes                            | 94,305<br>(01.1)                                    | 205,498<br>(01.7)   |   |   | 800,000   |
| Total Number of seats                    | 275   | 275   | 325   | 328   | 329   |
| Results Day                              | Feb 17, 2005<br>(18) Days                           | Jan, 21, 2006<br>(37) Days  | Mar, 26, 2010<br>(19) Days<br>May 14, 2010<br>Manual Count<br>(98) Days | May 19, 2014<br>(39) Days                                 | May, 13, 13<br>(2) Days<br>Aug, 19, 2018<br>Manual Count<br>(67) Days |
| Total Comp& Appeals                      | 138   | 338   |   | 890   | 1881  |
| Political Entities and Candidates Number | 98  | 256<br>7648   | 159<br>6200   | 107<br>(39C+68P)<br>9916                                  | 88<br>(23C+45P+19I)<br>6990   |
| First Session                            | Mar.16, 2005<br>(44) Days                           | Mar.16, 2006<br>(91) Days   | June.14, 2010<br>(98) Days  | June 1, 2014<br>(91) Days                                 | Sep 3, 2018<br>(112) Days   |
| Electoral Law                            | Closed-Party List<br>Proportional<br>Representation | Closed-Party List<br>Proportional<br>Representation                 | Open-Party List<br>Proportional<br>Representation                       | Open-Party List<br>Proportional<br>Representation         | Open-Party List<br>Proportional<br>Representation                     |

## **5. Quantitative Analysis of Trust in Government Institutions and Voter Turnout**

### **5.1 Introduction: Trust and Voter Turnout**

The impact of the 2003 U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq is a crucial starting point to analyze the importance of trust in formal political institutions. We argue that Iraq, as a unique case study with regards to political systems, has experienced a transitional process from an extremely repressive dictatorial regime that ruled Iraq from 1963 to 2003, to a semi-democracy or competitive authoritarian regime. With much scholarly debate about the proper framework to analyze the outcomes of elections in post-authoritarian and post-conflict countries, this study will illustrate how institutions are a leading explanatory variable that explain how voting behavior has evolved during the Iraq elections that took place in 2005, 2010, 2014, 2018.

One enduring consequence of the 2003 invasion and occupation of Iraq on the process of state-building and nation-building, is that the US Administration set new rules of the game to rebuild all aspects of political, economic and even social life in post-2003 Iraq. The transitional process from a totalitarian and authoritarian regime to a democratic regime still has unexpected, unintended, and reverse outcomes. However, the new state has been designed based on ethno-sectarian criteria as we shall see in the following chapters. These boundaries have influenced voters' decision-making process in post-2003. Thus, Iraqi voters have traditionally been characterized by scholars as polarized along sectarian, ethnic and tribal lines.

The underlying purpose of this section is to analyze quantitatively the relationship between trust in political institutions and voter turnout in the outcomes of four national elections: [eliminate parentheses] (2005, 2010, 2014, and 2018). In terms of the impact of formal institutions on voter turnout, our main argument is that the dramatic decline in voter turnout in the 2018 election can be traced back to a combination of three phenomena:

1. Trust in government institutions has been undermined because of the state's failure to provide essential services and solving resolve problems inherited from the old regime.
2. Party affiliation and loyal political patrons have become more critical and significant in determining who will win elections. However, we argue that, while heads of parties have mobilized the partisan voters, independent voters have been demobilized by religious and tribal leaders.
3. Socioeconomic factors, such as age and education, are critical variables to consider when we analyze the outcome of these elections.

Therefore, we argue that voting in elections has become less important for the new voters who entered the electorate in 2018 and concurrently voting has become more important to the supporters and loyalists of current political parties. Hence, we will attempt to assess whether supporters can be considered as independent voters or turn to be "obedient clients" within the patron-client networks that emerge in post-2003 Iraq and shape the institutional structures. The same theory can be applied to those who possess high levels of education and also those who are illiterate and have little or no education.

The reason for this is that mobilization efforts have significantly shifted from mobilizing the general public to the “obedient clients” during elections. That is, we assume that one of the most crucial goals of holding elections in Iraq today, according to the majority of Iraq voters, is to maintain the status quo and reinforce the path-dependent nature of the post-2003 political order. This is not because voters want to maintain the “path-dependent nature of the post-2003 order but because the institutional framework of the political process that implanted by the US administration or the Collation Provisional Authority (CPA) and amended by current political parties leads to maintain and consolidate this path-dependent.

## **5.2 Theory**

The relationship between trust in government institutions and voter turnout in post-authoritarian countries in general and in the Middle East and North Africa countries in particular suffers from a lack of well-grounded theoretical and empirical investigations. Regarding this relationship, Pippa Norris, in her influential study, “Electoral Engineering: Voting Rules and Political Behavior,” argues that “the propensity to participate or abstain is a habit of the heart acquired early in life and reinforced through experience of successive elections, along with other closely related civic attitudes and values such as partisan attachments and political trust.”(Norris, 2004, p. 154) Norris suggests that the level of political trust is among the most important factors determining voter turnout. Thus, trust in government institutions plays a pivotal role in fostering or impeding the emerging transition to democracy process.

This study considers that public trust in government institutions is one of the most important sources of polity legitimacy. In voter turnout literature, scholars generally emphasize trust in political institutions, such as the elections management bodies (EMBs), because they are directly responsible for running the electoral process. For instance, some researchers have argued that “citizens are more likely to express confidence in elections when EMBs display de-facto autonomy, and less likely to do so when mass media disseminate information independent of government control.” (Kerr & Lührmann, 2017, p. 50)

Building on the measurement of political trust and citizens’ satisfaction with the political system, and by using them as leading explanatory variables, Kimmo Grönlund and Maija Setälä (2007) found, in the European context, that “trust in parliament and satisfaction with democracy increase turnout, whereas trust in politicians has a smaller impact on turnout, and satisfaction with the incumbent government does not affect turnout at all.”. Thus, trust in parliament has particularly important implications for predicting voting behavior on an individual level.

Notwithstanding, under authoritarian regimes, the extent to which the level of voter turnout can be explained partially by the size of the patronage networks. This means that the political party's power depends upon the size of its patronage networks within the government institutions and the larger society. It seems possible that this understanding implicitly is due to the theory that “citizens are turned into clients, rewarding the favors and services they receive from their patrons with loyalty in terms of electoral votes. Elections that are to at least minimally resemble their counterparts in democratic political

systems must include the regular participation of oppositional actors.”(Koehler, 2008, pp. 986–987)

There is, therefore, a definite need to explain what is meant by the term “political trust” and how it can be measured. In terms of the political trust definition, a much-debated question is whether a trust is really important for political participation and other aspects of the democratic and governing process. For instance, Braithwaite, Levi, & Hardin (1998) have raised questions about the relationship between trust and law, specifically “when does good governance depend on strong laws strongly enforced, and when it does depend on trust? Are the two mutually exclusive? Does one drive the other out, or do they reinforce each other?”(Hardin, 1998, p. 1)

According to Russell Hardin (1998), the term “trust in government” will promote not only mechanisms and procedures that modern government follow in modern society, “but the trust among themselves [government teams] that enables its citizens to have is very important in their lives”(Hardin, 1998, p. 10). He makes a comparison between trust in government and trust in individuals. Moreover, the starting point of trust are the individuals, not the government and trust is extended largely when they take a position toward particular issues. In many rational choice theories, a debate is taking place between individual self-interest and society self-interest concerning the “political institutions are affected by people whose motives are heavy, if not entirely, self-interested”(Hardin, 1998, pp. 19–20).

Braithwaite, Levi, & Hardin (1998) are probably the best-known their work of the trust and governance from interdisciplinary perspectives (psychology, economics, political

science, and philosophy). From a rational choice perspective, the political scientists Hardin et al.[.] argue that the causes of why citizens cannot trust government is due to the lack of information available to judge the trustworthiness of governmental agencies. Furthermore, it is difficult for ordinary citizens to determine whether a particular institution can be characterized as trustworthy or not if the voter does not have enough information. This problem is exacerbated when the government does not possess adequate transparency and accountability. What is important, according to Hardin, is to realize “the general interest can be served by a government of millions of bureaucrats who are fundamentally self-interest, who are motivated not by unusual public spirit but primarily by income and career”(Hardin, 1998, p. 20).

In this dissertation, we adopt the definition of trust offered by Margret Levi (1998). Levi’s definition encompasses all forms of cooperation between two parts of the elections process (voters and candidates or patrons and clients). She states that the causal direction between the government and citizen as “A trusts B because he presumes it is in B's interest to act in a way consistent with A’s interest. Further, trust is relational. The initial granting of trust depends on one person's evaluation that another will be trustworthy.”(Hardin et al., 1998, p. 78). She argues that the government’s capacity to generate trust depends on the citizens’ perception that its members are honest and trustworthy.

Levi argues that “Government actors are like other actors in that the major means for establishing their trustworthiness are proven character, demonstrated consistency of trustworthiness, and encapsulated interest.”(Levi, 1998, p. 86) She has provided an empirical definition of trust in governmental institutions as “one that has procedures for

making and implementing a policy that meets prevailing standards of fairness, and it is a government that is capable of credible commitments.”(Levi, 1998, p. 88).

Equally important, for Bo Rothstein (2004), is that trust in government can be the product of the interaction between “government institutions and individual citizens.” He uses the term social trust. He depicts the social trust as the main source of a government’s legitimacy. He also finds strong empirical evidence that “equal and fair treatment by public agencies responsible for the implementation of services seems to be an important factor in explaining variations in social trust.”(Kornai, Rothstein, Rose-Ackerman, & Collegium Budapest, 2004, p. 21)

Furthermore, Charles Tilly (2005), holds the view that we can understand trust and distrust in terms of an effective relationship networking among formal and informal institutions. He provides a new definition of trust. Tilly believes that trust “consist of ramified interpersonal connections, consisting mainly of strong ties, within which people set valued, consequential, long-term resources and enterprises at risk to the malfeasance, mistakes, or failures of others.”(Tilly, 2005, p. 12) This definition has been broadened to include the risk of government failure caused by wrongful conduct by public officials in affecting citizens’ feelings of trust.

In terms of the measurement of political trust, this term can be measured by looking at questions which interviewers have posed to Iraqis. Thus, we are going to pay attention to the questions of trust in government, parliament, political parties, and election management bodies. According to the data that was taken from four surveys, the main

question that measured the trust in formal institutions is: how much trust do you have in the government, parliament, the judiciary, the political parties?

Measuring trust in government, and in public perceptions, has varied over time. Trust depends highly on citizens' recent reaction or attitudes toward the government's performance. It also varies substantially from one country to another. Hence, we are going to use the measurement of government performance to supplement our analysis. However, the relationship between political trust and voter turnout will be investigated by running a binary logistic regression analysis to analyze the impact of trust in government, parliament, political parties and election commission on voter turnout. Other factors such as income, education, age, and gender will also be considered in our analysis.

### **5.3 The Dependent Variable**

In previous studies on voter turnout in both developed and developing countries, voter turnout has been measured by asking respondents: "Did you vote in the last parliamentary election?" Thus, throughout this dissertation, the answer to this question is going to be our primary dependent variable. This dichotomous variable asks Iraqi voters whether they participated in the last parliamentary elections or not. It is coded using either a (0) for no vote or a (1) for a vote.

Table 3 Summary Statistic for the Dependent Variable “Voting in Elections”\*\*

|         |          | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Std. Deviation | Mean |
|---------|----------|-----------|---------|---------------|----------------|------|
| Valid   | Not Vote | 1384      | 26.2    | 27.2          | 0.445          | 0.73 |
|         | Vote     | 3708      | 70.2    | 72.8          |                |      |
|         | Total    | 5092      | 96.4    | 100.0         |                |      |
| Missing | System   | 189       | 3.6     |               |                |      |
| Total   |          | 5281      | 100.0   |               |                |      |

## 5.4 Models and Independent Variables

In order to specify our models, we include four sets of covariates variables. Every set represents a model which measures particular attributes of the relationship between dependent variable and independent variables. The first set of variables represents the basic model which involves the strongest predictors for voting in many countries around the world. These variables are age, education, income, gender, and marital status. This basic model considers one of the most widely accepted models in studying voter turnout. It assumes that educational attainment, advanced age groups, and gender are the factors that we assume can play an extremely significant role in shaping the voter decision-making process.

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\*\* Source: Arab Barometer II, III (2010-2012); WVS (2013); Arab Transformations Project (2014): n= 5281

In the second model, we add two independent variables to the basic model which focuses on measuring the relationship between voter turnout and partisanship. These variables are party identification and trust in political parties. The third model highlights the causal relationship between trust in elections management bodies and voter turnout. However, there were no questions in the surveys which measure trust in elections management bodies directly. Nevertheless, we are going to use questions which measure some practical aspects of the electoral process, such as the fairness, respondents' attitude toward the elections, votes counted fairly, and bribing voters during the elections campaign.

The fourth model involves respondents' evaluation of their confidence and trust in parliament and trust in government. We assume that, while these two variables are closely related and complete each other, they measure different aspects of political trust. Trust in parliament assumes that people have trust in the incumbent office holder. On the other hand, trust in government takes into consideration the level of government performance as an indicator to mobilize people to turn out and vote. The leading independent variables here are trust in government and trust in parliament.

Table 4 Summary and Descriptive Statistics for all Independent Variables<sup>††</sup>

|                     | N    | Minimum | Maximum | Mean    | Std. Deviation |
|---------------------|------|---------|---------|---------|----------------|
| Age                 | 5262 | 1       | 6       | 2.22    | 1.214          |
| Income              | 5228 | 1       | 99      | 3.50    | 9.737          |
| Gender              | 5262 | 0       | 1       | .48     | .500           |
| Education           | 5260 | 1       | 6       | 2.90    | 1.389          |
| Marital Status      | 5262 | 1       | 99      | 1.81    | 1.976          |
| Trust in Gov        | 5215 | 1       | 9       | 2.90    | 1.062          |
| Trust in Parl       | 5176 | 1       | 9       | 3.31    | 1.130          |
| Trust in Po_Parties | 5213 | 1       | 9       | 3.26    | 1.128          |
| Party ID            | 5092 | 3000    | 3018    | 3002.23 | 4.340          |
| Vote Counted Fairly | 1105 | 1       | 4       | 2.21    | 1.014          |
| Gov_Prefor_Cre_Jobs | 4062 | 1       | 8       | 3.36    | .960           |
| Gov_Prefor_Narr_Gap | 4062 | 1       | 8       | 3.41    | 1.202          |
| Valid N (listwise)  | 1006 |         |         |         |                |

## 5.5 The Hypotheses

The hypothesis we are testing are based on the political science literature discussed earlier. While most of the literature focuses on political trust in institutions and government

<sup>††</sup> Source: Arab Barometer II, III (2010-2012); WVS (2013); Arab Transformations Project (2014): n= 5281

performance, with particular attention to the impact of trust in elections administration, we are going to use trust in government as the leading independent variable. We assume that there is a general perception among Iraq's electorate which perceive the elections management body or the Independent High Electoral Commission of Iraq (IHEC) as a part of governmental institutions. Unfortunately, there is no question in the surveys which asked respondents to evaluate their confidence and trust in the Iraqi's Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC).

1. Hypothesis 1: We expect to find a significant relationship between age, education, income and voter participation. At the same time, we do not expect significant differences between material status and gender. Regarding the age variable, many scholarly studies have found a strong positive relationship between age and voter participation. These findings provide evidence for the "habit formation" hypothesis. This hypothesis argues that, when people vote in elections, much of their behavior is the result of inherited habits (Model 1)
2. Hypothesis 2: We do not expect statistically significant relationship between trust in political parties and voter participation. This is because, according to what we observe on the ground, there is no established political party system in Iraq. At the same time, it is extremely difficult to characterize hundreds of registered political parties as national political parties which claim to represent all segments of Iraqi society, If such a party exists, it suffers from lack of grassroots support among the general

public. Thus, we assume that the larger the number of political parties competing in a post-authoritarian election, the lower the voter turnout. In connection with this hypothesis, we do not expect that party identification has an impact in mobilizing voters to participate in elections. This is due, not only to the lack of an inadequate legal framework and lack of established political parties, but also due to the PR system which has been proven empirically to increase voter turnout elsewhere but works in the opposite way in Iraq's election by suppressing turnout levels. Ultimately, the PR system might contribute indirectly to the dramatic decline of voter turnout in the elections of 2018. (Model 2)

3. Hypothesis 3 We did not expect to find evidence of the impact of the fairness of election management body on voter turnout. Thus, we expect that electoral corruption, ballot rigging, and voters bribery which were very widespread in the last parliamentary elections of 2018, have significance impact on declining voter turnout in this elections.
4. Hypothesis 4: The higher the level of trust in government and the parliament, the higher the voter turnout. We also expect the correlation will be statistically significant between trust in government and parliament and voter participation. We assume that the overlapping and interrelated relations between the government and parliament within the parliamentary system has made Iraqi voters more confused in drawing clear lines between the powers of government and those of parliament.

This confusion is clear when we scrutinize the idea of the separation of power in the Iraqi parliamentary system according to Iraq's constitution. This constitution stipulates that the government and prime minister should be formed from all the political parties in the parliament. Thus, the government and its members are part of the Council of Deputies. That is, those who have trust in government are more likely to turn out and vote on election day and vice versa. Still, we do not expect to find high multicollinearity between trust in government and trust in parliament.

## **5.6 Socioeconomic Factors and Voter Turnout Model 1**

While it is beyond the scope of this study to explain in detail how socioeconomic factors influence voting behavior in Iraq, we will focus briefly on the role of age, education, income, marital status and gender. These variables have been widely used and have attracted significant research focus in predicting voter turnout in developed and developing countries. These variables were chosen because we argue that they are closely related to the formal institutions and they are well-documented and codified in every citizen's record. We have excluded urban-rural and region variables because we believe, based on our observations, that there was no reason to divide Iraqi society into urban-rural segments considering that the rural areas have been incorporated into urban areas after years of devastating neglect of most aspects of the agricultural sector in Iraq. This problem has accelerated as a result of the oil boom since the 1950s and farmers' migration from rural to urban areas. The other socio-economic factors, such as religion or sectarian and ethnic affiliation, are also excluded in this model because we argue that these variables can be considered as informal institutions. However, it is better to be analyze the impact of ethno-

sectarian affiliations on voter turnout in detail in the third part of this dissertation which deals with the relationship between voter turnout and informal institutions.

## **5.7 Deceptive Statistics**

There is general agreement among social scientists that age is one of the most accurate predictors of voting and political participation. This agreement has been built on the assumption that indicates that when new voters attain voting age, usually at 18 years old, and they participate in elections for the first time, they are most likely to vote in subsequent elections. It is possible that this assumption is valid if we think that voting in an election will become a habit. This is called the habit formation hypothesis. (Aldrich, Montgomery, & Wood, 2011). Thus, we assume that there is a positive correlation between voter participation and age. This relationship was built on the rule of thumb that states older citizens are more likely to vote than youth because they have more resources in terms of time, money and political knowledge. While this assumption seems to be valid in well-established western democracies and emerging democracies, it becomes very complicated to use it in analyzing the motivations of young voters who constitute the majority of voters not only in Iraq but also in the rest of MENA region.

Table 5 Descriptive Statistics Model 1 Voter Turnout by Socioeconomic Factors

|                    | N    | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation | Variance |
|--------------------|------|---------|---------|------|----------------|----------|
| Age                | 5262 | 1       | 6       | 2.22 | 1.214          | 1.474    |
| Income             | 5228 | 1       | 99      | 3.50 | 9.737          | 94.799   |
| Education_2        | 5260 | 1       | 6       | 2.90 | 1.389          | 1.930    |
| Female             | 5262 | 0       | 1       | .48  | .500           | .250     |
| Marital Status     | 5262 | 1       | 99      | 1.81 | 1.976          | 3.904    |
| Valid N (listwise) | 5226 |         |         |      |                |          |

Our analysis of the impact of age of Iraqi voters reveals that, while the majority of the Iraqi electorate is between (18-29) who represent (37.8%), the young voters (18-39) have constituted the large percentage (44.1%) of those who they did vote in the elections. We notice that the turnout levels of young Iraqi between 18 and 39 are high. It is worth noting that the young voters' motivations to vote cannot be explained only by an age-related variation to participate. This can be related to the fact that people of this age are more susceptible to vote-buying. That is, while voters aged (40-and below) have suffered from a lack resources which has mobilized them to vote, such as jobs, education and financial stability, they are more likely to be susceptible to vote-buying and ethno-sectarian mobilization. This can be observed in the table below.

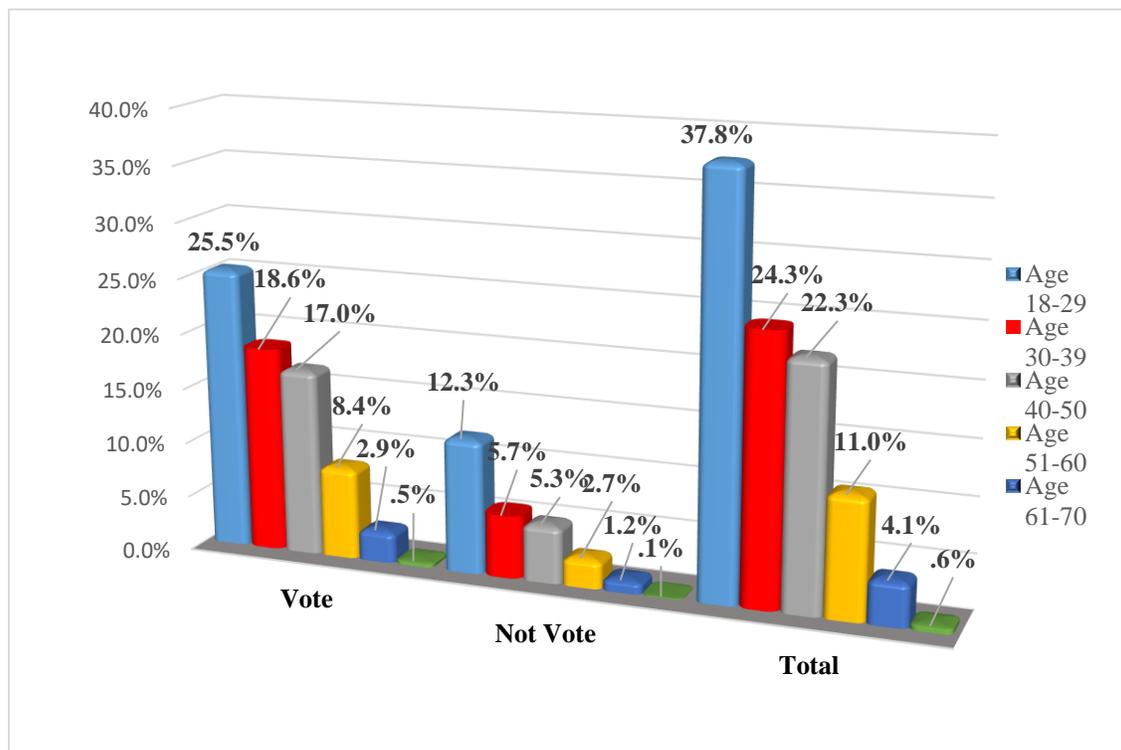


Figure 5.1 Voter Turnout By Age 2005-2018

Concerning the relationship between education and voter motivations, [the descriptive statistic results obtained from the surveys data indicates that the majority of Iraqi electorate who voted are illiterate or hold an elementary or secondary education (51%). Consequently, the higher the education levels obtained by Iraqi citizens, the less likely they are to participate in elections. This result may be explained by the fact that increasing mobilization resources, such as political knowledge, interest in politics, time, money and other variables might have a negative relationship on voters' motivations. There are, however, other possible explanations, such as those who hold high levels of education level are less vulnerable to vote-buying and electoral corruption.

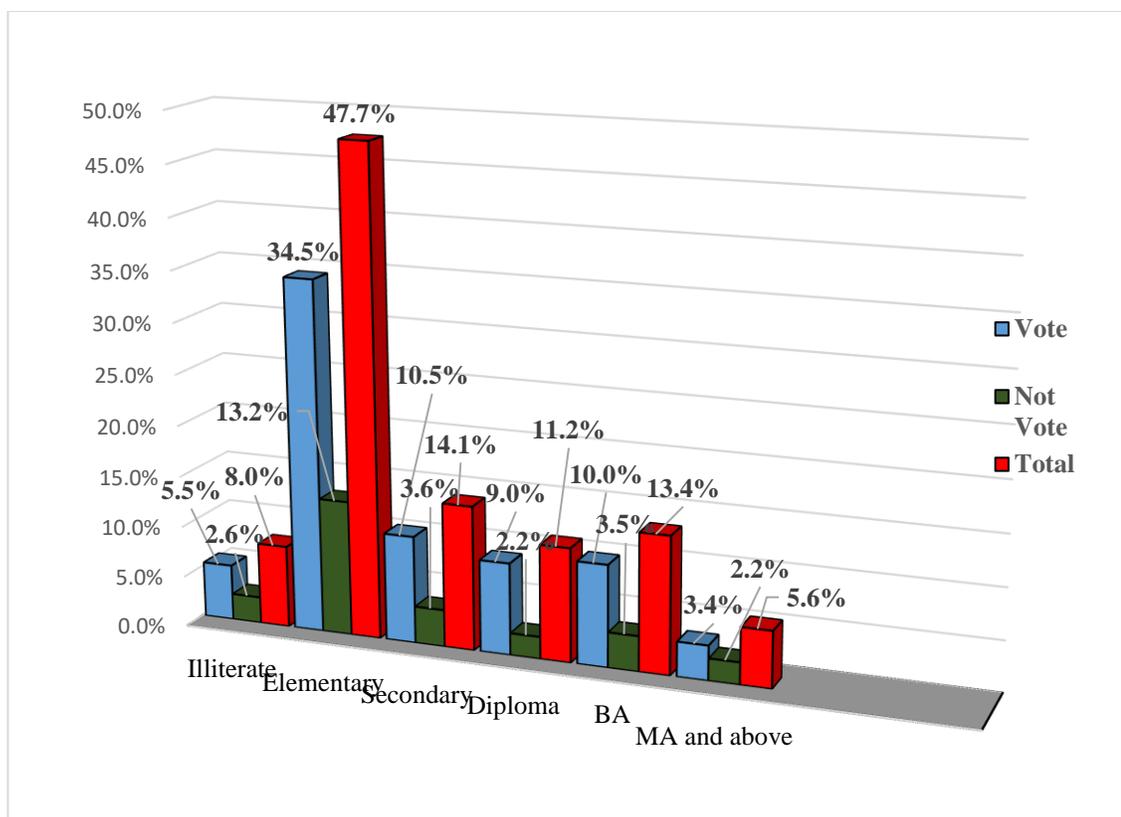


Figure 5.2 Voter Turnout By Education

In well-established democracies, income plays an essential role in mobilizing the wealthy to vote. For instance, it has been empirically proven that individuals with high income are more likely to vote in elections than low income individuals. This might be attributed to the fact that we do not expect high-income individuals to vote against of any party or candidate which will adversely affect their self-interest and income redistribution in particular. That is, in Iraq, we notice that wealthy or rich people have no incentive to participate in the election because of the lack of any income redistribution policy which can affect their self-interest. Thus, we assume that rich are less likely to vote in Iraqis elections. In contrast, we have noticed that the poor have more incentive to participate and vote in every election. The survey data reported here appear to support the assumption that

the poor have a greater incentive to participate in elections than rich people. From the data in Figure below, it is apparent that those who have claimed that their income is not enough in covering all the expense represents (65%) of the Iraq voters.

