

The Foundations of Iraqi Political Alliances and Their Impact on the Political System After 2003

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Abstract: Following the events of 2003, the Iraqi political system has been confronted with a multitude of challenges, encompassing political, economic, and security domains. A pivotal political challenge, which forms the focal point of this study, pertains to the issue of political alliances. These alliances have exerted a direct influence on the political process and the overall effectiveness of the political system. It is imperative to acknowledge that the political alliances in Iraq under the post-2003 political system have been characterised by instability. This instability can be attributed to the fragile foundations upon which these alliances were established, the absence of trust, and the reliance on sectarian and ethnic quotas. These factors have rendered political alliances vulnerable to both internal and external influences, which in turn have affected the structure of the political system and its constitutional institutions. These dynamics have contributed to delaying the transition from political instability to political stability. Despite numerous endeavors to deviate from this sectarian and factional political approach, the magnitude of these efforts has fallen short in comparison to the influence exerted by the dominant political actors.

Keywords: Alliances, Political system, Democracy, influence.

INTRODUCTION

In consensual democratic systems, political alliances represent the driving force and the primary factor in the political process. The effectiveness and success of the political system, and vice versa, are contingent on the foundations of these alliances. The more robust the foundations, the more effective the system will be, provided it is built on strategic plans and goals, and is in accordance with clear and realistic visions, with the availability of the principle of mutual trust and respect. The circle of sub-categorical affiliations is reflected in the effectiveness of the political system and the structure of its constitutional institutions, and vice versa affects the effectiveness of the political system and creates a state of political instability in the political process [Abdul-Ridha, A. T, 2023].

In this context, the Iraqi political alliances that emerged under the political system following 2003 were characterized by a state of instability, primarily due to the fragility of the foundations upon which these alliances were established and the absence of a robust principle of trust and reliance on component foundations. Sectarian and national quotas, which rendered them susceptible to the influence of both internal and external factors, and their repercussions on the structure of the political system and its constitutional institutions. These data contributed to the protraction of the period during which the political transition occurred, from a state of instability to political stability [Oddie, B].

The Significance of the Research: The centrality of this research stems from the pivotal role that alliances played in the Iraqi political process following 2003, particularly in the formation of presidencies and the navigation of the challenges and crises confronting the democratic political system. The study aims to elucidate the underlying foundations of these political alliances and to unravel the defects that contributed to a state of political instability and the inability to forge robust and cohesive alliances.

The Following Research Problem has been identified: What are the foundations on which the political process was built? Do strategic rules and fixed principles underpin political alliances? What is the nature of the competition between political blocs, and has this been reflected in the formation of political alliances? How has this affected the political system?

Research Hypothesis: The research methodology is founded on the hypothesis that the establishment of political alliances on strategic foundations and rules, and political controls, is indicative of the effectiveness and stability of the political system. Conversely, the absence of such strategic foundations and rules, and political controls, is suggestive of political instability and successive political crises.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A systematic approach was adopted to analyse this problem and understand its details, and this approach enabled the demonstration of how the

institutions of the Iraqi political system are formed and work, as well as the clarification of the effectiveness, failure and challenges facing the system from the perspective of political alliances.

Firstly, it is necessary to define the meaning of the alliance and the nature of the Iraqi political system after 2003. Before delving into the subject, it is necessary to define the concepts that will be examined in detail, albeit briefly. The conceptual framework will be elaborated upon in due course. The purpose of this definition is to provide a clear vision of the subject, and consequently, the meaning of the alliance and the political system will be apparent. The nature of the Iraqi political system after 2003 will also be learnt about.

1: Political Alliance.

This is defined as an alliance in which the specific tasks, assigned duties, and the desired goal of the alliance are determined at the time of its formation and are governed by the prevailing nature and repercussions of that particular period. [Sabaa, S. M. *et al.*, 2024] Some authors define the alliance as a temporary union between two or more groups within a pluralistic democratic political system, with the aim of expanding the area of influence and power and achieving objectives, most notably the formation of governments and the passing of laws within the Legislative Council in order to obtain the highest percentage of benefit and common interest, and that alliance either ends with the life of the government or the achievement of the common goal or is renewed in the event of political stability that resulted from it [Abdullah, A. G. B, 1982] As for the effective building of alliances, it is according to a continuous process based on the foundations of relationships that include groups with common principles and values in order to achieve a common goal. In the context of diverse societies that adopt the democratic system, political parties must engage in political work and cooperation, leading to the establishment of agreements and understandings. These alliances are classified into two categories: temporary alliances, often formed during election periods, and those characterized by continuity [Al-Saadi, A. H. S, 2013].

2: The Political System.