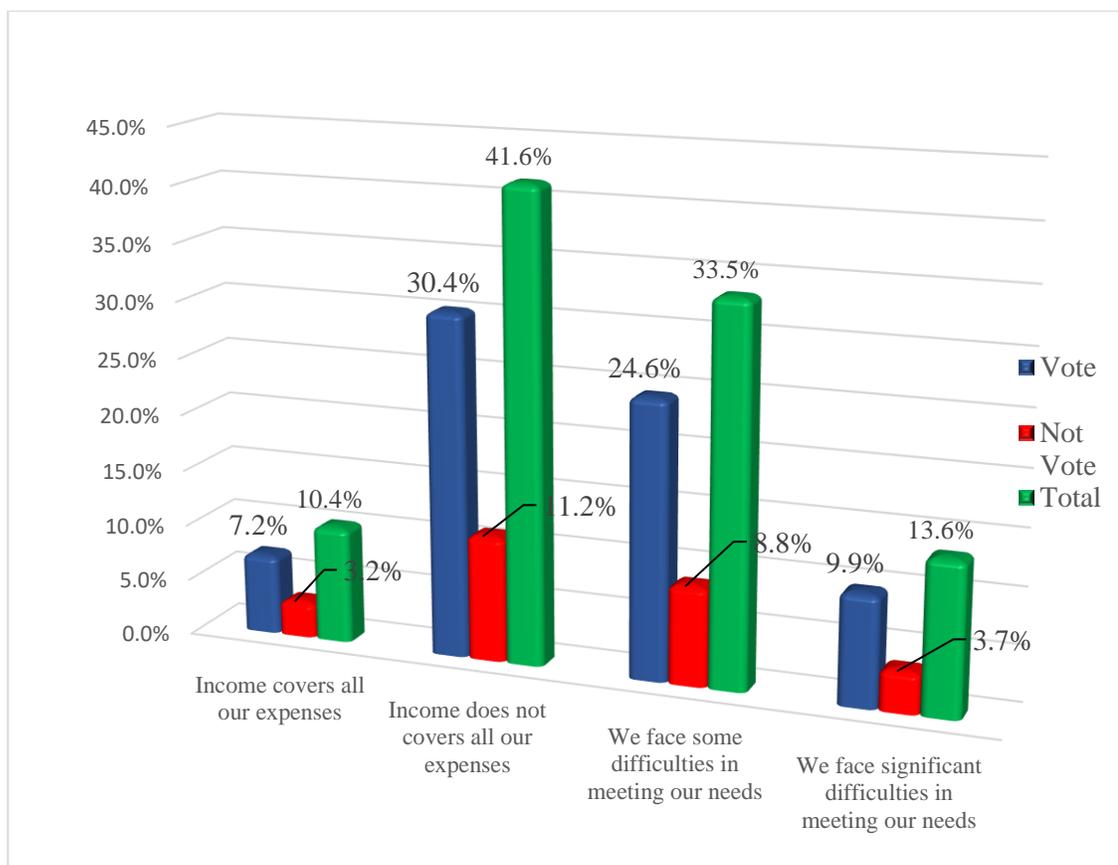


Figure 5.3 Voter Turnout By Income (2005-2018)

In conclusion, while a full discussion of why elderly, highly educated, and rich people have generally boycotted and abstained from participating in elections since 2005 lies beyond the scope of this study, it is almost certain that young, less educated and poor voters, who participated overwhelmingly, are more likely to be targeted by politicians and their brokers for vote-buying. There are still many unanswered questions about the impact

of socio-economic factors on voting behavior not only in Iraq but in post-authoritarian societies in the MENA region.

In terms of the relationship between gender and voting in elections, the data show that males have a greater incentive to vote than women. The data shows that 40% of males who were interviewed indicated that they do vote while only 32.8% of women indicated that they voted in the 2005 elections. It seems possible that these results are due to the patriarchal structure of Iraqi society in which women's political participation is underestimated and discouraged by men. In many cases, observers found that men vote on behalf of their women family members. These cases have been recorded as one of the types of electoral violations according to the international and independent observers (Mumtaz, 2010). Further studies investigating the relationship between gender and voting behavior in Iraq should be a future area of research.

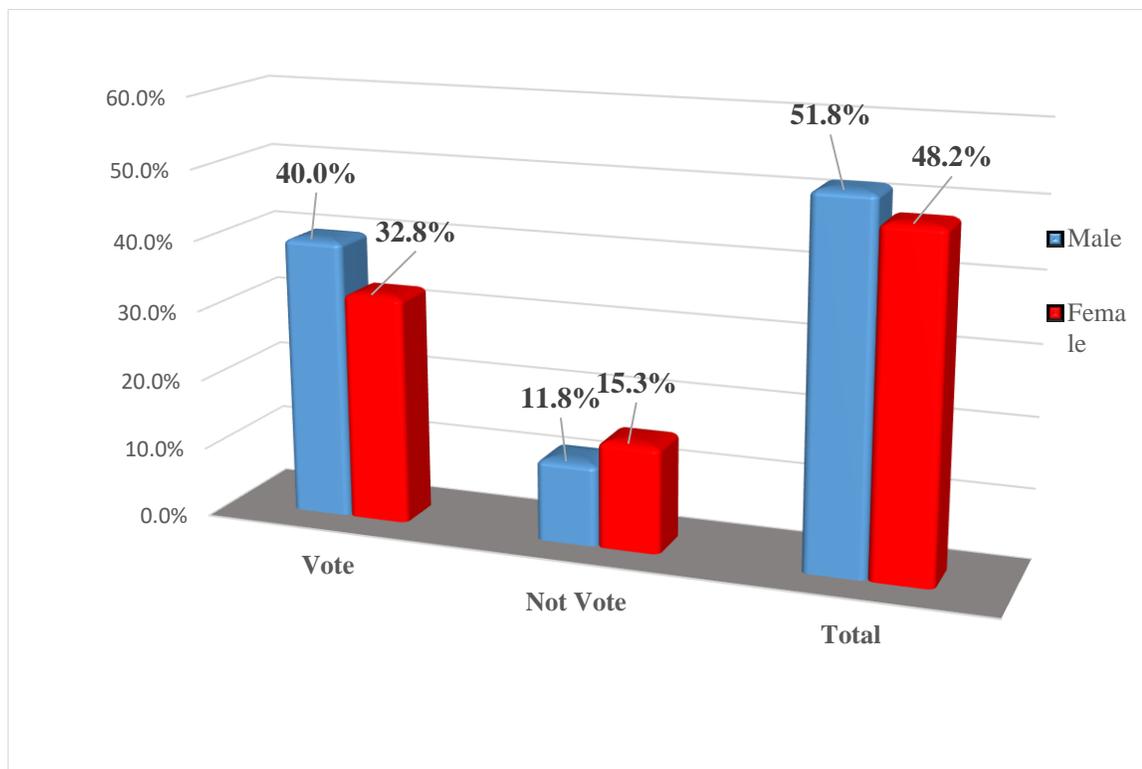


Figure 5.4 Voter Turnout By Gender in Iraq Elections

## 5.8 Logistic Regression Results

Binary Logistic Regression analysis was used to predict the probabilities of deciding to vote using four important socioeconomic predictors: age, education, income, gender, marital status. The regression table below reveals that a binary logistic model managed to predict 72% of the sample correctly. This model uses the below equation to explain the effect of socioeconomic variables on voter motivation:

$$\text{Voter Turnout} = \beta_0 + \beta \text{ Age} + \beta \text{ Income} + \beta \text{ Education} + \beta \text{ Gender} + \beta \text{ Marital Status}$$

Table 6 Logistic Regression Results: Voter Turnout by Socioeconomic Factors

| <i>Dependent variable:</i> |   |
|----------------------------|---|
|                            | Turnout                                     |
| Age                        | 0.082***<br>(0.032)                         |
| Income                     | 0.008**<br>(0.004)                          |
| Education                  | 0.002<br>(0.024)                            |
| Female                     | -0.476***<br>(0.065)                        |
| Marital_Status             | 0.139**<br>(0.067)                          |
| Constant                   | 0.774***<br>(0.139)                         |
| Observations               | 5,057                                       |
| Log Likelihood             | -2,915.353                                  |
| Akaike Inf. Crit.          | 5,842.705                                   |
| Note:                      | <i>*p&lt;0.1; **p&lt;0.05; ***p&lt;0.01</i> |

## 1.27. The Results: -

### 5.9.3 Age and Voter Turnout

What can be seen in the above table is that the estimation of age indicates that there is a significant positive relationship between age and voting. That is to say, the younger the voters are, the more likely they will participate in elections. This relationship has a very small positive coefficient. That is, with each year of advancing age, the probability of voting in elections increases by 0.082% ( $p = 0.009980$ ) at the level of  $P.value < (0.001)$ . Additionally, the regression coefficient estimate has a positive value of (0.082). That is,

for every unit increase in age, the probability of an individual turning out to vote increases by (0.082), which means the likelihood of voting will be higher among young in comparison to elderly voters.

### 5.9.3 Income and Voter Turnout

Because a relatively strong positive correlation between income and voter turnout difference has been found in most established democracies, the binary logistic results reveal that there is a positive relationship between income and voting in the Iraqi context. As we hypothesized, the higher the income of voters, the less likely they are to turn out to vote on election day because the regression coefficient is very small (0.008%). With every increasing point in income, the probability of voting increases by 0.008% (P.value = 0.042277), with the significance level set to  $<0.05$ .

The income variable is coded based on whether the income individuals earn to cover all their living expenses, does not cover all the living expenses ],facing difficulties in meeting their basic financial There is ample evidence in the clientelism and vote-buying literature that there was a strong correlation between the poverty level and voting in elections. This positive relationship indicates that the poor, who already represent the largest group of Iraqi voters, have been were increasingly targeted by politicians during elections. Further empirical investigation is needed to shed greater light on the mechanisms underlying the relationship between poverty or income level and elections in Iraq. Not surprisingly, according to many international organizations, Iraq is considered one of the poorest and most corrupt countries not only in the Middle East but in the World.

Table 7. Corruption in Iraq 2003-2018

| Year | Total # of Countries | Iraq Rank | Iraq's score |
|------|----------------------|-----------|--------------|
| 2003 | 133                  | 113       | 2.2          |
| 2004 | 145                  | 129       | 2.1          |
| 2005 | 158                  | 137       | 2.2          |
| 2006 | 163                  | 160       | 1.9          |
| 2007 | 179                  | 178       | 1.5          |
| 2008 | 179                  | 178       | 1.3          |
| 2009 | 180                  | 176       | 1.5          |
| 2010 | 178                  | 175       | 1.5          |
| 2011 | 182                  | 175       | 1.8          |
| 2012 | 174                  | 169       | 1.8          |
| 2013 | 175                  | 171       | 1.6          |
| 2014 | 174                  | 170       | 1.6          |
| 2015 | 168                  | 161       | 1.6          |
| 2016 | 176                  | 166       | 1.7          |
| 2017 | 180                  | 169       | 1.8          |
| 2018 | 180                  | 168       | 1.8          |

**CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS INDEX 2003-2018**  
<https://www.transparency.org/>

### 5.9.3 Education and Voter Turnout

In contrast to what it was expected, the level of education, as measured by educational attainment, has no impact on the voting decision-making process in Iraq since 2005. The binary logistic regression reveals that there is no evidence that education affects voting. The p.value was (0.92605) and greater than 0.05. Although the crosstabulation results indicate that the number of voters with a college degree is less than those who are illiterate or have primary and secondary education, we need to recognize that the education system in Iraq has been devastated by wars, sanctions and corruption, especially after the

Gulf War of 1991. Thus, the education system has suffered from government neglect since the Iraq-Iran war (1980-1988) and it was unable to function efficiently in creating a new political elite which could assume political power after 2003. This fact has been exacerbated in post-authoritarian regimes in which educational institutions have become a battleground for ethno-sectarian conflict and empowering the patronage networks which have penetrated the higher education system in post-2003 Iraq.

A possible explanation for why there is no a significance relationship between voting in elections and education might be that most of the higher education administrators and professors have more resources to evaluate the dierection of current political process which turned from building democratic regime to consolidate patronage relations. However, there are some exceptions form this trend in which people with college degrees, with whom we are in constant contact especially university professors. One of the main objectives from participating and voting in elections, according to these kind of voters, is to build and maintain a good relationship with political parties and their leaders. The way they do that is to give them access to mobilize voters on campus during the elections campaign in return for their financial support and to facilitate their promotion in their college and universities.

These results are also likely to be related to the high unemployment rate among those who hold college degrees. The most effective way to obtain a full-time and part-time government job, or at least the promise of one, is to be hired to work for a particular political party and mobilize other people to vote for this party in an election.

#### 5.9.4 Gender, Marital Status, and Voter Turnout

While the estimated parameter for gender variable has revealed that being female has a negative relationship to voting, the logistic regression results suggest that marital status has a positive impact on voting. In terms of females, the coefficient estimate of regression was (-0.90013) which is greater than 0.001. This negative relationship indicates as we move from male to female, the probability of voting decreasing by (-0.476). Based on our observations, we assume that men are more likely to vote than women. Even women who do vote often don't have a genuine choice in elections but instead vote based on the cues and opinions they receive from male counterparts. Hence, family voting is very common in post-2003 Iraq. This fact is proved by the regression results, which indicate that marital status has a significant positive relationship to voting. Despite this evidence, this hypothesis needs to be confirmed and validated. Thus, more empirical research on family voting in Iraq should be conducted in the future.

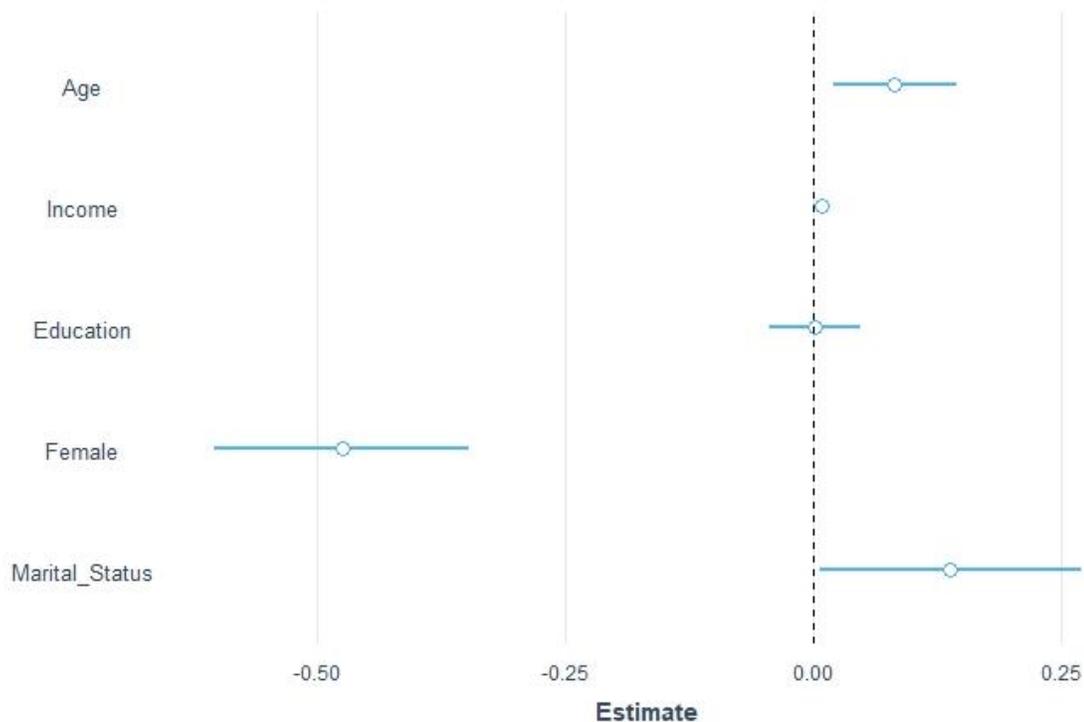


Figure 5.5 Model 1 Logistic Regression Results: Voter Turnout by Socioeconomic Factors

## 6. Trust in Government Institutions and Voter Turnout Model 2

This model has been built on the hypothesis that most of the eligible voters will participate and vote in election when they have high level of trust in government institutions. We assume that voters will vote only when they become convinced that their participation in elections is going to make significant change in their daily lives and to make structural, institutional change to the status quo. Thus, the higher the level of trust in government institutions, the higher the level of turnout.

However, the dependent variable has a binary outcome where (1) equals one vote and (0) equals no vote. We include two sets of independent variables which are associated

with trust in government institutions. The first set is related to the level of trust in institutions which includes: trust in government and trust in parliament, as well as trust in the government's performance in creating jobs which are categorical variables with four scale values (trust to a great, medium, limited extent, and no trust). The second set is the basic model which include set of socioeconomic variables such as age, income, education, gender and marital status.

## 6.1 Descriptive Statistics

The cross-tabulation table that implies the relationship between trust in government and voting has been generated using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) as shown in the graph below:

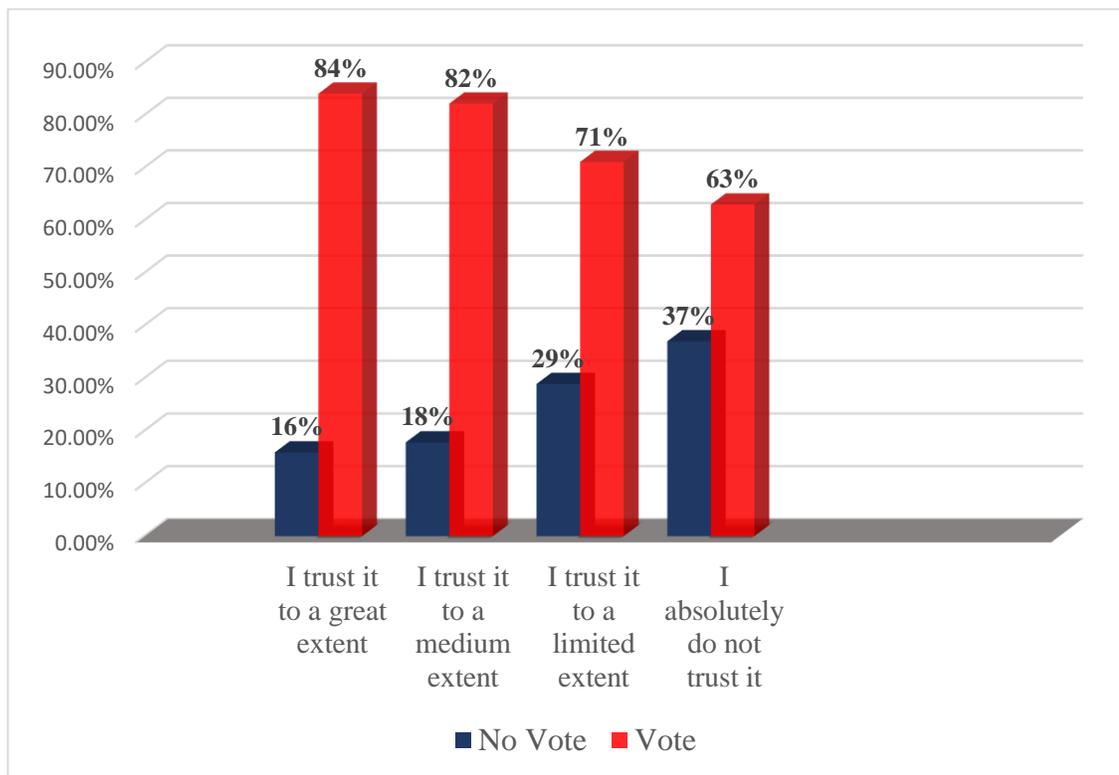


Figure 6.1 Voter Turnout by Trust in Government

The above data show that the number of individuals who they vote with great, medium, limited and not trust is very high. In the same vein, the number of voters who did not vote with high , medium, limited or no trust is relatively low in comparison to those who vote.

Table 8 Descriptive Statistics Model 2 Voter Turnout by Trust in Government Institutions

|                    | N    | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation | Variance |
|--------------------|------|---------|---------|------|----------------|----------|
| Age                | 5262 | 1       | 6       | 2.22 | 1.214          | 1.474    |
| Income             | 5228 | 1       | 99      | 3.50 | 9.737          | 94.799   |
| Education_2        | 5260 | 1       | 6       | 2.90 | 1.389          | 1.930    |
| Female             | 5262 | 0       | 1       | .48  | .500           | .250     |
| Marital Status     | 5262 | 1       | 99      | 1.81 | 1.976          | 3.904    |
| Trust_in_Parl      | 5176 | 1       | 9       | 3.31 | 1.130          | 1.276    |
| Trust_in_Gove      | 5213 | 1       | 9       | 3.26 | 1.128          | 1.272    |
| Valid N (listwise) | 5122 |         |         |      |                |          |

In the above table, the summary statistics are for trust in government and trust in parliament as leading independent variables in this model as well as the dependent variable. The mean of trust in government institutions is (3.26); the standard deviation which measures dispersion of the sample is (1.128). The mean of trust in parliament is (3.31), and the standard deviation is (1.130).

However, the model specification remained fundamentally incomplete if we were not able to check the multicollinearity relationship problem between trust in government and trust in parliament. We assume the highest variance inflation factor (VIF) will be found between these two variables. This is because we suspect that citizens in new or emerging democracies do not have sufficient political knowledge to differentiate between the powers of parliament and the powers of the executive branch of government. Nevertheless, there was confusion among Iraqi voters in understanding the power allocated to these two branches. To overcome this problem, the correlation between trust in government and trust in parliament was tested using the partial correlation coefficient to calculate the multicollinearity controlling by voter turnout variable. The result did not confirm our hypothesis. However, the highest correlation (0.422) is that between trust in government and trust parliament. This percentage cannot be considered troublesome in testing our hypothesis.

Table 9 Partial Correlation Coefficients Trust in Government by Trust in Parliament

| Control Variables |               |                         | Trust_in_Gov | Trust_in_Parl |
|-------------------|---------------|-------------------------|--------------|---------------|
| Turnout           | Trust_in_Gov  | Correlation             | 1.000        | .422          |
|                   |               | Significance (2-tailed) | .            | .000          |
|                   |               | df                      | 0            | 4975          |
|                   | Trust_in_Parl | Correlation             | .422         | 1.000         |
|                   |               | Significance (2-tailed) | .000         | .             |
|                   |               | df                      | 4975         | 0             |

## 6.2 Logistic Regression Results

The logistic regression results reveal that voters who they did vote in elections are more likely to take trust in government into consideration when they made their decision to vote or to abstain in elections since 2005. Accordingly, we found that there was a positive relationship between trust in government and voting. A p-value  $<0.001$  was considered significant. This means for every point increase in the trust score from (high, medium, limited or no trust), the probability of voting increases by (0.259). The results show that there is no relationship between trust in parliament and voting and it is also indicating that that there is a negative relationship between trust in the court system and voting in elections. It is worth mentioning that trust in the judiciary system has been measured in the Likert scale of five points ranging from (very good, good, neither bad or good, bad and very bad).. The coefficient estimate was (0.076), and p.value is significant at ( $<0.05$ ). Contrary to what we predicted about the relationship between government performance and voting, we did not find a strong positive relationship to support and validate our claim. Hence, government performance in creating new jobs and narrowing the gap between poor and rich has no significant impact on the voting decision making the process.

Table 10. Binary Logistic Regression Results: Voter Turnout by Trust in Government Institutions Model 2

| <i>Dependent variable:</i> |   |
|----------------------------|---|
|                            | Turnout                                     |
| Age                        | 0.062<br>(0.040)                            |
| Income                     | 0.010**<br>(0.004)                          |
| Education                  | 0.106***<br>(0.035)                         |
| Female                     | -0.554***<br>(0.080)                        |
| Marital_Status             | 0.410***<br>(0.088)                         |
| Trust_in_Gov               | -0.282***<br>(0.040)                        |
| Trust_in_Parl              | -0.041<br>(0.036)                           |
| Gov_Prefor_Cre_Jobs        | -0.049<br>(0.043)                           |
| Constant                   | 1.478***<br>(0.246)                         |
| Observations               | 3,895                                       |
| Log Likelihood             | -2,023.944                                  |
| Akaike Inf. Crit.          | 4,065.889                                   |
| <i>Note:</i>               | <i>*p&lt;0.1; **p&lt;0.05; ***p&lt;0.01</i> |

## **7. Trust in Election Commission and Voter Turnout Model 3**

This model argues that the lack of trust in the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) contributed to a decline in voter turnout in the elections of 2018. As we have seen earlier in chapter three, the most obvious consequences to emerge from the Independent High Electoral Commission of 2007, which abolished CPA Executive Order 92, changed the bureaucratic structure of the elections commission from non-partisan to partisan electoral commission. This new law made this institution fully subject to the will of corrupt political parties. We argue that the politicization and partisan nature of this important supervisory institution have undermined citizens' trust in the electoral administration and possibly to the entire post-2003 political and democratic transition process.

There is no doubt that one of the essential foundations of a political system's legitimacy is derived and maintained from citizens' political participation and in particular voting in elections. In the elections prior to 2018, we asked many people who are almost in daily contact with us about their willingness to vote in the forthcoming elections. The majority of them informed us that they will not vote because they mistrust the elections commission and elections officials. They emphasized that the reason behind their decision to abstain from voting is because the election results are fixed, whether they participate or not.

## 7.1 Descriptive Statistics

Unfortunately, while there are no questions in the Arab Barometer (II & III) and Arab Transformations Projects that directly address the issue of trust in the elections commission. However, we found some important questions in the World Values Survey (WVS) which address this crucial topic. In this survey, respondents were asked to indicate whether or not “votes are counted fairly and election officials are fair” We specified this model using these covariates as leading explanatory variables alongside the basic model (socioeconomic factors) and covariates that have been used in examining the relationship between voter turnout and trust in government institutions. All these covariates have been incorporated into the model entitled “Voter Turnout by Trust in Elections Commission.” Descriptive data were generated for all these variables. The results are shown in the table below.

|                                  | N    | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation | V |
|----------------------------------|------|---------|---------|------|----------------|---|
| Age                              | 5262 | 1       | 6       | 2.22 | 1.214          |   |
| Income                           | 5228 | 1       | 99      | 3.50 | 9.737          |   |
| Education                        | 5260 | 1       | 6       | 2.90 | 1.389          |   |
| Female                           | 5262 | 0       | 1       | .48  | .500           |   |
| Marital Status                   | 5262 | 1       | 99      | 1.81 | 1.976          |   |
| Elections_officials_are<br>_fair | 1181 | 1       | 4       | 2.21 | 1.060          |   |
| bribing voters                   | 1182 | 1       | 4       | 2.37 | 1.004          |   |
| Valid N (listwise)               | 1159 |         |         |      |                |   |

This table provides the number of observations, maximum and minimum, mean, standard deviation and variance of all the independent variables included in this model. What stands out in the table is that both variables measure the fairness of elections officials and that voters bribed, thus measuring the possibility that the rich can bribe the elections officials to manipulate and rig the elections results. Hence, we are going to use these two variables as leading independent variables to examine the relationship between voter turnout and confidence in the IHEC. The number of observations for the fairness of the

commission officials was 1072 and bribing voters by candidates during the election season was 1058. In these two variables, respondents were asked to indicate “In your view, how often do the following things occur in this country’s elections? Election officials are fair” and “bribing voters” Both have four Likert-scale items which measures an individual’s trust in elections commissions. These items are “Very often, fairly often, not often, and not at all often” In term of counted votes fairly, the mean score was (2.21) and standard deviation (1.014).

## 7.2 Logistic Regression Results

We employed logistic regression on nine independent variables and one outcome which is a dummy variable which measures voter turnout coded as (0) no vote and (1) vote. The table below shows the regression results which were obtained using R software packages that provide functions for carrying out all aspects of General Linear Models (GLM), including Logistic Regression (Logit).

Table 12 Descriptive Statistics: Model 3 Voter Turnout by Trust in Elections Commission

|                                  | N    | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std.      |          |
|----------------------------------|------|---------|---------|------|-----------|----------|
|                                  |      |         |         |      | Deviation | Variance |
| Age                              | 5262 | 1       | 6       | 2.22 | 1.214     | 1.474    |
| Income                           | 5228 | 1       | 99      | 3.50 | 9.737     | 94.799   |
| Education                        | 5260 | 1       | 6       | 2.90 | 1.389     | 1.930    |
| Female                           | 5262 | 0       | 1       | .48  | .500      | .250     |
| Marital Status                   | 5262 | 1       | 99      | 1.81 | 1.976     | 3.904    |
| Elections_officials_are<br>_fair | 1181 | 1       | 4       | 2.21 | 1.060     | 1.123    |
| bribing voters                   | 1182 | 1       | 4       | 2.37 | 1.004     | 1.008    |
| Valid N (listwise)               | 1159 |         |         |      |           |          |

However, the results, as shown in above table indicate that there is a positive relationship between voter turnout and bribing voters. The coefficient estimate between those two variables positive at the significant level of 0.05. Surprisingly, the relationship between voting in elections and the fairness of elections officials was negative. That is, for every unit increase in vote-buying from very often to fairly often, the probability of voting increases by (0,143). This trend did not take into consideration whether or not there was vote-buying or not. Put differently, the probability of voting has associated positively with the likelihood of voter bribery. In contrast, the likelihood of voting was associated negatively with the probability of having a professional, fair and transparent way to manage the electoral process. The coefficient value for the “elections officials are fair” is, as

expected, negative and about (-0.128) at the significant level of ( $p < 0.05$ ) and is expected to decrease over time.

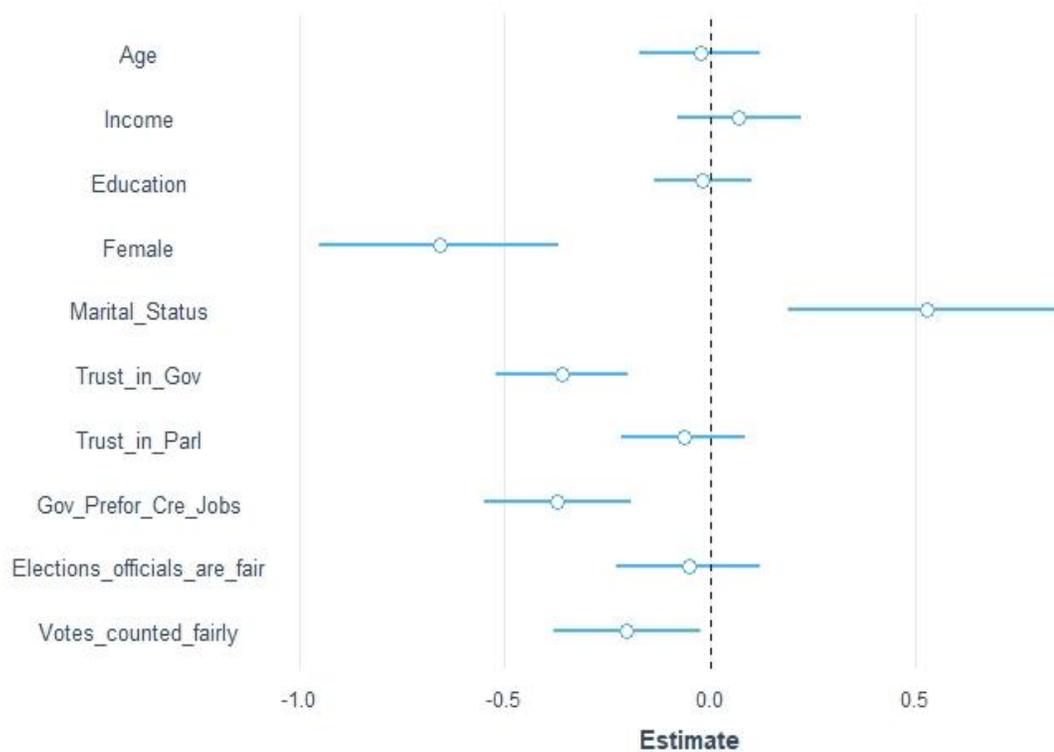


Figure 7.1 Logistic Regression Results: Voter Turnout by Trust in Elections Commission

## 8. Trust in Political Parties and Voter Turnout: Model 4

Trust in political parties makes an important contribution to our understanding of the decision-making process in voting. This role is exemplified by the fact that when the voters decide to vote, and they do find political parties which they can trust and which can express and represent their “political, social and economic aspirations.” Under these circumstances, they are most likely to vote. We argue that one of the most critical causes of declining voter turnout in Iraq’s 2018 national elections was the lack of trust in current political parties. Therefore, trust in political parties plays an extremely significant role in mobilizing voters to take part in elections and other types of political participation and vice versa. In the Iraqi context, we argue that there are many factors which have contributed to distrust in political parties. These factors can be divided into three categories: first, lack of ideological coherence within party members who recruited based on self-interest and ethno-sectarian affiliations; second, lack of national grassroots constituencies; and third, suspicious financing of political parties that comes directly either from corruption or from foreign powers on the conditions of loyalty to them.

However, generally speaking, we contend that there are three factors voters use to determine not only whether or not to vote but also in assessing the political parties’ performance. These factors are: (1) the political parties’ programs and trust in political parties, (2) trust in party leaders and politicians, (3) the achievements of ruling parties and the extent to which the members of political parties are uncorrupt and impartial. Nevertheless, Iraqi voters have considered the effects of these three factors when they vote at national and local elections. In the words of one of them, “Voting in elections doesn’t

help in decision making because we can't find a person to trust, who will do something for us. I will not participate in the victory of corrupt political parties or persons who I know nothing about.”(International Republican Institute (IRI), 2018, p. 15)

## 8.1 Descriptive Statistics

First and foremost, one should acknowledge that there was no well-established and Western-style political parties in Iraq. There is no doubt that there were some politicians and members of political parties who returned from exile after the overthrown Saddam's dictatorship in 2003. The political parties which they represent were brutally suppressed by Bacth Party dictatorship. Some examples of these parties are the Iraqi Communist (ICP) Party, established in the early 1930s, the Islamic Dacwa Party (IDP), established by Shi'a intellectuals and clerics in late 1950s, and the Islamic Party (IS), established by Sunni intellectuals and clerics in the early 1960s. Another example of ethnic political parties is the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), established by Iraqi Kurdish nationalists led by Mustafa Barzani in 1946, and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), founded in Damascus, Syria in 1975.

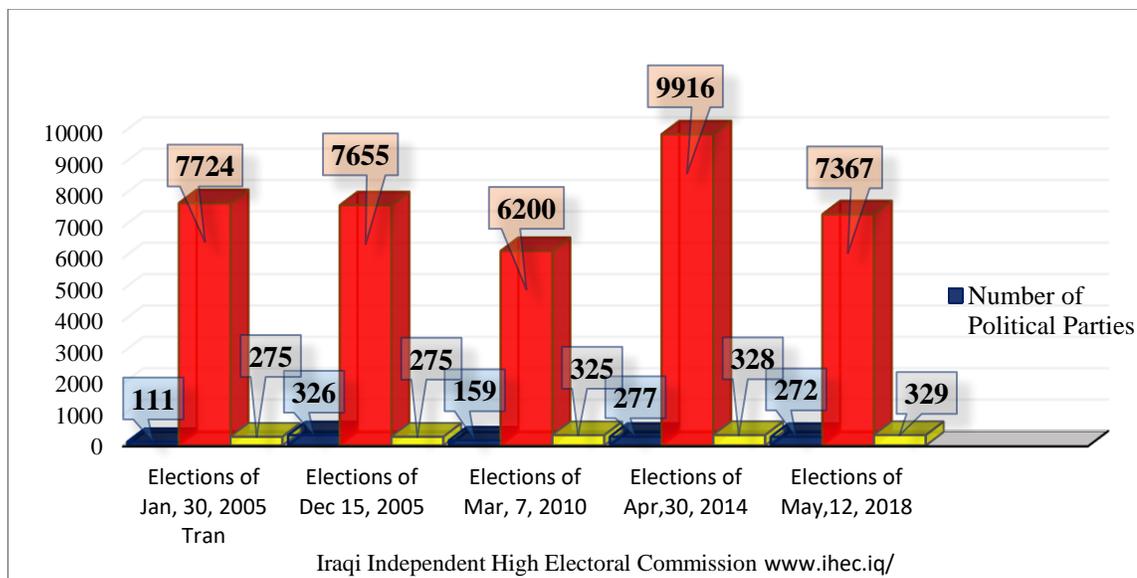


Figure 8.1. Number Of Political Parties, Candidates And Seats (2005-2018)

Notwithstanding, party life in post-2003 Iraq has not centered around ideological and institutional issues but instead has centered around religion, ethnicity and charismatic leadership and, more specifically, around patron-client networks. This phenomenon has led to the rise of the personalization of Iraqi politics which has dominated the political landscape since 2003. This phenomenon has worsened over time, particularly with widespread and rampant corruption which has consolidated the influence of what Eric Davis called “sectarian entrepreneurs”(Davis, 2007, p. 8) . The general impression of Iraq citizens toward the drawbacks of regime change in 2003 is that this process replaced one dictator by multiple authoritarian political leaders who mostly unelected party, ethnic and religious leaders.

The personalization of Iraqi politics has been achieved in various ways. Roma-Hermansson draws our attention to the distinctive categories of the personalization of politics which is often observed in “heads of government [who] behave like presidents even in parliamentary systems; mass media focus on party leaders and their personalities rather

than on their parties' politics; and citizens vote for persons rather than for parties, a trend that is the concern of this paper.”(Hermansson, 2011, p. 1)

We expected to find that there is no party identification in Iraq. This assumption was supported by the empirical data which we use in our model. The data show that the vast majority (68%) of Iraqis are independent. Party identification has been measured in the surveys by asking the respondents to describe their positions towards: “Which of the existing parties is closest to representing your political, social and economic aspirations?” To best of our knowledge, this question has been widely used worldwide to measure party identification.

However, only a few parties, which have been recognized as having strong charismatic leaders and can claim being victims of the Bacthist regime and having engaged in resistance to it, have secured some public support or, more likely, support based on patronage. These parties, as we can see in the charts below, are the Dacwa Party which ruled Iraq from 2005-2018 (8%), Sadrist Movement (6%), National Accord Coalition, led by Ayad Allawi (3%), Islamic Supreme Council (3%) and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (3%). The average of public support for all other political parties ranges between 1% and 19%.

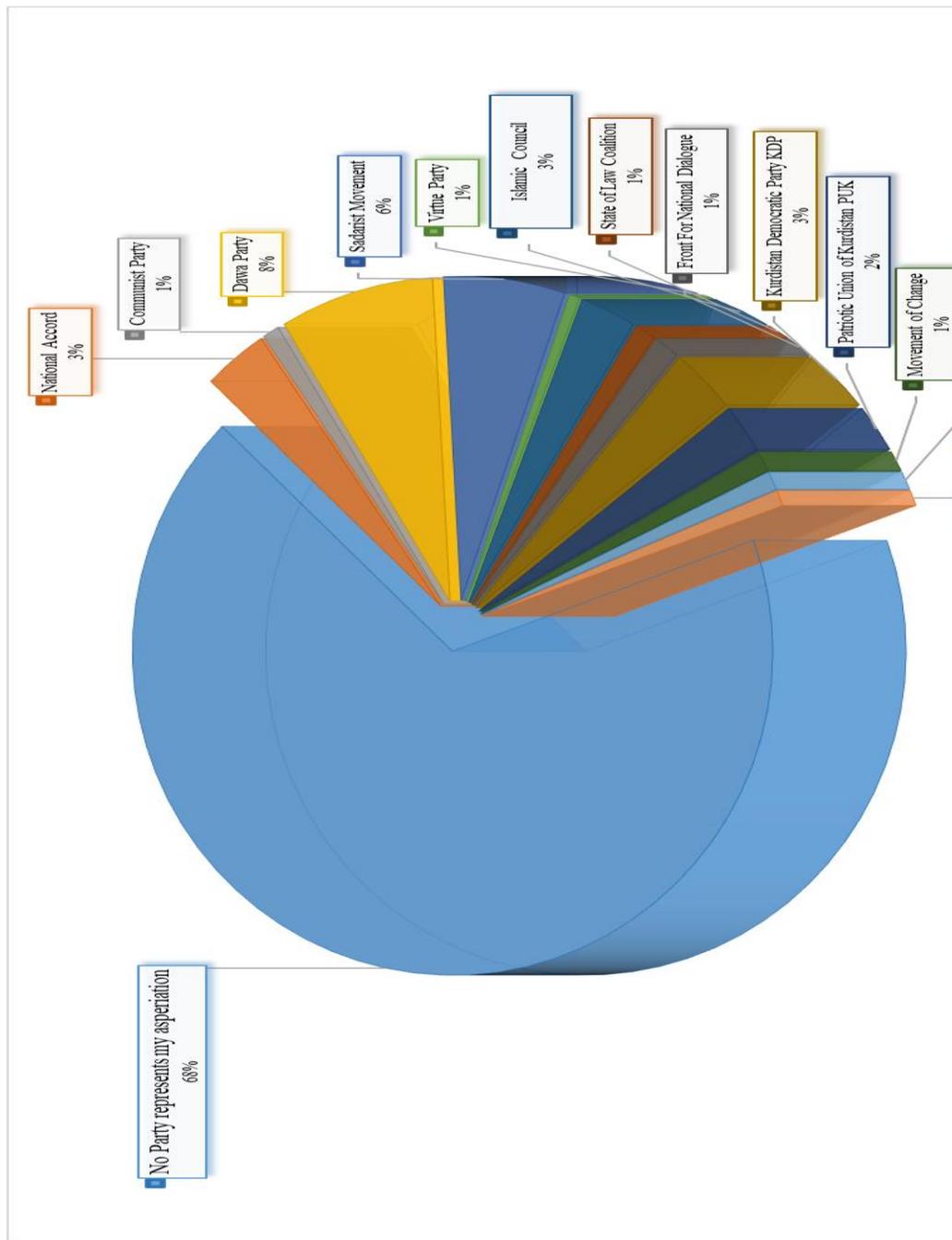


Figure 8.2 Party Identification in Iraq (2003-2018)<sup>##</sup>

<sup>##</sup> Arab Barometer II, III (2010-2012); WVS (2013); Arab Transformations Project (2014); n= 5281

The following is a brief statistical description of public trust in Iraqi political parties which we used as the leading independent variable alongside party identification in explaining the relationship between trust in political parties and voter turnout in post-2003 Iraq. As we expected, the data shows that only 4% of the respondents have trust in political parties. Nearly two-thirds of the respondents 78%, agreed that they do not trust political parties. This percentage represents the sum of three categories of trust in political parties which are trust to limited extent 38%, trust to medium extent 18% and trust absolutely do not trust the current political parties. Although the majority of voters lack trust in Iraq's political parties, they vote for them in every election. This fact tells us that their motivations for voting are not shaped by party identification but instead probably by, as we shall see in the next chapters, ethnic and sectarian affiliations.

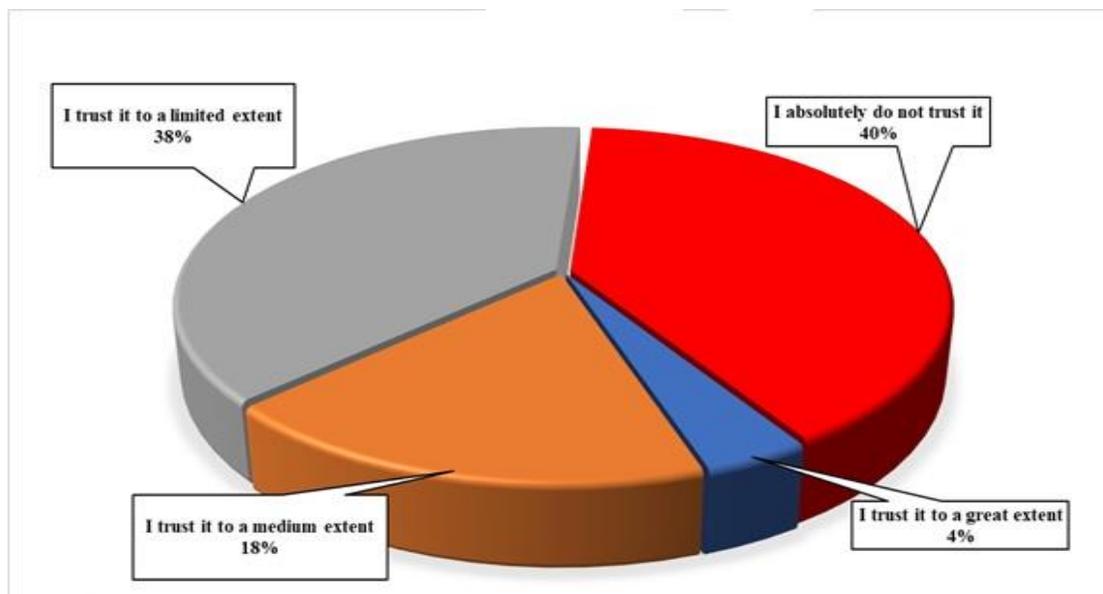


Figure 8.3 Trust in Political Parties

The cross-tabulation results indicate that those who do not trust political parties to limited, medium and no trust constitutes large numbers of people do vote in elections. This result may be explained by the fact that trust in political parties has nothing to do with the voting decision-making process. Further explanations can be obtained by performing the logistic regression analysis to test the statistical significance of the difference between voter turnout and trust in political parties. It is worth mentioning that, while the standard deviation of trust in political parties (1.128) and the mean was (3.26), the average mean of party identification is (3.002) and the standard deviation is (4.340).

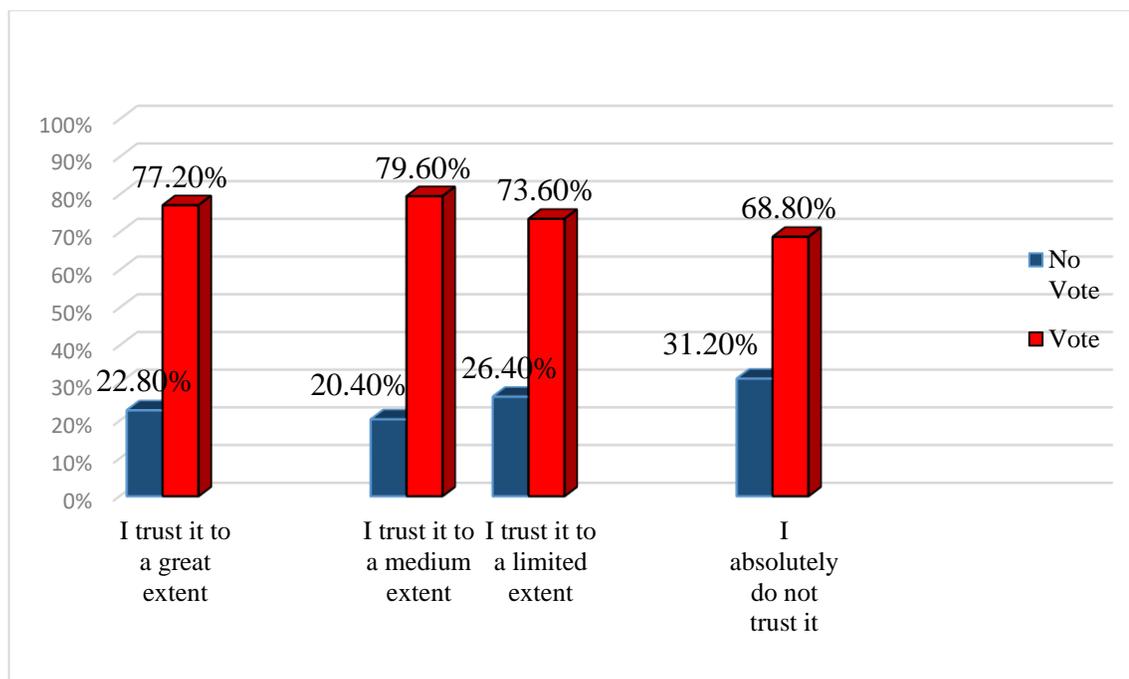


Figure 8.4 Voter Turnout by Trust in Political Parties

## 8.2 Logistic Regression Results

The model which we are going to present in this section includes the leading dependent variable which is voting in elections. This variable is a dummy coded 1 for voting and 0 for not voting. Regarding the independent variables, we are going to include our previous models (socioeconomic factors, trust in government, trust in elections commission). We add two important covariates which may influence voters' political preferences at elections. These explanatory variables are party identification and trust in political parties.

Logistic Regression analysis was used to predict the impact of partisanship and trust in political parties on the voting decision-making process. The results obtained from this analysis suggest that there is no relationship either between voting in elections and party identification, nor between voting in elections and trust in political parties. This result was not surprising as we already assume that there were no well-established political parties in Iraq which have institutional capacity to mobilize voters to vote for them.

Generally speaking, the most interesting aspect of this chapter's results is that there was no strong association between formal institutions and voter turnout in Iraq. Regarding the relationship between socioeconomic factors and turnout, the relationship varies between a very small positive and negative coefficient and no relationship, such as that between voting and education. With respect to the relationship between trust in institutions and voter turnout, the results suggest that voter turnout was negatively correlated with trust in government, trust in parliament and government performance in creating jobs. In the same vein, the results indicate that there was a small negative relationship between trust in

elections commission and participating in elections. Perhaps not surprisingly, there was no qualitative and quantitative evidence that party identification and trust in political parties have influenced the voting decision-making process in Iraq since 2003. Taken together, these results suggest that there might be a strong association between informal institutions and voter turnout. This will be our focus in the next two chapters of this dissertation.

Table 13 Logistic Regression Results: Voter Turnout by Trust in Political Parties Model 4

| <i>Dependent variable:</i> |  |
|----------------------------|--|
|                            | Turnout                                      |
| Age                        | 0.084**<br>(0.041)                           |
| Income                     | 0.010**<br>(0.004)                           |
| Education                  | 0.119***<br>(0.037)                          |
| Female                     | -0.548***<br>(0.082)                         |
| Marital_Status             | 0.383***<br>(0.090)                          |
| Trust_in_Gov               | -0.280***<br>(0.041)                         |
| Trust_in_Parl              | -0.023<br>(0.039)                            |
| Gov_Prefor_Cre_Jobs        | -0.051<br>(0.043)                            |
| Party_ID                   | 0.012<br>(0.010)                             |
| Trust_in_Po_Parties        | 0.001<br>(0.033)                             |
| Constant                   | -35.538<br>(30.753)                          |
| Observations               | 3,731  |
| Log Likelihood             | -1,933.678                                   |
| Akaike Inf. Crit.          | 3,889.356                                    |
| <i>Note:</i>               | * $p < 0.1$ ; ** $p < 0.05$ ; *** $p < 0.01$ |

## 9. Informal Institutions and Voter Turnout

### 9.1 Introduction

The purpose of this section is to examine the relationship between informal institutions and voter turnout in Iraq during four national elections, held in 2005, 2010, 2014 and 2018. One question that needs to be asked, however, is how to define “informal institutions.” According to Gretchen Helmke and Steven Levitsky (2006), informal institutions can be defined as follows: “socially shared rules, usually unwritten that are created communicated, and enforced outside officially sanctioned channels.”(Helmke & Levitsky, 2006b, p. 5) This definition is similar to that used by Douglass North, who apparently was the first to use the term institutions as “rules of the game” which “humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction.”. For North (1995), informal institutions mean “conventions, norms of behavior and self-imposed codes of conduct”(North, 1995, p. 22). Debate continues on what are the most important forms of informal institutions, for example, can we consider clientelism, patronage politics, tribalism, patrimonialism, corruption, and even violence as examples or case studies of informal institutions. In general, there is a consensus among political scientists that “informal structures shape the performance of formal institutions in important and often unexpected ways” (Helmke & Levitsky, 2004, p. 627).

As far as the voters’ mobilization is concerned, the role of religion and ethnicity or race in mobilizing voters have received increased attention in the voting behavior and political behavior literature. Therefore, we are going to treat ethnicity, sectarianism and

violence which play a critical role in mobilizing Iraqi voters because they act as informal institutions which shape political actors' behavior and formal institutions in post-2003 Iraq. For instance, Iraq adopted an informal power-sharing agreement which divided power between Iraqis two main ethnic groups - Kurds and Arabs - and sectarian groups, Sunnis and Shi'a.

This unwritten agreement has become one of the most important path-dependent process shaping the attempted transition to democracy in modern Iraqi politics. However, this ethno-sectarian and informal power-sharing agreement is a leading cause of increasing and enduring voters' polarization. The ethno-sectarian voting assumes that the Iraqi electorate, since the first elections in 2005 until the most recent one in 2018, is polarized along ethnic and sectarian lines. Hence, what we have seen so far, is that Shi'a vote for Shi'a, Kurds vote for Kurds, Sunnis vote for Sunnis, and Christians vote for Christians. This pattern of voting has led writers to conclude that the Iraqi electorate has been deeply polarized in terms of identity politics. While this pattern of voting holds true in the 2005 and 2010 national elections, it has developed to the point that voters become more polarized not only along with their ethno-sectarian identities but along their patronage and clientele networks. Thus, voting patterns have developed from ethno-sectarian based voting to voting based clientalism or patron-client networks and sometimes a neo-patrimonial form of voting based on tribal affiliation.

Recently, a considerable literature has grown up around the themes of identity politics, sectarianism, and Sunni-Shi'a relations, democratization, authoritarian legacy, women gender equality and Kurdish Nationalism in Iraq. While this literature (Al-Ali,

2013; Ali, 2018a, 2018b; Al-Jawaheri, 2008; Baram, 2014; Baram, Rohde, & Zeidel, 2010; Diamond, 2007; Dodge, 2005, 2017; Haddad, 2014; Helfont, 2018; B. Isakhan, 2011, 2016; D. B. Isakhan, 2012; Jones, 2010; Khoury, 2013; Nakash, 2011, 2018; Natali, 2010; Qarawee, 2016; Sassoon, 2008, 2012; (Ali, 2018b; Nakash, 2011, 2018; Natali, 2010) did not associate their analytic focus with voting behavior, the specific objective of this study is to make a causal story of how these affiliations influence voters' decision making process.

However, the dramatic decline in voter turnout in the election of 2018 was accompanied with increasing electoral fraud, vote buying and a significant decline of election integrity principles. This hypothesis might be true when considering the many elections reports, issued by international and local independent agencies, which clearly indicate that the elections of 2018 did not meet the international criteria of free and fair elections. For instance, according to the final report of the EU Election Experts Mission (EEM) which covered the period April 25 through July 31, which is labeled not for distribution and publication, there were many serious violations during the pre- and post-elections period of 2018. These violations are as follows:

1. The lack of transparency and independent evaluation of the electronic voting system which Iraq used for the first time in this electoral process.
2. The report indicates that there were widespread intimidation of voters and candidates, particularly in the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and disputed Arab-Kurdish areas claimed by the Federal Government in Baghdad and the KRG in Arbil.

3. The elections' legal framework contained many violations of the International Standard and Principles of Democratic Elections. More than 20% of eligible voters did not receive their voters' ID.
4. The reports address the problem of the lack of adequate security guards to protect voters against expected terrorist attacks at most of election stations.
5. The government-funded official satellite channel Al Iraqiya, which is only public funded broadcaster and television network in Iraq was notably biased toward the incumbent Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi and his Victory (Nasr) Coalition.
6. The elections commissioners were not independent because they all considered themselves representatives of the political parties participating in the elections.
7. There were not enough international and local election observers.
8. Vote counting procedures were not conducted according to on the regular administrative, efficient and transparent criteria. (Iraq Elections Report EU, 2018)

In the same vein, the London School of Economics and Political Science / Middle East Center issued an evaluation report which was released two months after the elections of 2018 on July 19. In this report, Mansour and van den Toorn (2018) found “low voter turnout in the 2018 Iraqi federal elections (at 44.5 percent) reflects a malaise in the overall

Iraqi population and a rejection of the political class that has governed the country since 2003.” (Mansour and van den Toorn, 2018) The authors report that “despite prior talk of post-sectarianism, most Iraqis voted along identity-based lines, but the coalitions were more cross-sectarian than in previous elections. The ability to mobilize a large portion of the Shi‘a base was key to successful election campaigns.” (Mansour & van den Toorn, 2018, p. 6)

However, according to the interview we conducted with an anonymous electoral officer through email and phone call, the turnout level in the elections of 2018 was extremely overestimated by the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) and the incumbents. The official told us while the IHEC announced there were more than 850.000.000 invalid votes that has been announced few days after the announcing the elections results, this number has not been subtracted from the total percentage and the final announced turnout level of 44.5%. He states that voters had been mobilized to vote based on their ethnic and sectarian identity but also to vote for their preferred patrons. He indicated that many voters had already been intimidated by militias and armed groups. Therefore, we utilize the sociological model of voting behavior and the importance of group membership voting that has been widely used in studies of the impact of race or ethnicity and religion on the voting decision-making process.

To develop a full picture of the impact of informal institutions on voter turnout, we focus, in the next three chapters on the role of religious and ethnic leaders in mobilizing Iraq voters, the relationship between of ethnicity and religion and voter turnout, and the role of electoral violence in encouraging or discouraging the Iraq voters from participating

in elections. Excellent The data we use are the same as those we used in previous chapters which derived from merging Four surveys (Arab Barometer II & III, Arab Transformation Project and World Value Survey). We also use qualitative data to supplement quantitative and regression analyses regarding the role of religion and religious leaders in mobilizing Iraqi voters.

### **10. The Role of Religious Leader in Mobilizing Voters Model 5**

A few days after the collapse of Saddam Hussein and his Bacth party dictatorship, on April 9, 2003, and during the massive looting and burning of most of the government ministries and buildings throughout Iraq, Ayatallah Ali al-Husseini al-Sistani, the highest religious leader of Iraq's Shi'a, issued set of religious edicts or Fatwas. These edicts called for the rule of law and fair trials for members of the former regime, as well as a call to refrain from retaliation against the criminals of the former regime and protecting the government institutions and public assets. These edicts had an extensive impact on Iraqis. He also called all Iraqis to participate voluntarily to return looted items to nearby mosques and to re-start and resume running the government institutions which provide people with basic needs such as hospitals, water purification stations, power stations, and police. (Sīstānī, 2009). Ayatallah al-Sistani was acting like a transitional president for the Republic of Iraq for a few weeks after the fall of Saddam.

During the early stages of the process of transitioning from authoritarianism to democracy, Sistani was one of the most powerful opponents of the CPA and its projects. He realized the importance of holding a general election to select the national

representatives for public offices. Sistani's role has increased significantly with every step toward post-2003 state-building in Iraq. He rejected Ambassador L. Paul Bremer's project of adopting a "caucus system" to choose ethnic and sectarian delegates based on "fixed shares" and establishing non-elected local governing councils. According to the CPA idea, those delegates would be responsible for writing a new constitution and helping the CPA run the State. According to Larry Diamond, the CPA's main advisor, in his influential memoir, *Squandered Victory: American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq*, the CPA realized that Sistani has a wide social network allowing him to send his message about the necessity of holding the election by reaching "the Iraqi people more rapidly and effectively than could the CPA, with its cumbersome communications machine, and that the international media would portray a second fatwa from Sistani as a disaster for the CPA and its transition plan" (Diamond, 2007, p. 87)

Hence, the idea of holding elections was not brought by Americans to Iraq because, as mentioned earlier, there was poor preparation for the state-building project after overthrowing the dictatorial regime. The idea of holding general elections, according to Diamond, grew after Sistani "issued a fatwa - a legal pronouncement by an authority in Islamic Law, which becomes incumbent on all believers - declaring Bremer's plan for an appointed body "fundamentally unacceptable" and ruling that general elections must be held so that every eligible Iraqi can choose someone to represent him at the constitutional convention that will write the constitution," which would then have to be approved by the people in a referendum" (Diamond, 2007, p. 44)

Sistani was involved heavily in the electoral and constitutional processes by supporting the post-2003 political process and mobilizing people to engage and participate in a transitional election, the constitutional referendum, and the first national election in 2005. In 2004, Sistani directed his office to constitute a shadow committee to monitor the process of writing the constitution which he believed must be written by an elected committee, not a committee appointed by the CPA. He wrote that “general elections must be held in order to enable eligible Iraqi voters to vote for their representative and then those representatives should constitute a constitutional council to draft the constitution.” This process should be done through holding transitional elections and a referendum and general elections. (Al-Khafaf, 2009) (Rahimi, 2004) (Habib, 2004) (Rahimi, 2004) (Sayej, 2018)

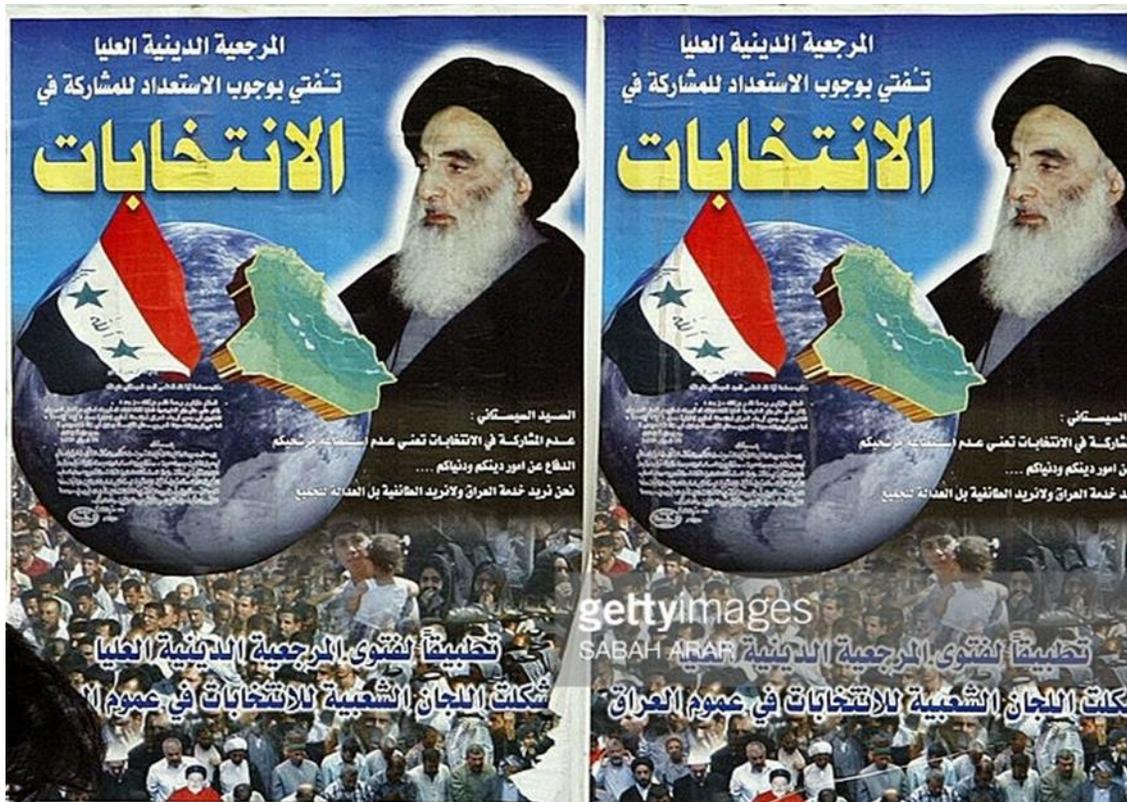
Therefore, Sistani was one of the most decisive political actors who contributed to the efforts of holding transitional elections on January 15, 2005, a constitutional referendum on October 15, 2005, the first national elections on December 30, 2005, and the second national elections on March 7, 2010. His role, as one of the most trusted religious leaders in post-2003 Iraq, was undeniable in mobilizing voters to participate extensively in the foundational efforts to implement a democratic transition in Iraq. Thus, we argue that Sistani was the main factor that determined the level of voter turnout and his role in mobilizing voters.

While some political scientists argue that the term “path dependent” only relevant to institutions or the rules not to individual behavior, our argument here is that although Sistani’s position towards the elections is an individual behavior but he does not express personal opinion in this regard. Hence, his personal opinions represent the official position

of one of the most influential informal institution in the Shiite community and to limited extend in the Sunni community which is Al-Hawza al-'Ilmiyya or Shia seminary headed by Marja who must be the most knowledgeable scholar in all fields of religion and theology. This turning point in Sistani opposition toward the elections in Iraq took place in 2012 after Sistani stopped supporting and legitimizing the current political elites which ultimately led to the dramatic decline in voter turnout in the elections of 2018.

In most of his religious edicts in post-Saddam Iraq, Ayatallah Ali al-Sistani considered participation in the transitional elections and first elections a religious duty for Shi'a and other Muslims. He directed all his authorized representatives - imams and preachers - to form popular committees and educate people about the importance of the constitution writing process and national elections. We have seen Shi'a mosques /alimajalis during the holy month of Ramadan and Mahram and other months focus on mobilizing voters to participate in elections. Ayatallah al-Sistani personally supervised the process of establishing the first Shi'a electoral coalition called the National Iraqi Alliance. He also has mobilized voters to vote for what was publicly known as the Sistani List. This electoral campaign extended to include canvassing for votes in support of the National Iraqi Alliance (NIAI) or United Iraqi Alliance (UIA). This Shi'a Alliance was best known as a Sistani's List. Since 2003, the role of the religious establishment and religious leaders in Najaf, one of the oldest Shi'a centers where the first Shi'a Imam and son-in-law of Prophet Muhammed is buried, has grown and gained significant power in influencing voting behavior and voter turnout. In the early days of regime change in 2003, this religious establishment presented itself as the patrons of the electoral and constitution writing

process and as the guardian of Iraq's core national interests. ("Sistani and Elections in Iraq," 2004)



<https://www.gettyimages.com/detail/news-photo/an-iraqi-woman-walks-past-posters-calling-iraqis-to-prepare-news-photo/51777959>

The power of the Shi'a seminaries, or Al-Hawza al-Ilmiyya, in al-Najaf has derived from its efforts to be able to maintain its autonomy from the Iraqi state.. This autonomy takes three forms: First, the autonomy in funding itself through an informal religious taxes that Shi'a pay every year. The amount of this tax is calculated according to the two tenths of the individual's annual income. Second, autonomy in organizing its internal scientific and educational affairs, such as the applications and admissions process of new religious students from all over the world. Third, the Hawza maintains autonomy

in appointing and promoting its representatives or Imams who are in charge of running widespread networks of mosques and institutions in many countries around the world ,not only in Iraq.

This autonomy establishes a move away from the dramatic changes that were brought through the revolutions and coup d'états throughout Iraq history. The followers' obedience to the spiritual authority of the Shi'a religious establishment can also be considered to be one of the most significant sources of its power. The interference of this establishment in political process and social life was justified for two reasons. First, normatively speaking, this establishment presents itself as the guardian of Islam and ensures there will be no national legislation which can contradict the general principles of Islamic Law. Second, it maintains its societal reputation and spiritual status as the religious leaders of its followers, based on its high morals and virtuous behavior. (Habib, 2004)

The Shia political elites have extensively exploited and utilized on a large scale the status of their religious establishment in Iraq to promote their self-interest. One should differentiate between three conditions regarding the Shi'a establishment's support of elections and the electoral process. The first condition was during the foundational elections in 2005 when this establishment explicitly supported the political process and the elections because its aims were more than to support the political elites, but instead maintain the general principles of Islam. The second was when the political elites, in 2010 to the present period, started exploiting the power of the religious establishment for their own self-interest by using, for instance, Sistani posters in their electoral advertising, meeting him during election campaigns, often presenting themselves to the public as

someone close and trusted by Sistani, the top Shia religious leader in Iraq and among the world's Shia. The third condition was when Sistani officially ended his support for the entire political process and abandoned all efforts to become a significant supporter and partner of Iraq's Shi'a political elites. This political change began in 2012 when Sistani stopped meeting with the entire political class, regardless their ethnic, sectarian, and religious affiliations, as we shall see in the next section.

Since the elections of 2005, the Sunni and Shi'a scholars, or cUlama, who are also recognized as sources of religious emulation, have played a significant role in determining the level of voter turnout. The effects of these fatwas influenced the Shi'a more than the Sunni community because the latter did not have the same level of trust and belief in their religious hierarchy. In the first national elections on January 30, 2005, a group of Sunni religious clerics, led by the Muslim Brotherhood, issued a Fatwa which called on all Sunnis to boycott the elections (Abdul-Hamid, 2004). One of the major consequences of this fatwa was the abstention of most of the Sunni community from participating in the first transitional elections. The average turnout in the Sunni provinces in this election was between 2% and 17%.

Sunni scholars and politicians have claimed that their decision for the calling upon Sunnis to boycott the elections was due to the lack of response from the Shi'a and Kurdish parties concerning their request to postpone the elections. They justified their request because of the dramatic security deterioration in Sunni provinces, lack of transparency of the Elections Management Body (EMB), which was comprised of 75% to 80% Shi'a members, the influence of the US CPA, the influence of neighboring countries, particularly

Iran, on the entire electoral process, and last but not least the lack of a legal framework facilitating the holding of general elections. The result was that the transitional elections took place, and the vast majority of Sunnis were underrepresented in one of the most crucial foundational events in the post-2003 political process.

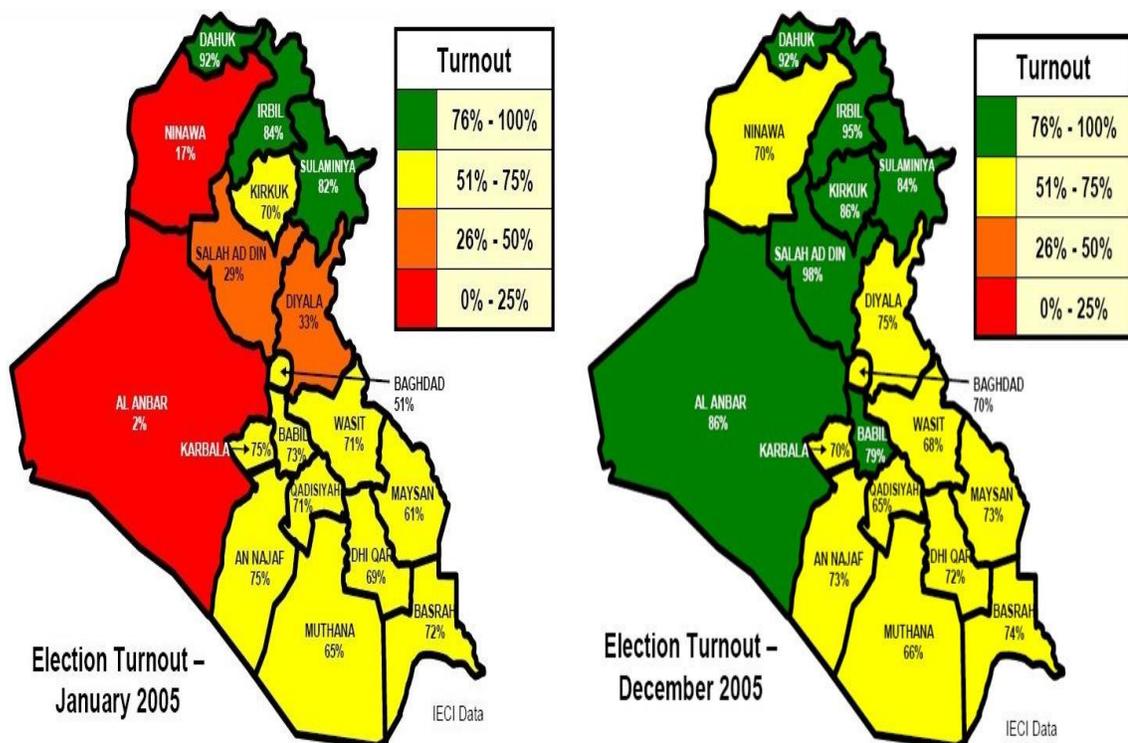
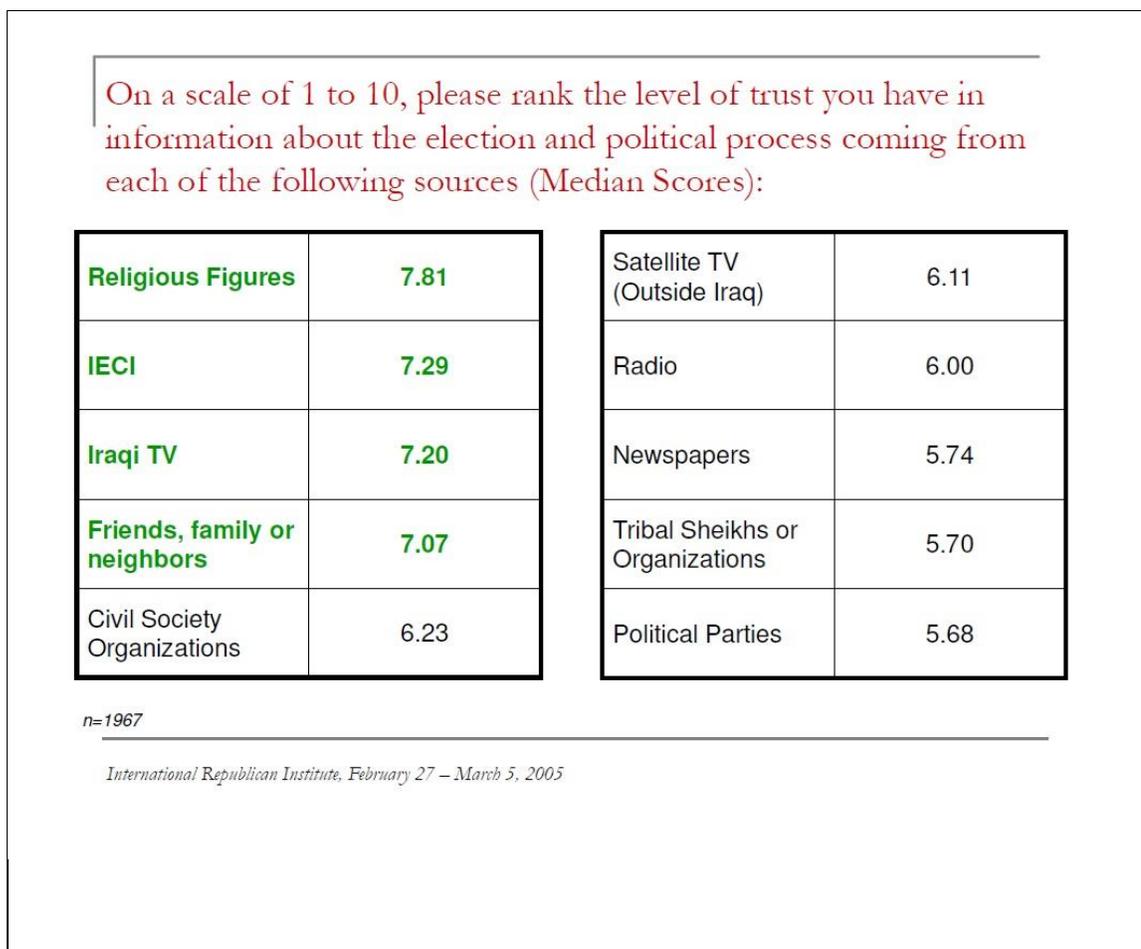


Figure 10.1 Voter Turnout in the Elections and 2005

On the Shi'a side, Ayatallah al-Sistani and his representatives organized a massive campaign to encourage people to vote in the transitional elections, particularly for the "Sistani List." Iraq witnessed thousands of volunteers canvassing and distributing election handouts and posters with Sistani's photograph. According to one of the most widely distributed election leaflets that was issued after a meeting between Ayatallah al-Sistani

and delegates from Sadr City in Baghdad on Dec 31, 2004 entitled, “al-Sistani's directives regarding the transitional elections and the list of the Iraqi National Alliance.”, This leaflet stated that participation in the election was compulsory for every capable Muslim regardless of his/her age. (Āyār, 2018)



The leaflet also contained a list of directives: 1) all eligible voters in the household were to participate actively in the elections – the main objective of participation in the transitional elections was to constitute an elected committee which would be responsible for writing a new permanent constitution; 2) Islam is the official religion of the state, and

there must be no legislation which contradicts this fact; 3) all Iraqis, regardless of their ethnicity, race, religion, and sectarian background, are equal in their rights and duties; 4) the Iraqi National Alliance List Number 169, and its members, are blessed and supported by Ayatallah al-Sistani, and all Muslims are encouraged to vote for it. (Sistani, 2004)

In the second national elections on Mar 7, 2010, Ayatallah al-Sistani's support for the Shi'a Alliance and politicians affiliated with it declined significantly. His support changed from explicit to implicit. He did not issue any Fatwas or religious decrees regarding the elections. We argue that Sistani's implicit support in elections can be considered as a major contributing factor to the decline of voter turnout from 76.36 in 2005 to 61.76 in 2010. What is notable about Ayatallah al-Sistani's position toward this election are three important issues: First, he did not prevent Shi'a politicians from using his picture and statements in their election campaigns. We have seen Sistani's words and pictures alongside the political parties' slogans in most of the electoral posters and handouts. Second, he did not stop meeting with them regularly or keeping in touch with them through his representatives. Third, he started criticizing the government for failing to provide basic services such as jobs, electricity, and clean drinking water.

Sistani's position toward the elections attracted great attention from the vast majority of eligible voters with every election season. His position on the elections was expressed and conveyed to the public through the Friday sermon (khutbat al-jumcah) in the Shi'a shrine city of al-Karbala' by Sistani's two close and most trusted representatives, Sayyed Ahmad al-Safi, previous a member of the Transitional Assembly and founding member of the first Shi'a elections list (Iraqi National Alliance), and Sheikh cAbd al-Mahdi

al-Karbala'i. Sistani's sermon during the elections week was extremely important and voters relied on it for cues and suggestions when making their decision whether to participate or not in elections. In the week before the elections of 2010, Sistani strongly encouraged Iraqis to participate in the elections because "it is the only way for making changes in society." At the same time, he explicitly stated that the al-Hawza al-cIlmiyya, or al-Marjaciya, the other name for the Shi'a religious establishment in al-Najaf, stands at a distance from all political parties, coalitions, and blocs participating in the elections. This implicitly meant that Ayatallah Sistani still supported them and legitimized their power. He also warned from using the government institutions and the public funds for electoral ends and particularly financing of elections campaigns. (The Archive of Friday Sermons)

By analyzing the last two Friday sermons before the elections since the first national elections in 2005, we notice that the discourse and position of Ayatallah Sistani during the elections of 2005, 2010, and 2014, did not change significantly. He continued encouraging Iraqi voters to participate in the elections actively, scrutinize their decision-making strategy, and seek the most appropriate candidate to represent them in parliament. He also called on the electoral lists and candidates running for the national election to address the problems of increasing poverty rates, poor infrastructure, lack of basic needs, corruption and inequality in the country. He insisted that these problems must be addressed and prioritized.

For instance, during the elections of 2014, Sistani issued a set of electoral instructions. In these instructions, he did not mention that he "stands at a distance from all political parties, elections coalitions, and blocs participating in the elections." This

situation was considered as one of the critical pillars which had been used by post-2003 political elites for legitimizing their rule. Sistani had clearly expressed his support for the Shi'a coalitions and candidates in the elections of 2005 and 2010. But why did his position toward the Shi'a political elites and the entire ruling class change significantly during the elections of 2014? This can be understood as part of an extremely important decision which he made in 2012 to boycott all government officials, regardless of their levels or posts in government or their ethnic or religious backgrounds, and stop supporting them. This decision was made after massive demonstrations in Basra, in southern Iraq, on February 26, 2011, in conjunction with the Arab Spring or Arab Uprisings.

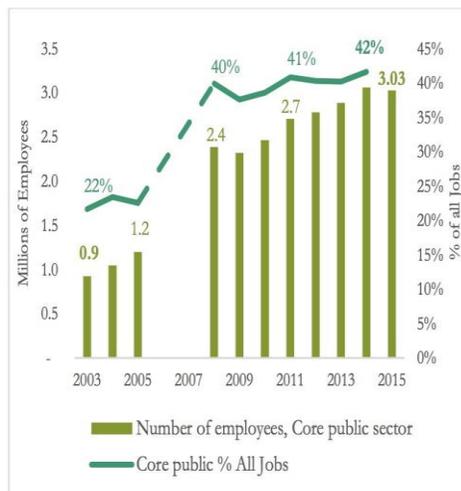
In these demonstrations, which expanded across several central, southern, and northern provinces, citizens asked the government to provide them with basic needs, such as electricity, clean drinking water, and jobs. In response to these demonstrations, Sistani issued a statement which called on the government and Council of Representatives (parliament) of Iraq "to take serious and tangible steps to improve public services, especially electricity and ration card items, provide job opportunities for the unemployed, and fight and eliminate the rampant corruption in government institutions.

Furthermore, the government and Council of Representatives must take decisive decisions to cancel the unacceptable privileges granted to current and former members of the Council of Representatives and provincial councils and senior officials in the government. Moreover, there must be tangible steps to refrain from creating unnecessary government positions that cost large sums of money annually."(Sistani, 2011) A few months after this statement, Sistani made his decision to boycott all Iraqi politicians

because they did not listen and respond to his demands. One of his conditions for ending his boycott was to improve government performance and solve the critical problems which have faced ordinary Iraqi citizens since 2003. Nevertheless, Ayatallah Sistani continued to meet with ordinary citizens, UN representatives, Arab and international delegations. We argue that the decision to boycott the politicians generated or constituted a new turning point in the relationship between the religious establishment and political elites.

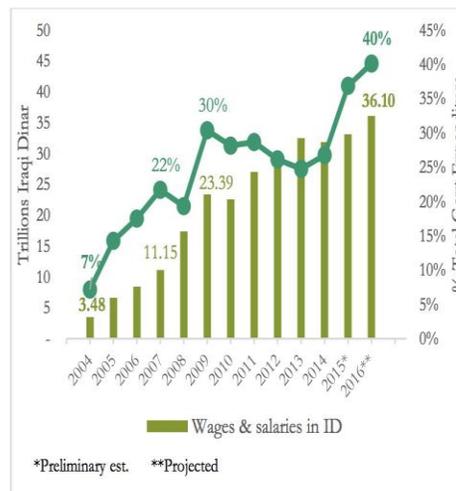
After 2012, Iraqi politicians lost almost entirely the support of Ayatallah al-Sistani. They started relying on their loyal clients for electoral support. Those clients, who were mostly government officials, tribal leaders and tribesmen seeking to be promoted to higher positions and government jobs with good monthly salaries, and cash handouts from their patrons. Therefore, to assess the dramatic changes in the democratization process since 2003, we need to take into consideration that there was an unprecedented growth in the size of the public sector and the influence of tribal leaders during the two terms of Prime Minister Nuri Al-Malaki (2006-2010; 2010-2014), as well as a dramatic increase in the level of corruption. This growth of corruption created new patron-client networks which provided significant electoral support for the current political elites and ruling class, regardless their ethnic and religious background. While it is beyond the scope of this study to examine the impact of these factors on voter turnout separately, we argue that they contributed to a dramatic decrease in voter turnout in the elections of 2018.

**Figure 50. Core Public Sector Employment  
2003-2015**



Source: Iraq Ministry of Finance and World Development Indicators

**Figure 51. Government Wage Bill**



Source: Iraq Ministry of Finance and the IMF

Nevertheless, Sistani strongly criticized the high salaries and privileges of high ranking government officials such as the members of parliament, ministers and their deputies. Sistani is aware that there was pressure on voters who have been appointed during the two terms of the premiership of Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki and his political party, the Islamic Dawa Party, and other ruling parties to government posts in exchange for their votes. Thus, in one of his Friday sermons prior to the 2014 election, Sistani states that he has “noticed that some government officials are trying to pressure some voters against their will. They told them that they should elect particular candidates...and the voter who is subjected to such pressure has to know something that he has to practice his right, and he will really be proud of that tomorrow and not say that I chose because I was under the pressure from my boss. When he says I vote only to fulfill my civic duties, any obligation otherwise is false and not binding.” (al-Safi, 2014)

The elections of May 2018 were the first elections after the three-year war (2014-2017) against the self-proclaimed caliphate called the Islamic State in Iraq and Sham (ISIS). This war took place in five provinces in northern, western, and central Iraq, constituting more than two-thirds of Iraq's territory. Sistani's role in this war was undeniable. He was the one who called his followers all over the country to take up arms and defend the nation against this terrorist organization. A few weeks after ISIS declared its self-proclaimed Islamic State in Mosul, Salah-al-Din, Anbar, and parts of Kirkuk, Sistani issued an important Fatwa that called on Iraqis to voluntarily constitute a paramilitary organization called the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) or al-Hashd ash-Sha'abi. The main objective of this organization was to fight back against ISIS' invasion and to promote and reinforce the Iraqi Army that collapsed and was defeated in front of a few hundreds of gang members.(Official Gazette of Iraq, 2016)

During the three years of the war, Ayatollah Sistani continued criticizing the dysfunctional government institutions that are unable to provide citizens with the most urgent basic needs for human dignity. He also continued criticizing and attacking the ruling political class and blamed them for rampant corruption and the rise of terror groups such as ISIS. Since demonstrations calling for reform of the whole political system started in the cities of Basra and Baghdad in the summer of 2015, Ayatollah Sistani adopted the slogan "those who have been tried should not be tried again" or in Arabic "al-mujarab la yujarab."



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This slogan has sparked a lot of debate among the public, social media, and members of political parties themselves over who can be excluded as “not tried” and who can be included as “tried.” The debate over the interpretation of this slogan “al-mujarab la yujarab” continued from 2015 to 2018. Therefore, this slogan has been used extensively by political competitors to attack and vilify the post-2003 political elites, especially those who have been elected to the parliament in three previous national elections (2005, 2010, and 2014) or who have held ministerial positions and high-level bureaucratic positions since 2003.

On May 4, 2018, approximately a week before election day on May 12, 2018, Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani issued a very important statement that demonstrated his position toward the political process in general and the upcoming elections in particular. It also provided cues to the voters regarding the standards of choosing appropriate parties and candidates in the elections within the general framework of those who have been “tried” they should not be “tried” again. This slogan has been interpreted by the incumbents in a way they want to. They claim this slogan encompasses and applies only for those who are corrupt and fail in their duties since 2003. To many observers and voters, the meanings of this statement have contributed to a great extent to the decline in voter turnout in the elections of 2018. The main points of this statement can be summarized as follows (Sistani, 2018): Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani reiterated his support for a political system constructed based on political pluralism, the peaceful transfer of power through the ballot boxes, and free and fair elections.

1. Sistani strongly warned that an existential threat to these principles might lead to the rise of a new authoritarian and dictatorial regime in Iraq. To avoid this outcome, he suggests the following remedies for reforming the electoral process:
  - a- The electoral law should be changed to a fairer law which aims to protect votes from being manipulated by the big parties.
  - b- The competition among different electoral lists should be based on economic, educational, and basic or municipal services programs which can be implemented nationally, eliminating ethnic, sectarian, and partisan

considerations, and even away from media marketing used to distribute messages for their electoral ends.

c- External interference in the election in the form of financial and political support should be prevented, and the penalties for such conduct should be tightened. Voters should value their votes and not vote for incompetent candidates in exchange for a temporary monetary benefits, nor should they vote based on emotional, personal, and even tribal interests.

2. The participation in these elections is the right for every eligible voter who meets the legal requirements, and there is no imposed obligation to enforce that each voter practice this right except the supreme national interest of the people of Iraq. All citizens must be aware that abandoning this right increases the chances of others to win the elections, others who might not represent the ambitions and desires of their people. At the end of the day, the decision to vote or not is completely a personal matter, and it is left to the individual's discretion to decide to vote or not.
3. The Grand Ayatollah Sistani and the religious establishment in Najaf or the Marjjeia reiterates its previous position that it “stands at one distance from all candidates and elections lists” to not support any candidate or list at all. The whole matter of voting is entirely up to the voters to decide. It is necessary here to emphasize that it did not allow any politician or any entity to utilize and exploit the position of the highly respected Marjjeia for their electoral ends. Thus, the advisable criteria and conditions for evaluating the candidates are: 1) the competency and integrity of the candidates; 2) the commitment to values

and principles of Iraqi society; 3) the candidate should not have any foreign agendas, should uphold the rule of law, be ready to sacrifice for the sake of his/her people, and every candidate should have an applicable program to solve the problems and crises accumulated since 2003. The best way to choose is to scrutinize the candidates and their parties' leaders, especially those who have previously held high-ranking positions in the government and parliament to avoid falling into the trap of corrupted and failed politicians.

The purpose of reviewing and analyzing Ayatollah Sistani's fatwas and statements since 2005 is to determine whether it has influenced the level of turnout or not. The most obvious finding to emerge from the above statements is that these statements or cues have contributed significantly to increasing and decreasing the turnout level. For instance, in the first founding elections in 2005 and 2010, Ayatollah Sistani and his representatives play a vital role in mobilizing voters. Thus, the turnout level ranged between high (76.36%) to medium (62.39%). When he gradually withdraws his support and his adoption of the Shia coalition in 2014, and stopped meeting with not only Shia politicians but all politicians and government officials regardless their ethnic and religious background, the turnout level slightly declines less than one point from 62.39% to 61.76%. However, we argue that the factors which contributed to the decline of voter turnout in the elections of 2018 can be listed as follows: (a) Ayatallah al-Sistani's decision to boycott the politicians; (b) the dramatic deterioration in the security situation because of the rise of ISIS after it seized Iraq; second largest city, Mosul, in June of 2014, which was followed by al- Sistani's fatwā, or religious edict, on June 13, 2014 calling for Iraqis to join the fight against ISIS; (c) the rampant government and administrative corruption and inefficiency in delivering basic

social services to the people; and, (d) the rise of the slogan “those who have been tried they should not be tried again” on Aug 29, 2015. All these factors represent the straw that broke the camel's back in relationship to Ayatallah al-Sistani's support for the post-2003 political elites. In general, it seems that after Sistani's statement in 2015, voters realized that there were no candidates who met the criteria that Ayatallah al-Sistani specified because the vast majority of them had been tried before. The result was that the majority of eligible voters did not vote. Consequently, voter turnout dramatically declined in May 2018 from 61.76% to 44.5%.

### **10.1 The hypothesis**

The hypothesis I test in this model is that, the higher the level of popular support for religious leaders intervening in elections and government decisions, the higher the election turnout. By using individual-level data, this section offers insights into whether or not religious leaders can mobilizing voters to participate in the elections.

In his important book, *Reaching for Power: the Shi'a in the Modern Arab World*, Yitzhak Nakash analyzed the role of Ayatallah al-Sistani in mobilizing voters to take part in the state-building process in post-2003 Iraq. He wrote that “[a]mid the turmoil that followed the U.S. invasion of Iraq, and in the absence of a national leader with the stature to unite Iraqis, Grand Ayatollah ‘Ali Sistani has asserted himself as the most revered leader of Iraqi Shi‘is...[he] enjoys the largest following in the Shi‘i world today, has assumed something of the role of a Shi‘i “pope,” providing counsel to his followers and responding to the political aspirations of his constituency.” (Nakash, 2011, p. 7)

In the same vein, Caroleen Marji Sayej's comprehensive review of the role of religious leaders in post-2003 Iraq concluded that, "the fatwas related to the electoral process in post-Saddam Iraq were much more effective than those that called for an end to sectarian fighting. Fatwas that called for calm amid a civil war were less likely to be effective than fatwas making voting an obligation for all or fatwas that called for a boycott of the political process until legitimate elections were conducted." (Sayej, 2018, p. 9)

## **10.2 Descriptive Statistic**

The Arab Barometer Survey's Second Wave (2010-2011) and Third Wave (2012-2014), and a post-2014 election survey conducted by The Arab Transformations Project in June of 2014 make. The figure below shows the results of merged data from these three surveys. The total number of respondents was 4062. While the dependent variable is defined as the number of individuals who voted on the election day, the leading independent variables in this model comprise people's evaluations of whether or not religious leaders should intervene in the electoral process and whether or not the religious leaders should intervene in government decisions. The sociodemographic variables (Age, Education, Income, Marital Status, and Gender) will be included in this model as additional covariates.

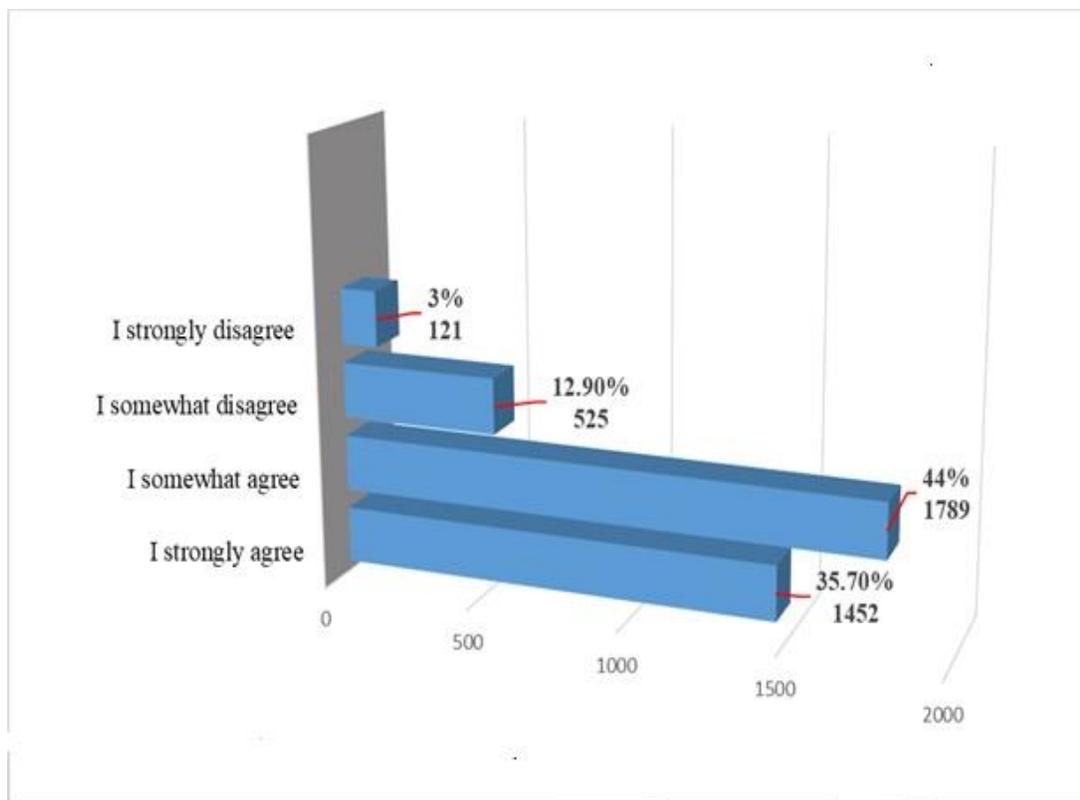


Figure 10.2 "Religious leaders should not interfere in voters' decisions in elections."

The percentage of respondents who strongly agree or agree somewhat that religious leaders **should not** intervene in voters' decision-making process are about 79.7% and those who strongly agree and somewhat agree that religious leaders **should** influence and intervene in the electoral process constituted only 15.9% of all participants in the survey.

The data also show that the number of respondents who strongly agree and somewhat agree that religious leaders should influence government decisions was about 46.5%. However, more than a half of those who responded (52.4%) indicated

that they do not believe that religious leaders should not have any influence on government decisions.

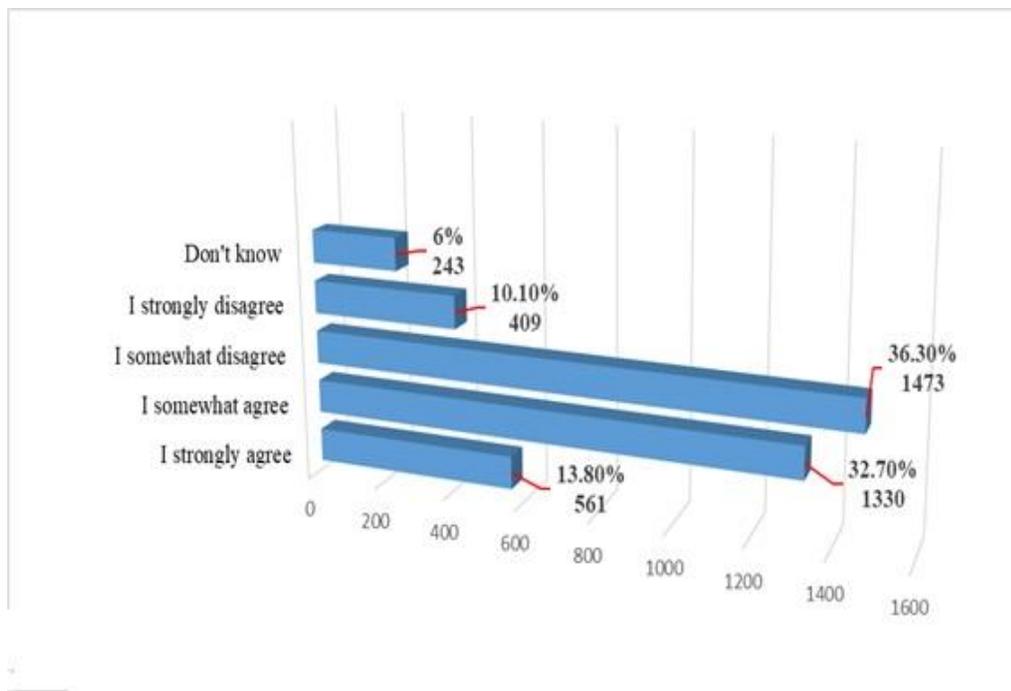


Figure 10.3 Religious leaders should have influence over government decisions.

|   | N    | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation | Variance |
|---|------|---------|---------|------|----------------|----------|
| Religious_leaders_and_el<br>ections               | 4062 | 1       | 9       | 2.10 | 1.488          | 2.216    |
| Religious_practices_and_<br>social_political_life | 4062 | 1       | 9       | 2.59 | 1.949          | 3.800    |
| Valid N (listwise)                                | 4062 |         |         |      |                |          |

## **10.2 Logistic Regression Results**

We employ logistic regression to estimate whether respondents' answers to the following questions: 1) Religious leaders (imams, preachers, priests) should not interfere in voters' decisions in elections, and, 2) Religious leaders (imams, preachers, priests) should influence government decisions. We can expect that these two questions [?] are associated with motivations for voting for Islamic and secular political parties or candidates. However, we have built this model to examine the relationship between religious leaders' influence and voter turnout. We also include the variable that captures whether religious leaders influence government decisions related to the electoral process.

**Table 15** Logistic Regression Results: The Role of Religion Leaders in Mobilizing Iraqi Voters Model 5

| <i>Dependent variable:</i>          |                      |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|
|                                     | Turnout              |
| Age                                 | 0.057<br>(0.041)     |
| Income                              | 0.008*<br>(0.004)    |
| Education                           | 0.089**<br>(0.036)   |
| Female                              | -0.543***<br>(0.081) |
| Marital Status                      | 0.476***<br>(0.090)  |
| Religious leaders and elections     | -0.083***<br>(0.026) |
| Religious leaders and Gov decisions | -0.040*<br>(0.024)   |
| Pray Daily                          | 0.097<br>(0.068)     |
| Attending Friday Prayer             | 0.038<br>(0.038)     |
| Constant                            | 0.319<br>(0.231)     |
| Observations                        | 3,649                |
| Log Likelihood                      | -1,937.906           |
| Akaike Inf. Crit.                   | 3,895.812            |

*Note:*

\* $p < 0.1$ ; \*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.01$

The logistic regression analysis revealed that there is a negative statistical relationship between voter turnout and religious leaders' interference in elections and

government decisions. This means that the religious leaders' role in mobilizing voters was negatively correlated with citizens' motivations to vote.

Keeping all other variables constant, when people's positions regarding the influence of religion on elections increases one unit, from strongly agree to somewhat agree, or from somewhat disagree to strongly disagree, the likelihood of voting decreased by -0.080. In other words, the coefficient is negative and significant at the level of  $p < 0.001$ . However, regarding the relationship between the influence of religious leaders on government decisions and voter turnout, the logistic regression results suggest that, with every unit increase in the religious leaders' influence, the probability of voting will also decrease by -0.044. The coefficient is negatively significant at the level of  $p < 0.05$ . Furthermore, praying daily and attending the Friday prayer have no impact on voters' choice on election day. Thus, in the Iraqi context, it seems that the media and an individual's friends play a crucial role in influencing voters' preferences and behavior.

A possible explanation for the influence of religious leaders in the early days of regime change in 2003, especially in the elections of 2005 and the elections of 2010, was positive and relatively high. This might be explained by the fact that the credibility of religious leaders in the early stages of regime change was at its highest level. Their influence has declined since 2014 when Sunni-Shi'a religious leaders alike decided to boycott Iraq's politicians and ruling parties. Therefore, their influence has shifted from positive to negative. As a result, the influence of the religious leaders wanes when they hesitate to take a clear moral and religious stance on political and corruption issues which arose as a result of the government's failure. In conclusion, religious leaders

currently have little or no influence in mobilizing people to vote in elections. But it is worth noting that their decision to stop supporting the entire political process affected the level of voter turnout. Another possible explanation for the decline of the role of religious leaders is the increased influence of tribal and party leaders who have built a strong network of clients among the tribal members and public sector employees.

### **11. Religion, Ethnicity and Voter Turnout Model 6**

Religion, ethnicity, and class are three of the most widely used groups of the sociological model of voting behavior and have been extensively used for predicting how people act based on their sociological affiliation. Much uncertainty still exists about the relationship between voting behavior and class cleavages, not only in developing countries but, also, in western liberal democracies. Therefore, it will be excluded from my analysis. We will focus only on ethnic affiliations (Kurds Vs. Arabs) and religious affiliations and to which extent eligible voters take these affiliations seriously when they make their decision to vote or not. We argue that religion in the first national elections on December of 2005 has had an extremely significant impact on shaping voting behavior and public opinion in Iraq as it was shown in the below graph.

### What factor will have the greatest influence on your vote in the December elections?

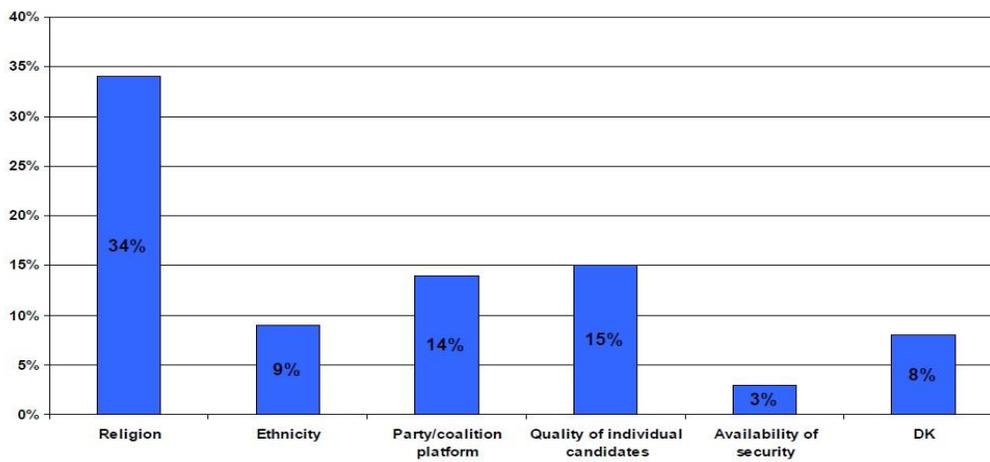


Figure 11.1 Factors influencing voter turnout in the elections of 2005

There is no clear evidence that indicates that social class stratification can be used to explain voting behavior in Iraq. Evidence suggests that ethnic and religious segmentations, as well as tribal affiliation, are among the most critical factors in influencing voting behavior in Iraq. Thus, it is striking that there is no question in the surveys that we are using which address the relationship between tribal affiliations and voting in elections. Therefore, tribalism will be excluded from our analysis. Although we believe its impact on voting decision-making process is extremely important. Studies have examined the impact of these two variables in developing democratic governance in Iraq, and they found that religion and ethnicity have hindered the efforts of building such a democratic state. They also note that these two variables are complicating the efforts of building democracy not only in Iraq, but also as “the main barrier to democratization in the region as a whole” (Posusney and Angrist 2005: p. 4).

Why people vote based on their social group memberships is the central question which will be addressed in testing this model. The sociological model of voting behavior was constructed during the 1940s at Columbia University, by Paul Lazarsfeld (1901-1976), who was a political sociologist. He organized a voting study project using survey research methodology and led a research team and conducted survey research in Erin County, Ohio which surveyed 600 respondents. Lazarsfeld and his team of researchers questioned voters extensively about their motivation in participating and voting in the 1940 presidential election. The empirical implications of this ground-breaking and pioneering study were published in *The People's Choice: How the Voter Makes Up His Mind in a Presidential Campaign* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944).

Research on this subject was followed by another seminal work in 1954, *Voting: A Study of Opinion Formation in a Presidential Campaign* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954.), which sought to investigate the main social factors which affected voters' decision-making process and why voters act in the way they do during elections. Why people vote based on their social group memberships is the central question that will be addressed in testing this model. Historically, the sociological model of voting behavior was constructed during the 1940s at Columbia University. Paul Lazarsfeld (1901-1976), who was a political sociologist, organized a voting study project using survey research methodology. He led a research team and conducted survey research in Erin County, Ohio which surveyed 600 respondents. Lazarsfeld and his team of researchers questioned voters extensively about their motivation in participating and voting in the 1940 presidential election. The empirical implications of this ground-breaking and pioneering study were published in *The People's Choice: How the Voter Makes Up His Mind in a Presidential*

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Social variables were discovered by Pippa Norris (2004) to have influenced voting behavior in Western and developing countries alike. She examines the view that “religious and class identities orient citizens toward the political system and provide a simple, low-cost guide to voting, enabling information shortcuts which allow people to decide which politicians and policies to support over consecutive contests.” (Norris, 2004, p. 102)

It is challenging to generalize the impact of social variables in shaping voting behavior in post-authoritarian countries. It seems possible that the impact of these variables is closely associated with the education system. This system reflects the norms, values, and the ideology of a patron-client based sociopolitical in post-authoritarian countries, particularly those dominated by a patriarchal order, lack of critical thinking, lack of institutional autonomy, the politicization of higher education institutions and the non-meritocratic selection in the faculty appointment process. Thus, citizens in these countries, even if they cannot be characterized as “least-sophisticated citizens with minimal literacy and schooling,” still need to receive instructions and recommendations from their “patrons,” such as religious, tribal and party leaders, to make up their mind on how to vote.

It will be argued that voting behavior has instead been structured around the premise that primordial affiliations, such as ethnic and religious lines, are stronger than other affiliations. These lines provide a useful account of how voters have chosen their representatives in post-authoritarian Iraq since the first foundational election in 2005. Therefore, the chapter explores how religion and ethnicity as an informal rules of institutions shape voter choice. For instance, to investigate the extent to which these two variables determine why Shi'a, Sunnis, Kurds, Arabs, and Christians vote for their fellow politicians and candidates, this study will highlight the need to capture the impact of religion and ethnicity on the voting decision-making process. This approach will also analyze the impact of Iraq's social structural complexities and social cleavages on the voting decision-making processes.

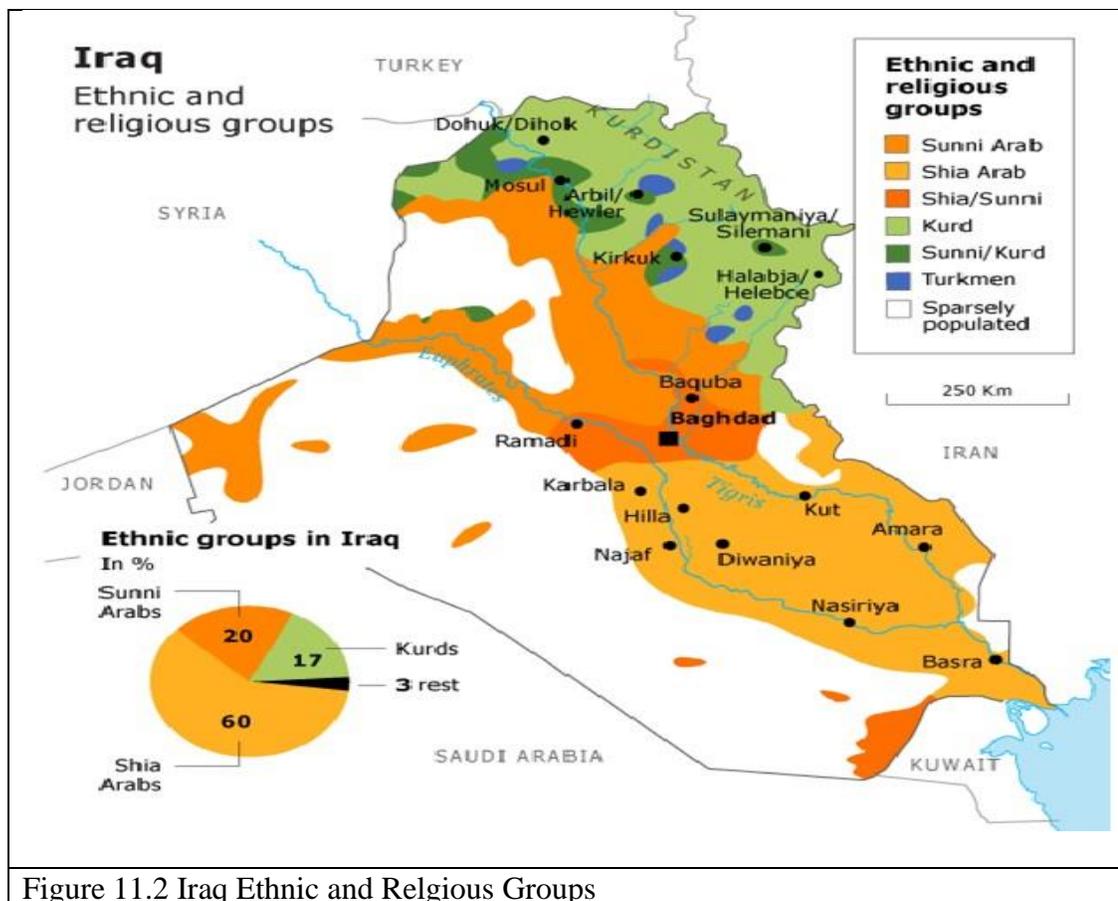


Figure 11.2 Iraq Ethnic and Religious Groups

In the first transitional elections of 2005, the Shi'a won the elections as the result of a broad boycott by the Sunni Arab community who believed that holding elections under occupation was illegitimate. After this election, Iraq's Transitional Assembly was formed. The main objective of this assembly was drafting and ratifying a new permanent constitution and preparing for the first national election. Given the victory of the largest Shi'a coalition (Iraqi National Alliance) in the 2005 general election with the largest voter turnout post-2003, a system of ethno-sectarian-based politics was born. This election established the ethno-sectarian-based political system which we witness today in Iraq. This

ethno-sectarian system has been informally institutionalized, and this has marked the beginning of a path-dependent process.

Hence, the main goal of the permanent Iraqi constitution was not only to reconcile or harmonize the relationship between religion and ethnicity, but also to minimize the hegemony of central state power and prevent a new dictatorial regime from rising again. It has been written by inexperience and incompetent in four months which started on June and ended by October 15 2005 in a national constitutional referendum. Since 2005, the political institutions of the three branches of government have struggled to develop their interrelationships with one another. In the same vein, Iraq's 18 governorates, which were supposed to be built based on administrative decentralization and federalism granted to them by the constitution, have struggled to organize their relationships with each other, on the one side, and with the central government, on the other.

Despite the move away from authoritarianism and the centralization of power by a Ba'ath Party regime toward a "democratic state," Iraq continued to hold competitive multi-party elections in a context of ethno-sectarian rule. These elections have utilized informal rules based on ethno-sectarian criteria to mobilize voters to take part in the elections. Candidates generally competed in all 18 governorates based on proportional representation according to the estimated population size in each governorate.

### **11.1 The hypothesis**

The hypothesis which will be tested in this section is that a higher degree of ethnic and sectarian bigotry enables voters to make an informed voting choice which consolidates

the ethno-sectarian and quota-based political system. This system has been built on an informal power-sharing agreement. That is, I hypothesize that there is a strong positive correlation between ethnic and sectarian affiliation and voting choices. This leads us to another equally important hypothesis: voters will choose only among those candidates who present themselves as ethnic and sectarian leaders, and they most likely will not vote for those who view themselves as national leaders. Thus, the higher the level of ethnic and sectarian sentiments among voters, the higher the level of voter turnout will be. In other words, voters are more likely to be motivated to participate in elections based on their group-membership identity.

### **11.3 Descriptive Statistic**

During the last parliamentary elections on May 12, 2018, which marked a significant turning point in Iraq's short history of competitive elections, many researchers on Iraqi politics expressed their pessimism about the future of sectarianism and ethno-sectarian politics in Iraq. For instance, Harith Hassen argues that the cross-sectarian electoral coalitions such as the Victory Alliance (Al-Nasr) led by the former Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi and the Forward Alliance (Sa'iron) led by the Shi'a populist leader, Muqtada al-Sadr, marked a new era of post-sectarian politics in Iraq. His prediction was relatively narrow, being primarily concerned with the formation of electoral coalitions at the national elections. While he used qualitative data to make his argument, he did not support his claim using individual-level quantitative data which revealed Iraqi voters' point of views toward the relationship between sectarianism and voting in elections. He wrote, "While it is unlikely that a cross-sectarian coalition will form immediately after the election, intra-Shia

rivalries may result in a shift whereby sectarian identification is not the only consideration shaping post-electoral alliances.” (Al-Qarawee, 2018)

In the same vein, Douglas Ollivant (2018), argues that “the emergence of cross-sectarian tendencies in the major lists” is one of the most significant signs of Iraq entering a new era of politics. Ollivant notes that there are very few pre-election coalitions, such as The Victory Alliance (cross-ethnic and cross-sectarian), which are formed to overcome some sectarian barriers exacerbated by the policies of the American invasion and occupation in 2003. According to the author, this example alone conclusively makes the elections of 2018 generally seem like an encouraging sign of “the proliferation of cross-sectarian and pro-reform parties” (Ollivant, 2018). While Ollivant’s analysis suffers also from limited use of individual-level data available to support his claim, most of his predictions are relatively true from the perspective of individual voters but wildly exaggerated from the perspective of political elites who have not yet rejected ethno-sectarian identity politics.

According to a recent public opinion survey (Aug-Oct 2018), the vast majority (86% to 52%) of Iraqis today believe that the relationship between Sunnis and Shi’a has improved significantly since the post-ISIS war of 2017. While this can be considered an important shift towards post-sectarian Iraq, the ethnic relations between Kurds and Arabs in the north of Iraq is deteriorating in many areas, especially in Kirkuk and other disputed territories. In conclusion, the survey indicates that the vast majority of Iraqis see their country today is more divided than unified across ethnic lines but not across sectarian lines. (NDI Survey Findings, 2018)

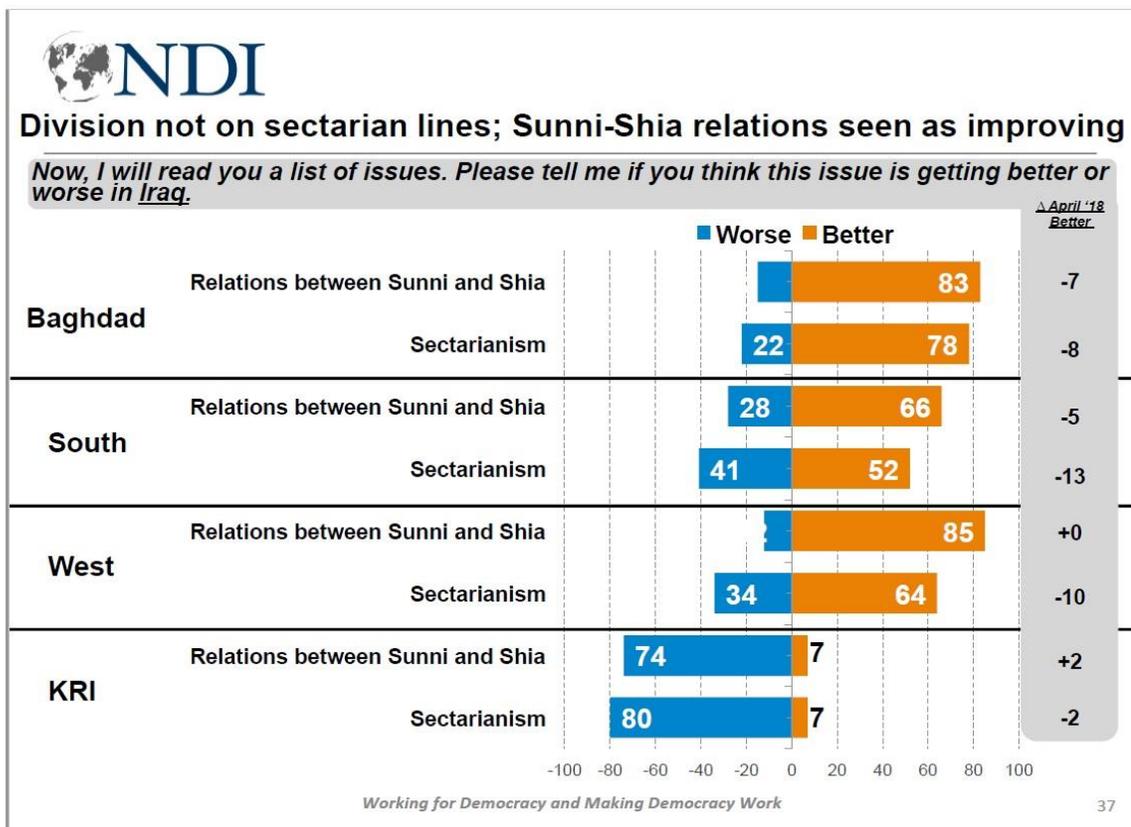


Figure 11.3 Sunni-Shia Relations in Post ISIS War

In my analysis, while I argue that cross-sectarian sentiment becomes a driver and very popular among those who abstained or boycotted the elections of 2018, ethno-sectarian motivations are still one of the main driving forces behind those who voted in this election. By using available individual data, the cross-tabulation between voter turnout and religious denomination (Sunni vs. Shi'a) demonstrates that the Shi'a tend to abstain from voting more than the Sunnis by about three points. While the total percentage of Sunnis who voted was about 32.2% and those who failed to vote was about 12.3%, the total percentage of Shi'a who vote was about 39.7%, and those who did not vote was about 14.9%.

Table 16 Descriptive Statistics: Religious denominations, Ethnicity, Praying

|                         | N    | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std.      |          |
|-------------------------|------|---------|---------|------|-----------|----------|
|                         |      |         |         |      | Deviation | Variance |
| Shiite                  | 5262 | 0       | 1       | .54  | .498      | .248     |
| Arab                    | 5245 | 0       | 1       | .84  | .371      | .137     |
| Kurdish                 | 5245 | 0       | 1       | .14  | .348      | .121     |
| Sunni                   | 5262 | 0       | 1       | .46  | .498      | .248     |
| Pray_Daily              | 5103 | 0       | 1       | .75  | .432      | .186     |
| Attending_Friday_Prayer | 5100 | 0       | 1       | .59  | .491      | .241     |
| Valid N (listwise)      | 4945 |         |         |      |           |          |

The proportionality differences in the population size among Iraqi ethnic groups (Arab, Kurd, Assyrian, and Turkman) suggests that the Arab ethnic group's participation in the elections usually tends to be higher than other ethnic groups.

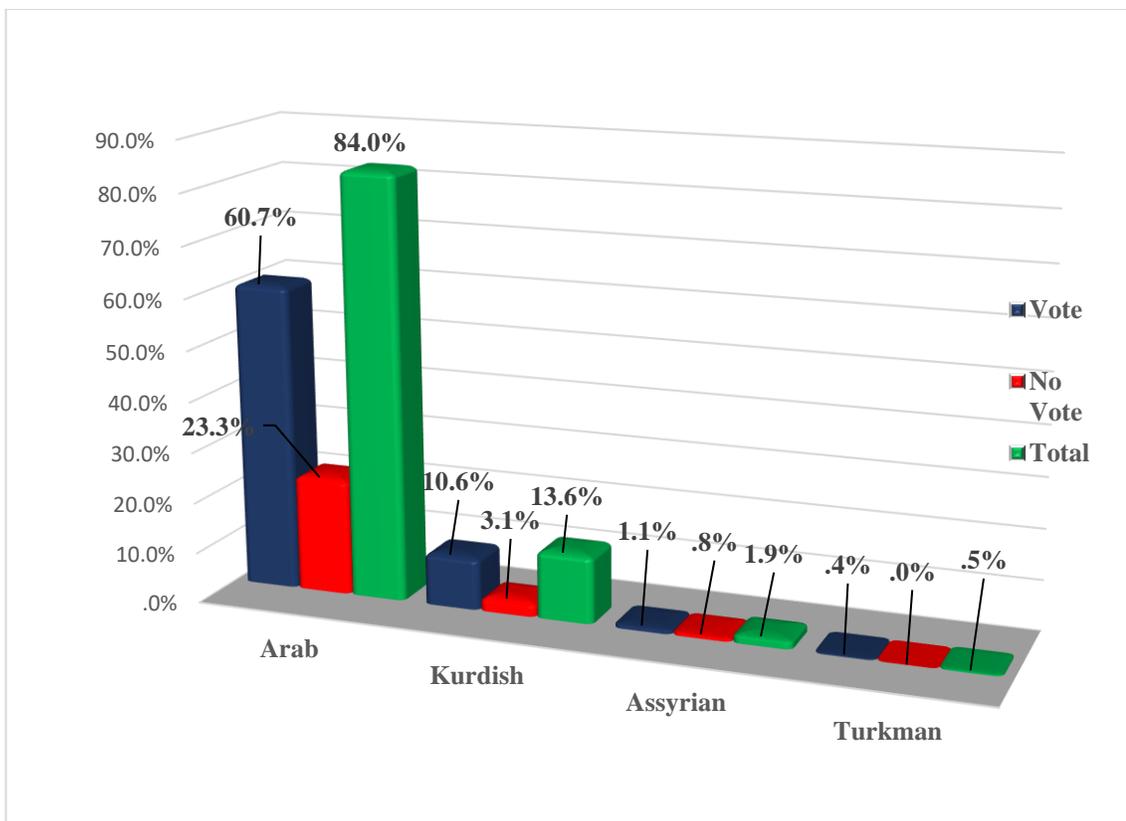


Figure 11.4 Voter Turnout By Ethnicity

### 11.3 Logistic Binary Regression Results

In the context, emerging and well-established democracies, the -group membership voting, based on ethnic, race, religion and social class, might be understood as one of the most powerful driving forces for participating in elections. Since the first national elections in Iraq on December 2005, voters realized that they have the power to influence electoral outcomes by voting for their favorite ethno-sectarian candidate. This motivation might exist, not only among the ordinary and low education individuals, but also among educated adults. Thus, the level of ethno-sectarian sentiments is one of the leading independent variables for determining the turnout level in the Iraqi national elections since 2005. We expect the relationship between ethnicity and voting to be a positive one, as well as between

sectarian identity and voting. Higher turnout can be expected in ethnically concentrated areas. The dependent variable is binary coded with output of (1= voting, 0 = No Vote). The statistical technique we employ is the binary logistic regression analysis.

We divided the religious denomination variable into two variables. The first one is for Shi'a coded as (1 = Shi'a and 0 = No Shi'a). The second variable is for Sunni coded as (1 = Sunni and 0 = No Sunni). We suspect there was likely to be high intercorrelation between Sunni and Shi'a. After we ran a regression model, we found there is a multicollinearity problem between Sunni and Shi'a in the model.

| Control Variables |         | Shiite                  | Sunni_1 |        |
|-------------------|---------|-------------------------|---------|--------|
| Turnout_1         | Shiite  | Correlation             | 1.000   | -1.000 |
|                   |         | Significance (2-tailed) | .       | .000   |
|                   |         | df                      | 0       | 5089   |
|                   | Sunni_1 | Correlation             | -1.000  | 1.000  |
|                   |         | Significance (2-tailed) | .000    | .      |
|                   |         | df                      | 5089    | 0      |

We decided to drop one of these variables and run two separate models: one for Sunnis and the second one for Shi'a. In both models, socioeconomic variables (Age, Income, Gender, Education and Marital Status) were included as additional covariates

One of the most interesting results of the logistic regression test was there is no relationship between religious denominations and the tendency of voting participation in Iraq. Therefore, being Sunni or Shi'a does not increase or decrease the probability of voting in elections. While the coefficient regression of Sunni was ( $B = -0.082$ ;  $\text{sig} = 0.22821$ ), the coefficient regression of Shi'a was ( $B = 0.082$ ;  $\text{sig} = 0.22821$ ). Thus, the coefficients in both cases are not significant. This result contradicts what has been reported by many Iraqi politics experts who have described the Iraqi electorate as predominantly defined along sectarian lines. (Mansour, 2018). This can be explained by the fact that there might be other important considerations than only sectarian affiliations. These considerations might include - tribal and kinship affiliations, family voting and vote-buying practices. Thus, I suggest further study with greater focus on the relationship between sectarianism and voting behavior in post-2003 Iraq.

In contrast, the logistic regression results indicate that ethnicity or ethnic background has had a greater impact on the voting decision-making process in Iraq since 2005. Therefore, being from a Kurdish background (Kurds compose around 14-17% of the total population in Iraq) or Arab background not only increases the likelihood of voting but also more important in mobilizing voters than sectarian affiliations. The Arab regression coefficient is 0.456, and the significance level is 0.01818 ( $p < 0.05$ ). Moreover, the Kurdish regression coefficient is 0.867, and the significance level is 0.0000674 ( $p < 0.01$ ).

Table 18 Logistic Regression Results: The Impact of Religious Leader on Voter Turnout among Sunni Model 6a

|                         | <i>Dependent variable:</i>                  |         |
|-------------------------|---|---------|
|                         | Turnout_1                                   |         |
| Age                     | 0.089 <sup>***</sup>                        | (0.033) |
| Income                  | 0.008 <sup>*</sup>                          | (0.004) |
| Education               | 0.001                                       | (0.024) |
| Female                  | -0.507 <sup>***</sup>                       | (0.067) |
| Marital Status          | 0.191 <sup>***</sup>                        | (0.069) |
| Kurdish                 | 0.867 <sup>***</sup>                        | (0.217) |
| Arab                    | 0.465 <sup>**</sup>                         | (0.197) |
| Sunni                   | -0.082                                      | (0.068) |
| Pray Daily              | 0.256 <sup>***</sup>                        | (0.063) |
| Attending Friday Prayer | 0.045                                       | (0.030) |
| Constant                | -0.233                                      | (0.271) |
| Observations            | 4,764                                       |         |
| Log Likelihood          | -2,748.685                                  |         |
| Akaike Inf. Crit.       | 5,519.371                                   |         |
| <i>Note:</i>            | <i>*p&lt;0.1; **p&lt;0.05; ***p&lt;0.01</i> |         |

Table 19 Logistic Regression Results: The Impact of Religious Leader on Voter Turnout among Shiite Model 6b

|                         | <i>Dependent variable:</i>                   |         |
|-------------------------|--|---------|
|                         | Turnout_1                                    |         |
| Age                     | 0.089***                                     | (0.033) |
| Income                  | 0.008*                                       | (0.004) |
| Education               | 0.001  | (0.024) |
| Female                  | -0.507***                                    | (0.067) |
| Marital Status          | 0.191***                                     | (0.069) |
| Kurdish                 | 0.867***                                     | (0.217) |
| Arab                    | 0.465**                                      | (0.197) |
| Shiite                  | 0.082  | (0.068) |
| Pray Daily              | 0.256***                                     | (0.063) |
| Attending Friday Prayer | 0.045  | (0.030) |
| Constant                | -0.315                                       | (0.273) |
| Observations            | 4,764  |         |
| Log Likelihood          | -2,748.685                                   |         |
| Akaike Inf. Crit.       | 5,519.371                                    |         |
| <i>Note:</i>            | * $p < 0.1$ ; ** $p < 0.05$ ; *** $p < 0.01$ |         |

## 12. Violence and Voter Turnout in Iraq Model 7

### 12.1 Introduction

On August 19, 2003, a few months after Saddam Hussein was overthrown, one of the first ever terrorist attacks took place at the Canal Hotel; the headquarters of the United Nations in Baghdad. In this headquarter, highly trained UN inspectors worked for more than 13 years searching for Weapons of Mass Destruction. The perpetrators used a new strategy which had never been used before under Saddam Husayn's dictatorship. This strategy is suicide and car bombings. In this attack, the perpetrators used truck filled with heavy explosive materials and targeted the newly appointed the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative in Iraq, Sérgio Vieira de Mello. De Mello lost his life in this attack along with 17 of his colleagues and a100 injured as a result of this terrorist attack. (Filkins & Jr, 2003)

Since this attack, a continuous number of suicide and car bombing attacks have deliberately targeted innocent people. Most of those people are eligible Iraqi voters. The question which we address in this chapter is: does the ethno-sectarian violence which started with UN Headquarters and has not ended with the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham [Syria] (ISIS) assaults decrease or increase voter turnout? What is the relationship between electoral violence and voter turnout? Why did we see high and moderate turnout in the first four competitive elections (Jan 2005, Oct 2005, Dec 2005 and 2010) when the death toll was very high? Why did voter turnout decline in 2018 elections which were held few months after the defeat of ISIS left hundreds of thousands of casualties? Is there any causal relationship, in the Iraqi context, between the level of violence and voter turnout?

The emergence of ethnic and religious extremism in countries, such as Nigeria, Somalia, Rwanda, Sudan, the former Yugoslavian Federation (Croatia, Serbia and Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina), Iraq, Syria, Libya, Sri Lanka, and Kashmir has led to genocide and ethnic cleansing. To understand the mechanisms that explain why people fight each other in the name of religion, ethnicity, and culture, this chapter argues that most of these type of conflicts should be understood as a manifestation of the politicization of religion. In some countries, those leaders have utilized elections and voting to consolidate their power by intimidating voters and candidates and rigging elections. For instance, in the first transitional elections in Iraq on January 2005 and the first national elections in December 2005, we have seen insurgents and militia members either forcing most Sunni voters to abstain from voting or forcing Shi'a voters to vote for particular coalitions.

Talking about this issue, elections experts who have contributed to a paper evaluating the Iraqi elections of 2005 state that, "the security situation in Iraq has overshadowed every aspect of the elections. The violence and threats of attacks by insurgent groups have severely restricted Iraqi citizens' rights to assembly, association, movement, and expression. Significant parts of the electorate were unable to participate because of violence and intimidation. Given that many political entities could not campaign freely and many voters were afraid or unable to register or vote, these elections do not measure up to the usual international criteria"(Walker & Clark, 2005, p. 188)

This chapter is divided into three parts. The first part deals with the definition of electoral violence and methodology used for studying this topic. We will focus on the key theme which deals with the relationship between the politicization of ethno-religion

violence and elections to support my argument. In the second part, we review the literature which focuses on the relationship between electoral violence, particularly the number of casualties and voter turnout. The third part of this chapter presents a quantitative analysis, including descriptive statistics and logistic regression results. It examines the relationship between voter turnout as a dependent variable and four key independent variables which address voters who reported their concerns and feelings regarding terrorist attacks, involving in a regional war, involving in civil war and last but not least their fears of increased ethno-sectarian violence.

### **1.1.1. Violence and Voter Turnout in Iraq**

It is necessary to clarify exactly what is meant by sectarian and ethnic violence and then to clarify the meaning of electoral violence. We argue that electoral violence encompasses sectarian violence (Sunni vs. Shi'a), ethnic violence (Kurds vs. Arabs) and terrorist violence. But what is the electoral violence and how is it related to the sectarian and ethnic violence?

To answer this question, a generally accepted definition of all these terms is lacking and have been used interchangeably in previous studies. Throughout this chapter, the term “electoral violence” will be used to refer to all kinds of violence against eligible voters and innocent people which ultimately aims to influence the turnout level by pushing voters to vote or to boycott the elections. Therefore, we assume that all types of violence in Iraq since 2003 have, to great extent, electoral implications. Such violence seeks to mobilize voters to cast their votes for particular political parties and candidates. The electoral

violence also tends to mobilize sectarian or ethnic groups to participate in elections. It is also designed to intimidate and threaten swing voters.

This meaning of electoral violence is similar to that found in (Höglund 2009) who distinguishes electoral violence in conflict-ridden societies from other types of violence, through studying motives, timing, actors, and activities and targets. He argues that holding elections in a stable political environment is completely different from holding elections under abnormal political conditions in “countries ravaged by war.” According to the author, the reasons are because “1) there may be threats and use of violence, 2) people may vote for security, rather than elect leaders on the basis of their democratic merits, and 3) violent parties may gain democratic legitimacy through elections”(Höglund, 2009, p. 415) Thus, the author defines electoral violence by looking at (a) the motives that aims to influence the electoral process in general; (b) timing of violence in relation to “1) the pre-election phase, 2) the day or days of the election, and 3) the post-election phase.” (c) actors who committed this violence such as “state actors (military and police), political parties, guerrilla, rebel groups, and militia and paramilitary groups.”, and (d) the nature of the violence activities and the targets which imply “harassing, assault, and intimidation of candidates, election workers, and voters; rioting; destruction of property; and political assassination.”(Höglund, 2009, pp. 416–417)

#### 1.1.2. The conceptualization of Ethno-Sectarian Violence

While sectarian violence or ethnic violence, considering the two terms can be used interchangeably and constitute the main component of electoral violence, the main difference between them is the means which are used by political actors to achieve their goals.. In case of ethnic violence, the political actors usually have different motivations.

They tend to use violence as a means to create an atmosphere which will eventually lead to civil war in which some scholars indicated that the threshold of battle deaths has to reach more than 1000 to differentiate the civil war from ethnic violence. For instance, James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin analyze 25 interstate wars which occurred between 1945 and 1999, and use this threshold as an indicator to differentiate civil war from ethnic violence. To understand the causes of civil war waged in particular countries, the authors use regression analysis to examine cross-sectional variation in civil violence, controlling for per-capita income.

Like ethnicity, ethnic violence embodies multiple concepts and intertwines concepts such as national movement and nationality. Thus, this term can be identified “as violence perpetrated across ethnic lines, in which at least one party is not a state (or a representative of a state), and in which the putative ethnic difference is coded-by perpetrators, targets, influential third parties, or analysts-as having been integral rather than incidental to the violence, that is, in which the violence is coded as having been meaningfully oriented in some way to the different ethnicity of the target.”(Brubaker & Laitin, 1998, p. 428)

Brubaker and Laitin (1998) have shown the beneficial effects of using a rational choice approach in analyzing ethnic violence. They argue that “drawing in particular from the realist tradition in international relations, from game theory, and rational choice theory in general... ethnic violence in all three traditions is seen as a product of rational action (rather than emotion or irrationality), though structural background conditions are seen as crucially shaping the contexts of choice.”(Brubaker & Laitin, 1998, p. 437) While there is

a growing body of literature which recognizes the importance of different methodologies and models in analyzing ethnic violence (large-N, medium-N, small-N, in-depth case study, game-theoretic model, rational collective action, and culturist approaches), the authors structure their review of ethnic violence around three major approaches: “(a) Inductive work at various levels of aggregation seeks to identify the patterns, mechanisms, and recurrent processes implicated in ethnic violence. (b) Theory-driven work employs models of rational action drawn from international relations theory, game theory, and general rational action theory. (c) Culturalist work highlights the discursive, symbolic, and ritualistic aspects of ethnic violence” (Brubaker & Laitin, 1998, p. 423)

While, unfortunately, there are many questions relating to the relationship between elections and violence, in the Iraqi context, they remain unanswered and relevant today. In the same vein, when we try to examine the root of ethnic violence in many countries, the main weakness of many approaches, which conceptualize and examine electoral violence, is that they do not take into account the effect of the politicizing of sectarian and ethnic identity. In addition, these approaches do not explain properly the concrete causal mechanisms through which ethnic and sectarian identity lead to ethnic violence and ultimately to civil war. However, such approaches have failed to address the role of institutions in the construction of national identity and their role in preventing ethnicity from turning into a source of ethnic conflict and civil war in socially diverse or divided societies.

However, we would argue that ethnic conflicts emerge within these multi-ethnic societies because the nation-state’s social or political contract has been undermined by

authoritarian rule or powerful political elite. Some scholars suggest what they perceive to be a viable way to avoid ethnic violence which is training minorities to become involved in political life by establishing political institutions. Varshney (2007) argues that “only under the tutelage of a more politically advanced ethnic group can order be maintained and ethnic violence avoided. Tutelage was necessary until a civic consciousness towards a political center, not to an ethnic group, emerged.”(Varshney, 2007, p. 289)

Political consciousness is a process which needs to be addressed within [the literature on?] political institutions which in turn should take into account the importance of power-sharing consociationalism as a recommended “solution to the ethnic conflict.” Lijphart (2008) argues that, “while consociational democracy is not incompatible with presidential, plurality or majority electoral systems, and unitary government, a better constitutional framework is offered by their opposites: parliamentary government, proportional representation (PR), and, for societies with geographically concentrated ethnic or religious groups, federalism.”(Lijphart, 2008, p. 4) But why has consociationalism not led to political stability and united Iraqis so as to prevent ethnic violence?

To answer this question, some studies have shown that the sources of ethno-sectarian conflict in Iraq can be grouped according to political, economic, cultural and historical factors. While some democratization studies investigate the effects of national identity, historical memory, colonial legacies, and the role of Baathist authoritarianism and the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein have produced equivocal results, others did not pay enough attention to the role of the concentration of wealth that led to planting the social

and political seeds of authoritarianism in Iraq. We argue that the lack of income equality and the creation of rentier state – the “oil curse” - in isolation from robust income distribution policy through taxation, not only contributed to the survival of the dictatorial regime but also undermined the level of trust among ethno-sectarian groups in Iraq and ultimately distorted the structure of the state-society relations. These factors have undermined the process of democratic transition in post-2003 Iraq. While discussing the importance of consociational arrangements in Iraq is extremely important, this study is unable to cover the entire scope of this issue because the main concern here is the relationship between electoral violence and voter turnout, not the relationship between consociationalism and the electoral process.

The relationship between terrorism and ethno-sectarian violence is a very complicated relationship and has attracted conflicting interpretations from several point of views. Although differences of opinion still exist, there appears to be some agreement that terrorism refers to the targeting and killing of innocent people simply because of their religious beliefs, ethnicity, political views, and/or race. The causes of this abnormal social phenomenon can be traced to a number of developments. Under an authoritarian regime, where the state was still powerful in terms of its military and security apparatus, Iraq never experienced any serious terrorist attacks. But when the United States destroyed the state in 2003, terrorist attacks become a daily occurrence for all Iraqis. One of the most grave mistakes in Iraq made by the United States occupation forces was dismantling the conscript Iraqi Army and other security forces. Many of these forces had a good education and professional military training – many soldiers had served in the Iran-Iraq War - and they had broad social relations throughout Iraq.

The United State's disastrous mistakes in Iraq contributed to the increase in the level of terrorist attacks from the beginning of its occupation of the country. Furthermore, there is clear evidence that terrorism has benefited to a large extent from social grievances and political disadvantage of Iraqi Sunni community.

The grievances and marginalization of the Sunni Arab community created a safe haven for thousands of terrorist sympathizers who were viewed as their patrons and protectors from the new Shi'a dominated regime in Baghdad. Therefore, socioeconomic variables can play an important role in understanding the problem of terrorism in Iraq. Taken together, existing research suggests that "the illiterate, underemployed population is often unwilling to express an opinion about policy issues, probably because they have more pressing matters on their minds... A range of socioeconomic indicators—including illiteracy, infant mortality, and gross domestic product per capita—is unrelated to whether people become involved in terrorism"(Krueger, 2008, p. 6) [I don't udnertand this last sentence] However, more research on this topic needs to be undertaken before the association between ethno-sectarian violence and terrorism is more clearly understood.

### **1.1.2. Electoral Violence and Voter Turnout in Iraq**

The study by Bingham Powell (1994), *Contemporary Democracies Participation, Stability, and Violence,*” offers probably the most comprehensive empirical analysis of the relationship between voter turnout and violence. The author found that “countries with high voting turnout had on average the least violence...[and] Countries with low voting participation had the most violence.”(Powell, 1994, p. 26) However, a strong relationship

between death tolls and voter turnout has been reported in the literature. One important finding has been that increasing terrorist activity will lead to increased voter turnout.

By the same token, scholars investigate the question of “how to combat casualties affect the decision to vote in established democracies.” According to the data from “23 democracies over 50 years and survey data from the United States and the United Kingdom during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars”, Koch and Nicholson found that there was “strong support for the hypothesis that higher casualties increase turnout, both at the aggregate and individual levels of analysis.”(Koch & Nicholson, 2016, p. 942)

However, Chris Blattman systematically examined the relationship between electoral violence and voting in emerging democracies in Africa. He used Uganda as an in-depth case study. The author assumes that violent trauma increases voter participation. He tested this hypothesis by using survey data and regression models and found that “the victims of violence are just as likely as their peers to participate socially and behave aggressively. They are considerably more likely, however, to vote and lead in their communities.”(Blattman, 2009, p. 244)

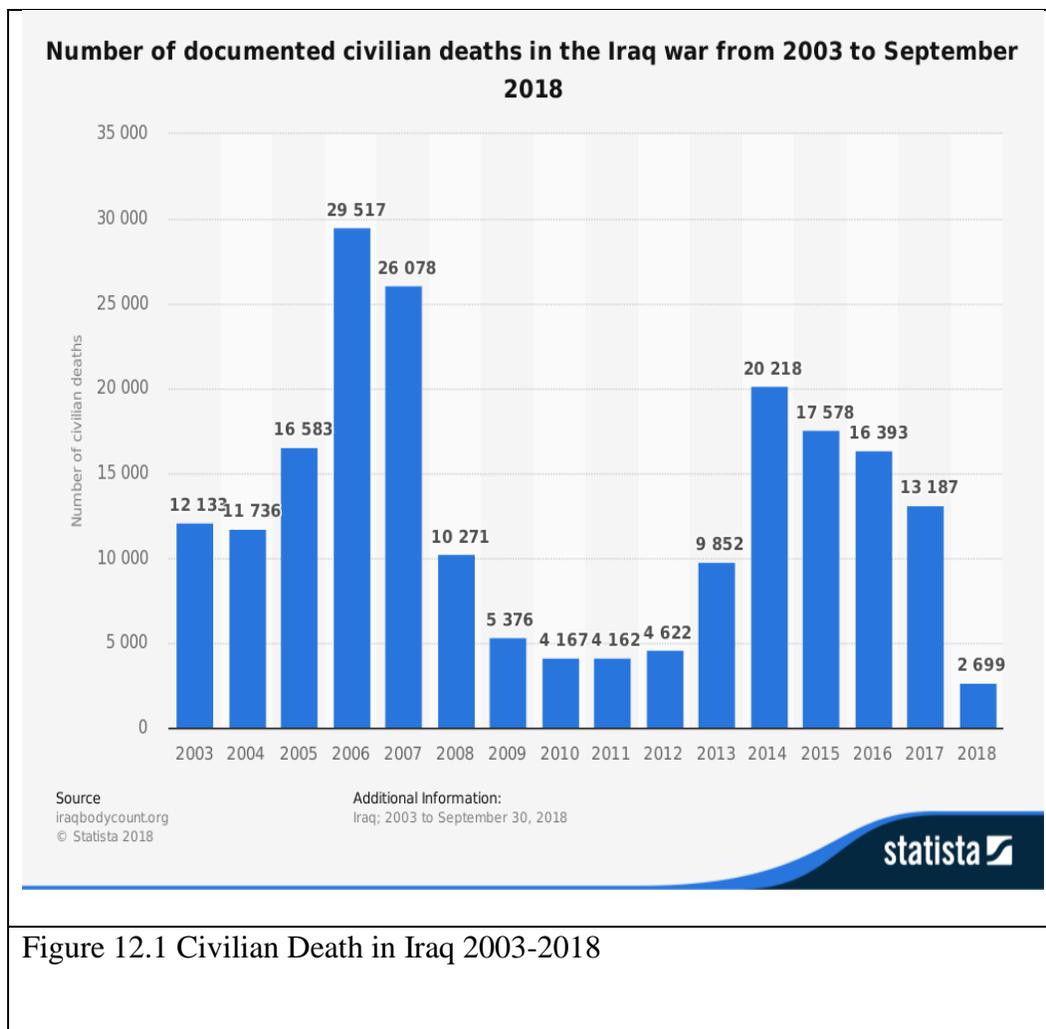


Figure 12.1 Civilian Death in Iraq 2003-2018

In his analysis to the relationship between violence and elections in Iraq between 2005 to 2010, Marc Lemieux argues that “political violence in Iraq since the fall of Baathism has principally been a reactive expression of communal protection and political self-preservation given the vacuum of state authority. Such violence resulted from significant miscalculation and pure ignorance of foreign forces and their civilian administrators, as evident in CPA address disbanding the entire Iraqi Army and the banning of the top four (instead of the top two) levels of Baathists from employment” (Lemieux, 2011, p. 36)

In his important study *Violence and the Vote Understanding Electoral Violence in Post-Conflict Iraq and Afghanistan*, Michal Khan notes that, in the first three democratic processes in 2005, many incidences indicated the electoral violence took place during the pre- and post-election periods. These incidences include car bombings, direct shootings, assassinations, voter intimidation, incidents of vandalism, and insurgent attacks on polling stations, mosques and public markets. (Khan, 2015, pp. 34–35) We argue, as an eyewitness, that these incidences were some of the most crucial motivations which motivated voters to go the polls on election day. Voter turnout ranged in Iraqi provinces from 66% to 98 % during the elections of 2005 and 2010. See the table below about Voter Turnout and Ballots Cast by Governorate in January, October, and December 2005.

Table 20 Voter Turnout in Governorates of Iraq in the Elections of 2005 and 2010\*

| Governorate      | Elections of Jan 30, 2005 |               | Referendum of Oct 15, 2005 |               | Elections of Dec 15, 2010 |              |
|------------------|---------------------------|---------------|----------------------------|---------------|---------------------------|--------------|
|                  | No. of Votes              | Turnout %     | No. of Votes               | Turnout %     | No. of Votes              | Turnout %    |
| <b>Anbar</b>     | <b>13,893</b>             | <b>2%</b>     | <b>259,919</b>             | <b>38%</b>    | <b>585,429</b>            | <b>86%</b>   |
| Babil            | 507,153                   | 73%           | 543,779                    | 73%           | 593,828                   | 79%          |
| Baghdad          | 1,887,010                 | 51%           | 2,120,615                  | 55%           | 2,702,541                 | 70%          |
| Basra            | 748,967                   | 72%           | 691,024                    | 63%           | 813,758                   | 74%          |
| <b>Diyala</b>    | <b>206,529</b>            | <b>33%</b>    | <b>476,980</b>             | <b>67%</b>    | <b>529,755</b>            | <b>75%</b>   |
| Dohuk            | 396,824                   | 92%           | 389,198                    | 85%           | 422,218                   | 92%          |
| Erbil            | 666,362                   | 84%           | 830,570                    | 95%           | 828,810                   | 95%          |
| Karbala          | 305,798                   | 75%           | 264,674                    | 60%           | 309,771                   | 70%          |
| Kirkuk/Tameem    | 403,286                   | 70%           | 542,688                    | 58%           | 595,425                   | 86%          |
| Missan           | 255,584                   | 61%           | 254,067                    | 59%           | 323,250                   | 73%          |
| Mosul/Nineveh    | 203,198                   | 17%           | 718,758                    | 57%           | 942,514                   | 70%          |
| Muthanna         | 191,336                   | 65%           | 185,710                    | 54%           | 208,662                   | 66%          |
| Najaf            | 371,615                   | 75%           | 299,420                    | 57%           | 385,533                   | 73%          |
| Qadissiya        | 344,316                   | 71%           | 297,176                    | 90%           | 338,925                   | 65%          |
| <b>Salahadin</b> | <b>145,656</b>            | <b>29%</b>    | <b>510,152</b>             | <b>75%</b>    | <b>555,755</b>            | <b>98%</b>   |
| Suleymania       | 750,837                   | 82%           | 723,723                    | 78%           | 809,759                   | 84%          |
| Thi-Qar          | 535,991                   | 69%           | 463,710                    | 57%           | 588,41                    | 72%          |
| Wassit           | 351,801                   | 71%           | 280,128                    | 54%           | 354,563                   | 68%          |
| Total Turnout    |                           | <b>58.26%</b> |                            | <b>78.59%</b> |                           | <b>79.6%</b> |

What is interesting about the data in the above table is that voter turnout in Iraq's governorates, which experienced a high level of violence, has increased significantly. For instance, in Anbar Province the turnout level dramatically increased from 2% to 86%. The voters in this governorate were mobilized by many social and political actors. The outlook on elections shifted from boycotting the transitional elections in Jan 2005 to participating actively in the first national elections in Dec 2005. With increased violence and terrorist attacks in this governorate, the turnout level decreased from 86% to 61% in the elections

\* Source: Iraq Independent High Electoral Commission and Jeff Fisher, Council of Representatives Election Composite Report Iraq December 15, 2005 Final Report

of 2010. During periods of relative political stability between 2012 to 2014, voter turnout levels continued also declined in the elections of 2014 from 61% to 44%. Not surprisingly, the first elections after ISIS that had controlled al-Anbar Governorate for a few months, voter turnout also continue declining, from 44% to 41%. From this data, we can assume, not only in al-Anbar Governorate but in most of the Iraqi governorates as well, that there is a casual relationship between violence and voter turnout. The more violence Iraq experiences, the less voter turnout there will be. Therefore, we are going to test this hypothesis in the next section of this chapter using binary logistic regression.

Table 21. Turnout in Governorates of Iraq in the Elections of 2005 and 2010

| Governorate          | Elections of Mar 7, 2010 |               | Elections of Apr 30, 2014 |               | Elections of May 12, 2018 |               |
|----------------------|--------------------------|---------------|---------------------------|---------------|---------------------------|---------------|
|                      | No. of Votes             | Turnout %     | No. of Votes              | Turnout %     | No. of Votes              | Turnout %     |
| Anbar                | 802.000                  | 61%           | 531067                    | 44%           | 436723                    | 41%           |
| Babil                | 961.000                  | 63%           | 1.041.989                 | 69%           | 610527                    | 49%           |
| Baghdad              | 4.599.000                | 53%           | 4.904.058                 | 53.5%         | 2305986                   | 44%           |
| Basra                | 1.466.000                | 57%           | 1611794                   | 62%           | 726164                    | 40%           |
| Diyala               | 840.000                  | 62%           | 887491                    | 61%           | 567723                    | 54%           |
| Dohuk                | 574.000                  | 80            | 612059                    | 76%           | 570092                    | 72%           |
| Erbil                | 917.000                  | 76%           | 971196                    | 73%           | 773269                    | 65%           |
| Karbala              | 00056                    | 62%           | 617846                    | 69%           | 321310                    | 42%           |
| Kirkuk               | 787.000                  | 73%           | 841297                    | 68%           | 492145                    | 50%           |
| Missan               | 561.000                  | 50%           | 605031                    | 56%           | 322490                    | 43%           |
| Mosul                | 1.702.000                | 66%           | 1912447                   | 54%           | 984091                    | 39%           |
| Muthanna             | 379.000                  | 61%           | 419471                    | 66%           | 234276                    | 45%           |
| Najaf                | 696.000                  | 61%           | 768519                    | 75%           | 393400                    | 42%           |
| Qadisiya             | 9.00061                  | 62%           | 662708                    | 71%           | 368823                    | 47%           |
| Salahadin            | .00069                   | 73%           | 769572                    | 57%           | 421375                    | 45%           |
| Suleymania           | 1.098.000                | 73%           | 1168461                   | 74%           | 764044                    | 55%           |
| Thi-Qar              | 993.000                  | 60%           | 1075824                   | 65%           | 566246                    | 43%           |
| Wassit               | 638.000                  | 63%           | 690566                    | 70%           | 411497                    | 49%           |
| <b>Total Turnout</b> |                          | <b>62.39%</b> |                           | <b>61.76%</b> |                           | <b>44.50%</b> |

## 12.2 Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics concerning the leading independent variables and the dependent variable was generated using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). While the mean score for those who worry about involving their country in a civil war is 1.97, the mean score of those expected the sectarian violence will increase is 1.89. In the same vein, the average mean score of those who worry that terrorist attacks will increase is 1.77. Those three variables have been coded from 1 to 4 where 1= Very Much, 2= A Great Deal, 3= Not Much and 4= Not at all.

Table 22 Descriptive Statistics: Dependent Variable and Independent Variables Model 7

|                              | N    | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation | Variance |
|------------------------------|------|---------|---------|------|----------------|----------|
| Turnout                      | 5092 | 0       | 1       | .73  | .445           | .198     |
| No Vote                      | 5092 | 0       | 1       | .27  | .445           | .198     |
| Civil_War_2                  | 2756 | -1      | 4       | 1.97 | 1.053          | 1.108    |
| Increase_Sec_Violence        | 2719 | 1       | 4       | 1.89 | .974           | .949     |
| Increase terrorist<br>attack | 2750 | -1      | 4       | 1.77 | .915           | .836     |
| Valid N (listwise)           | 2622 |         |         |      |                |          |

The frequency graph below for the respondents' concern that Iraq may slip into civil war shows that the majority of respondents 40.4% are worried about involving their county in a civil war.

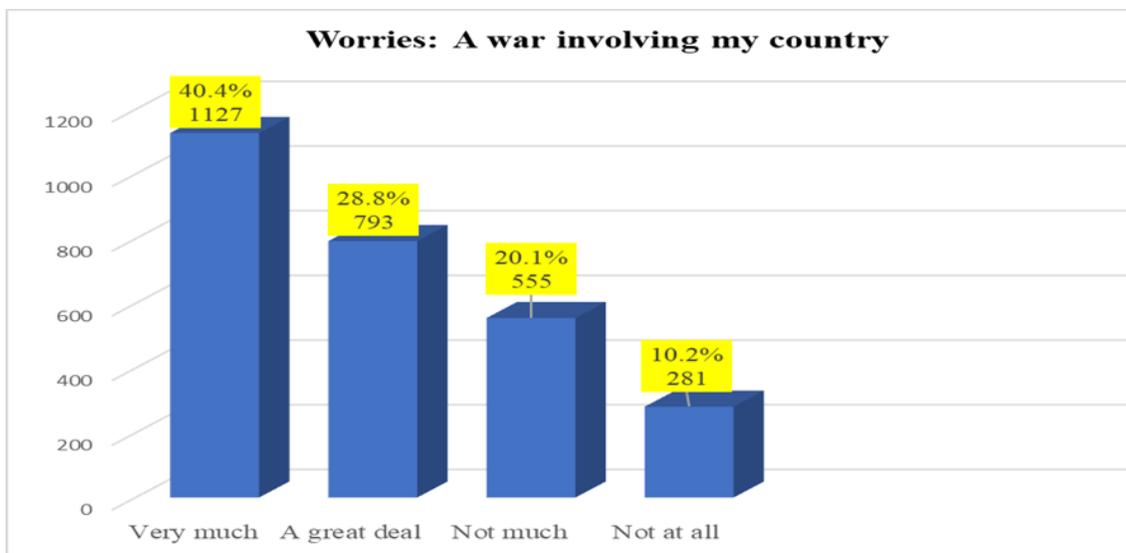


Figure 12.2 Worries : a war involving my country

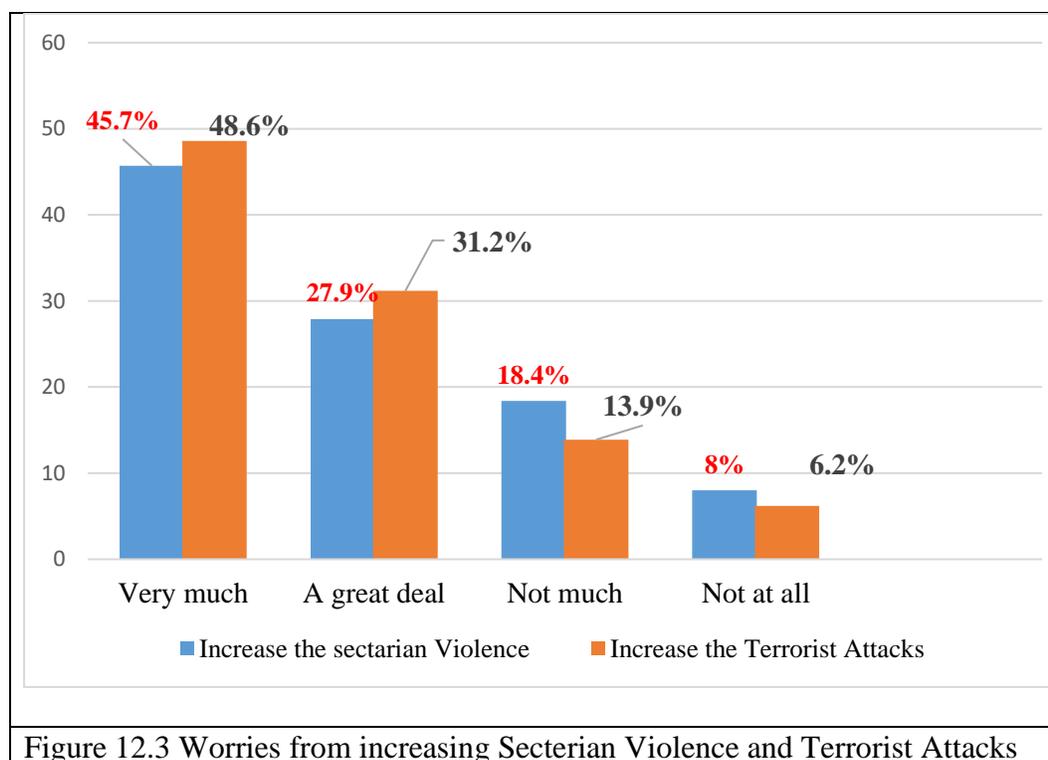


Figure 12.3 Worries from increasing Secterian Violence and Terrorist Attacks

### **12.3 Logistic Binary Regression Results**

We designed this model to examine the effects of electoral violence which can take many shapes, including sectarian violence, ethnic violence, and civil war on voter turnout. In a more generic sense, however, we used the model to examine the relative influence of the likelihood of increasing sectarian violence, terrorist attacks and sliding into civil war. It is also helpful to include covariate variables in this model, such as age, education, income, marital status, and gender. Before we ran a logistic regression test, we suspected that there might be an intercorrelation relationship between increasing sectarian violence and increasing terrorist attacks because both variables might have the same meaning but differ in wording only.

Next, to explore this suspicion, we ran a multicollinearity bivariate partial analysis controlling by our main dependent variable (Voter Turnout). The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used in this test. The result confirmed our prediction by showing there was a strong correlation (82.2%) between increasing sectarian violence and an increase in terrorist attacks. Thus, we decided to omit the variable which measures respondent attitude toward the probability of increasing the sectarian violence and substituting for it with the variable which measures respondent attitudes toward the probability of involvement in a regional war. Thus, we ran our logistic regression model using the following covariates: increasing terrorist attacks, civil war, involvement in a regional war, age, educations, income, marital status, and gender

| Control Variables     |                  |                         | terrorist_attack | Increase_Sec_Violence |
|-----------------------|------------------|-------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
|                       |                  |                         | –                |                       |
| Turnout               | terrorist_attack | Correlation             | 1.000            | .822                  |
|                       |                  | Significance (2-tailed) | .                | .000                  |
|                       |                  | df                      | 0                | 2657                  |
| Increase_Sec_Violence |                  | Correlation             | .822             | 1.000                 |
|                       |                  | Significance (2-tailed) | .000             | .                     |
|                       |                  | df                      | 2657             | 0                     |

The logistic regression results reveals that, there was a negative relationship between involvement in the regional war and motivating voters to vote in elections.] By the same token, the probability of increasing terrorist attacks has a negative statistically significant effect of motivating voters to go to the polls. The regression coefficient of the likelihood of increasing terrorist attacks is (-0.113), and the p-value level was set at < 0.05.

One of the more significant findings to emerge from this logistic regression analysis is that the probability of sliding into civil war has a positive impact on voters' motivations to support and vote for particular political parties and candidates. From this analysis, one can conclude that electoral violence is one of the most crucial contributing factors in mobilizing voters to participate in elections. With current fragile state institutions, corruption, militias and paramilitaries, and the increasing size of organized crime that

resulted from the state's abandoning its “monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force,” the political impact of violence will increase in the future and will certainly affect voter turnout level negatively.

we have proved that the relationship between violence and voter turnout was positive in the first and second foundational elections of 2005 and the elections of 2010. While we have noticed that the more violence Iraq experienced, the more people turned out to vote in the election of 2005, 2010 and 2014. In the election of 2018, we observe that the more violence we have, the less Iraqis turn out to vote. In conclusion, violence no longer maintains its impact on mobilizing voters to participate in elections.

Table 24 Logistic Regression Results: Electoral Violence and Voter Turnout in Iraq Model 7

|                               | <i>Dependent variable:</i>                   |
|-------------------------------|--|
|                               | Voter Turnout                                |
| Age                           | 0.058<br>(0.049)                             |
| Income                        | 0.010<br>(0.007)                             |
| Education                     | 0.120***<br>(0.042)                          |
| Female                        | -0.558***<br>(0.097)                         |
| Marital Status                | 0.455***<br>(0.112)                          |
| Terrorist attack              | -0.113*<br>(0.068)                           |
| Involvement in a regional war | -0.065<br>(0.058)                            |
| Civil War                     | 0.130**<br>(0.058)                           |
| Constant                      | 0.332<br>(0.247)                             |
| Observations                  | 2,594  |
| Log Likelihood                | -1,359.602                                   |
| Akaike Inf. Crit.             | 2,737.204                                    |
| <i>Note:</i>                  | * $p < 0.1$ ; ** $p < 0.05$ ; *** $p < 0.01$ |

### 13. Conclusions

### **13.1 Predicting Iraqi Voters Choice**

This dissertation presented a systematic empirical and theoretical investigation of the Iraq parliamentary elections in 2005, 2010, 2014 and 2018. The analyses were performed in the framework of qualitative and quantitative methodology. While no known empirical research on Iraqi politics has focused on exploring the impact of formal and informal institutions on voter turnout, this study explores, for the first time, the effects of these institutions on mobilizing voters to participate in elections. Theoretically, we have utilized some elements of the most common approach to studying political institutions. This approach is historical institutionalism which encompasses analysis based on the concepts of critical junctures and path-dependency.

This method helps us to explain the legacy and consequences of the US invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003 on the electoral process in particular, and Iraq's attempt to implement a democratic transition in general. We presented an institutional explanation for the main causes which led to the dramatic decline in voter turnout in the elections of May 2018. We trace back the historical development of the electoral process in Iraq since 2003 by focusing on the main components of the electoral system, the election supervisory body and the Iraqi party system as formal institutions which have been codified into the laws and regulations of the Republic of Iraq. On the other hand, we examined the impact of informal institutions on voter turnout in Iraq by focusing on the role of religious leaders, the role of ethnicity and religion and the role of electoral violence in mobilizing voters to participate in elections.

The overall weakness of formal institutions and relatively strong and stable informal institutions are indicators of the dysfunctional nature of Iraq's ethno-sectarian democracy. This dysfunction is probably associated with the fact that both variables have had a substantial impact on voting behavior. Nevertheless, the funnel of causality proposed in this study addresses the interaction between formal and informal institutions and how this interaction is related to voter mobilization efforts. However, while other intervening variables have been used by voters to make their final choice on election day, we argue that what determined voters' choice at the ballot box is mainly the interactions between these two variables.

Nevertheless, we have tested seven models to examine the relationship between voter mobilizations and voter turnout in Iraq since the first foundational elections in 2005. These models encompass socioeconomic factors, trust in government institutions, trust in political parties, trust in elections commissions, trust in religious leaders, religion and ethnicity and the role of electoral violence. Therefore, there no particular model that should be relied upon more in explaining the relationship between voter mobilization and turnout accurately and predicting the future of voter turnout levels?.

Voters' level of education, income, age ethnicity and religion need to be taken into consideration to understand voter behavior in post-authoritarian Iraq. By the same token, the level of trust government institutions has an increasingly important role in mobilizing voters to vote and have the same motives and effect of group membership variables. Therefore, voters' calculus combines elements of social, economic and religious identities and the extent to which extent they trust government institutions when casting their ballots.

Therefore, all models tested in this study should be taken seriously, although some of them have limited predictive powers. Finally, the models which seem to best explain and predict election outcomes in the short and medium term are socioeconomic and group membership models.

## **13.2 Lessons Learned**

This dissertation began as an endeavor to find new theories and models to explain the phenomenon of voting behavior in post-authoritarian countries, and Iraq in particular. It aimed to add new insights concerning Iraqi politics, avoiding topics which have been, to some extent, examined in previous studies, such as identity politics, authoritarianism, historical memory, sectarianism, oil and politics, the first and second Gulf Wars, the American invasion and state-building process, and colonialism and post-colonialism. Understanding how voters behave might enable us not only to predict the possibility of a future democratic transition in Iraq, but the factors which affect the voting decision-making process. We also thought that this investigation would lead to developing new theoretical and empirical underpinnings for studying voting behavior in Iraq and MENA region. These areas have been neglected and understudied in the Middle East, particularly how to utilize voting behavior models, which have been widely used and tested in Western countries, to develop such models which can be applied not only in Iraq but in other post-authoritarian countries.

After the qualitative and quantitative analyses conducted in this study, one can conclude that the process of building and applying Western-based models of voting behavior was extremely unreliable due to the gap and difference between Western

democracies and Iraq in the formal and informal institutional settings. One can easily be fooled into believing that the electoral process and other structural aspects of the democratic transition process in Iraq have been built by the United States, based on the foundations of “liberal democracy.” The factors which mobilized voters to turnout and determine election outcomes are completely different from that in well-established democracies.

My goal in writing this dissertation was multi-faceted: making significant contributions to debates surrounding the future of democracy in Iraq and highlighting or emphasizing the importance of studying voting behavior and voter mobilization to predict this future. Unfortunately, the results led me to the firm conclusion that the nascent or emerging democracy in Iraq has not been yet consolidated through elections, especially after the recent dramatic decline in voter turnout from 61.76% in the elections of 2014 to 44.5% in the elections of May 2018. This decline, which was accompanied by electoral fraud and election-rigging, has undermined Iraq’s emerging and nascent political institutions and electoral administration in particular. According to an interview with an anonymous high-ranking official in the Iraqi “Independent” High Electoral Commission (IHEC), the recent elections in 2018 witnessed massive electoral rigging, electoral manipulation, and voter intimidation, unseen since 2005.

This study’s main discovery was to confirm that Iraq is moving toward a new authoritarian regime, but in a different setting that it has experienced from 1963-2003. The best label for this regime might be full-scale competitive authoritarianism which was coined by Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way in their groundbreaking work *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War*. In this regime

type, the elections, instead of being an institution that create fundamental changes in the political process, have become increasingly meaningless, and the main reason for holding such elections is to maintain the status-quo. This can be accomplished through reinforcing corruption and patronage politics instead of fostering a true democratic transition. Nobody expects that holding elections under the current conditions in Iraq will bring any significant institutional change. This change is urgently needed to address the problems of mistrust between the Iraqi people and their government. It is also needed to overcome the fatal blunders of the US-invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003.

Notably, we found that existing theoretical and empirical principles of voter mobilization apply to Iraq. Variables such as socioeconomic factors (age, income, gender, marital status), trust in government institutions, the integrity of the election commission, the role of religious leaders in mobilizing voters, and ethnicity help the Iraqi voters decide which party or candidate to vote for on election day. On the other hand, variables such as education, trust in parliament, government performance, trust in political parties, party identification, religious or sectarian affiliation have minimal explanatory power in explaining incentives which increase or decrease voter turnout. Despite these promising results, there is abundant room for further research in determining why some variables have a significant effect in shaping voters' choices and others not.

There are many limitations and deficiencies of this study that stem from the lack of English and non-English theoretical, empirical and conceptual literature in the area of voting behavior in Iraq. Notwithstanding, we should state that this dissertation contains

some theoretical and empirical discoveries that can be expanded and replicated by researchers and scholars who are interest in studying the voting behavior and electoral mobilization in Middle East countries in general and Iraq in particular. Most importantly, the following conclusions can be drawn from the present study are:

- 1- There is no relationship between education and voter motives. The statistical results obtained from the surveys using cross-tabulation analysis of these two variables indicates that the majority of the Iraqi electorate who voted were either illiterate or possess an elementary and/or secondary education. The total percentage of those voters who are illiterate, and/or have an elementary and/or secondary education, is 52%. Consequently, the higher the education level Iraqi citizens attain, the less likely they are to participate in elections.
- 2- Age is the major determinant of voter turnout. The relationship between age and voter turnout is statistically significant at the  $p < 0.001$  level. Moreover, we found that while the majority of the Iraqi electorate is between 18 and 29, it represents 37.8% of the total electorate.
- 3- This study raises important questions about the impact of economic factors and income level in particular on voters' incentives to participate in elections. While we found that there was a statistically significant difference between income and voter turnout, we found that the majority of the Iraqi electorate (62.6%) lives in poverty and faces significant difficulties in meeting their basic daily needs. This will probably serve as a base for future studies on clientelism and vote-buying in Iraq in which the poor are targeted by candidates and political parties to obtain their votes in elections.

- 4- In general, therefore, it seems that while the relationship between voter turnout trust in government institutions has a negative regression coefficient ( $\beta$ ) of -0.282 and a standard error of 0.040, trust in parliament has no effect on voter turnout.
- 5- The results reveal that the integrity and independence of elections officials matter in mobilizing voters to go to the polls. The fairness of having professional non-partisan elections officials negatively affects voter turnout level ( $\beta$ ) of -0.128 at the significance level of 0.05. On the other hand, the regression coefficient of whether or not the rich buy elections, without being punished by the electoral commission, affects the level of voter turnout positively ( $\beta$ ) at 0.143 and the significance level also set at  $p < 0.05$ .

Party identification and trust in political parties have no effect on the voter decision-making process. The main challenge faced by some researchers is that they propose that democratization will be more likely to emerge in post-authoritarian countries which lack well-established political parties. These might be a completely false and exaggerated claim because I argue that well-established political parties constitute a necessary and sufficient condition not only for political stability but also for a successful transitional process from authoritarianism to democracy. We believe that this can be a significant contribution to the democratization literature on the Middle East, which rarely devote enough attention to the role of formal institutions such political parties and elections integrity and informal institutions such religious establishments and violence in studying the future of democratic transition in the MENA region. Specifically, this study demonstrates that Iraqis have not developed any psychological attachment to political parties since 2003. In other words, Iraqi

voters do not identify with a political party or, in general, consider themselves close to particular parties. Notably, the rates of party membership in Iraq appear very small and ineffective. Voters did not become psychologically attached to parties which recently emerged or even historical parties but attached themselves instead to party leaders and their brokers. Surprisingly, those leaders mostly do not participate in elections as candidates. The leaders do, however, act as bosses, controlling everything from determining where a candidate will be placed on the party list to forming the parties' internal policies, including funding, and distributing benefits to their brokers and clients in the shape of full or part-time public jobs or cash handouts to the needy, orphans, widows, internally displaced people, and all the victims of war and the dictatorial regime.

- 6- Further, the study demonstrates that there is a statistically significant relationship between voter turnout and ethnic affiliation. This means ethnicity is one of the most crucial factors in encouraging Iraqi voters to participate in elections. Thus, the influence of ethnicity on voting exceeded the influence of party identification.
- 7- On the other hand, surprisingly, the study discovered that sectarian affiliation had no impact on voting decision-making process in Iraq. While there is no doubt that this finding might contradict the conventional wisdom that Iraqi voters are inherently likely to cast ballots along their sectarian lines, it is not true to generalize the pattern of sectarian voting. Further research should be undertaken to investigate this finding by using first-hand data that collected by using questionnaires.

- 8- In the Iraqi context, the role of religious leaders in mobilizing voters cannot be neglected while studying voting behavior and voter turnout. I analyze some of the Friday sermons of one of the most prominent religious leaders in Iraq, Grand Ayatallah Ali al-Sistani, particularly ones delivered the week before election day in May 2018. These sermons offer important cues which voters rely on to decide whether or not they are going to participate in the election. I found that these cues are extremely important in increasing the level of voter turnout, as manifested in the elections of 2005. At the same time, I argue that these cues are one of the most crucial contributing factors to a dramatic decline in voter turnout in the elections of 2018. I construct a model to test this assumption quantitatively, and I found that the role of a religious leader in elections and his impact on government decisions is negatively correlated with voter turnout. In general, the relationship between religious leaders and decreasing or increasing the level of voter turnout is statistically significant at  $p < 0.01$  and  $p < 0.001$ . This study also confirmed what has been found in previous research conducted on the role of religion and ethnicity in post-2003 Iraq. These two variables have exacerbated the societal cleavages which already exist despite the elections.
- 9- The parliamentary and federal structures of the Iraqi state, alongside the electoral system, have also contributed significantly to exacerbating the polarization between Kurds and Arabs, as well as between Shi'a and Sunnis. Thus,, this study suggests that the vast majority of Iraqi voters made their decision to vote to a large extent according to their ethnic identity (Arab vs Kurds) not along the widely presumed basis of their sectarian identity (Shi'a vs Sunnis).. Hence, while religious practices

such as praying daily or attending Friday prayer did not influence the process of voters' decision making, the role of religious leaders in mobilizing voters is still important. The influence of religion on Iraqi voters is in decline and it will have no influence in mobilizing voters to cast their ballots.

10- This study revealed that electoral violence, including any form of violence targeted against innocent people and security forces for electoral ends, has a significant impact on increasing voter turnout level. In principle, it does not matter whether this violence targeted innocent civilians or security forces. I assume that most violence that Iraq experienced since 2003, such as terrorist attacks, ethno-sectarian violence, and civil war, had electoral ends. While violence in the first three foundational elections (2005, 2010 and 2014) helped in encouraging voters to vote for those who promise to bring stability, it can also be one of the confounding factors which discourages voters from voting, which ultimately led to the dramatic decline in voter turnout in the elections of 2018. The 2018 national elections were held after three years of war against one of the most brutal terrorist organizations, the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. It was also accompanied by rampant corruption, inflation, high poverty, a high unemployment rate, a massive internally displaced persons crisis, the growth of economic inequality, and a failure to provide basic needs, such as health care, electricity, and clean drinking water in Iraq. All these factors have contributed significantly not only to undermining the trust between citizens and the electoral process, but also to increasing people's disenchantment with the political elites' unfulfilled promises since 2003.

### **1.2.1. Future Research**

This dissertation has demonstrated that the relationship between electoral politics and both formal and informal institutions is interrelated and has complex effects on voter mobilization. Although I believe that I have made an initial attempt at developing a conceptual and empirical framework to answer the question of how voters decide to cast their votes in post-authoritarian countries by focusing on the role of formal and informal institutions, I make no claim that I have incorporated all the relevant variables, nor have I employed all available and sophisticated statistical and qualitative methods in my research.

Future research presents new opportunities to conduct further empirical and conceptual investigation of voting behavior and the outcomes of Iraqi elections. There are still many unanswered questions about how to describe, explain and predict pre- and post-election outcomes in Iraq. Generally speaking, future research should focus more on testing how formal and informal voting rules affect voters' participation decisions. It is also important to address the issues of tribalism, corruption, electoral violence, voter intimidation, vote-buying, electoral rigging, foreign meddling, and clientelism which should be understood as informal institutions. Media influence and campaign financing also require special attention as institutional factors which shape public attitudes toward elections and voting. To the best of my knowledge, none of these factors has been taken into consideration in post-2003 research on Iraqi politics.

While this work focused only on national elections in Iraq, there is still no research on local elections. The reasons might be the lack of data. This definitely should be a subject that is taken into consideration in future research. This dissertation demonstrates that

socioeconomic and sociodemographic factors have an important impact on voting behavior, but this topic also needs more research in the future. Further research could extend the findings related to the role of religious and tribal leaders and how much they influence voters' electoral choices in subsequent national and local elections. The rise of populist and national leaders and their role in mobilizing voters, and the future of the democratic transition in Iraq, should also be taken into account in future research.

It is also necessary to conduct more research which incorporates resource mobilization theories and voter turnout in the Iraqi context. In other words, it could be expected, according to Resource mobilization theory (RMT) to understand why informed and educated people tend to boycott elections, while young, uninformed, low educated, and poor people participate in elections more than other groups. The more resources such money, time and knowledge the Iraqi voters have, the most likely to boycott the elections in the future. It would be desirable to examine how national identity and civic duty affect the quality of voter decision-making.

The vast majority of research on Iraqi politics examines the direct effect of sectarianism and ethnicity and other independent variables, using macro-level and qualitative analysis, on state-building and nation-building in Iraq. In doing so, researchers ignore the fact that these variables can be better understood when we focus on these social cleavages on the micro-analytic or individual level, and how these cleavages affect voters' preferences which are then translated into voting decisions. In other words, what has been lacking in the analysis of electoral outcomes since 2003 is using survey data to examine the relationship between social and political cleavages and voting behavior in Iraq. Thus,

the message for future research is clear: besides utilizing qualitative data, researchers should also consider quantitative data and employ various statistical and regression models. Last, but not least, while this study did not have the chance to benefit from comparative analysis and cross-nation differences and similarities regarding the voting behavior in post-authoritarian countries, for reasons beyond the researcher's control, future studies on this topic are therefore recommended.

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