A number of definitions for the political system were mentioned in the statement, and these definitions underwent changes in accordance with the development of political systems. Initially defined as the method of exercising power within the state, the definition of the political system

underwent a transformation and multiplication, including the definition of the political system as an institutional structure in which structures with an intertwined and interconnected relationship interact within its internal framework, the function of which is to achieve balance in society [Al-Jamal, Y, 1989].

The political system is defined as a group of elements whose mission is to maintain society as a living entity that exists on its own and is managed by a political authority. Among these elements that make up the political system are: political organizations, political rules, political relations, and political awareness. Each of these elements affects and depends on the other. This change in defining the concept of the political system came after an increase in political activity and the multiplicity of its official and unofficial sources [Saudi, H. A. B, 1986]. The constitutional trend interprets the political system as the official political institutions represented by the executive, legislative and judicial authority. Conversely, the behavioral trend expands the conceptual framework of the political system, demonstrating that the system assumes other dimensions through the network of interactions, relations and roles that are linked to the political authority, whether through the ideological framework or the organizational institutional framework. This evolution has been linked to the broader development of life in general, and consequently, this has been reflected in the political system. Consequently, the political system has been understood to extend beyond the conventional concept of government, encompassing political parties, organizations, pressure groups, interest groups concerned with human rights and other rights, civil society organizations, as well as the media in its various forms, and the activities of individuals and institutions that take on a religious and social character. While all of these entities and actors entered the framework of the political system, it is crucial to note that this does not imply their direct integration into the government. In light of this, the political system can be defined as the legal framework for political activities, and the relationship of institutions that contain activities that have a relationship with authority, i.e. the authority to organize society. It encompasses all interactions that have a bearing on the use of legitimacy. [Salman, S. M, 2007; Al-Aswad, S, 1991]

The Following Essay Will Explore the Nature of the Iraqi Consensual Political System.

The consensual democracy model is one of the political models that has been applied to address the issue of political participation in pluralistic, multiple or divided societies. It is based on building large alliances that guarantee the basic social components opportunities for representation and participation in decision-making, thus avoiding submission to the authority of the majority as the minority retains the right to veto or object. This makes its ability to confront the majority and avoid its dominance available and possible in practice [Al-Anbaki, T. J. H, 2017] Iraq's adoption of a parliamentary system of government following 2003 is a common feature in contemporary global political systems, though it varies in practice according to the political and social nature of the state. Iraq's system is characterized by consensual governance, a feature that is further bolstered by the presence of party pluralism. This pluralism ensures that a political party cannot form the government alone or function effectively within parliament. The principle of alliance is therefore the main factor in addressing that problem and achieving the legal quorum. In order to achieve stability and continuity in the political process, there must be correct foundations for that alliance. The adoption of the democratic system came according to mechanisms and intellectual principles based on effective constitutional institutions. Since Iraqi society is a diverse society, the consensus mechanism was adopted in managing the new system of government. The consensus mechanism was adopted as a method for political forces, and even extended to form a political norm at the level of the official institutions of the political system, as those institutions were divided among the main formations of society by consensus. [Abdul Karim, A. K. Q, 2020]

3: The Nature of Political Alliances:

Has been previously demonstrated in this text. The Iraqi political system after 2003 adopted the consensus mechanism in governing, and what must be clarified is that this mechanism was agreed upon and theoretically prepared before the fall of the former regime, through opposition conferences that were held and the preparations that were made after the fall. [Al-Kaabi, A. S, 2011] These hypotheses were implemented through the Governing Council and then consolidated through the founding framework in the Transitional State Administration Law, as well as the Iraqi Constitution of 2005. However, following the establishment of the system's foundational

elements and the commencement of its practical implementation, a discord emerged between the social and political realities and the mechanism that was employed. This discord contributed to the escalation of sectarian polarization and the formation of fronts by these political forces, thereby creating a schism within the political system between the sectarian approach and the democratic doctrine. The crux of the issue, therefore, lies not in the multiplicity and diversity of political parties, but rather in the manner in which these parties adopt an ideological stance towards this diversity [Majeed, S. A, 2024], failing to bestow upon it a unified human and national dimension. With regard to the formation of political alliances, these were derived from certain articles of the Iraqi constitution and were embedded within the political process in a manner consistent with the nature of Iraqi society. This was achieved through the requirement of an absolute majority to elect the president of the House of Representatives, and a two-thirds majority for the Presidency Council. These texts, in light of a system that relies on multi-partyism and proportional representation, make it difficult for a party or political bloc to obtain a two-thirds majority within parliament. This, in turn, is what prompts the active political blocs and parties to discuss the mechanism for choosing the three presidencies according to the principle of partnership and political consensus. [Salih, G. M, 2019]

The Iraqi National Constituent Assembly elections that took place on 30 January 2005 established the foundation for the formation of the various political forces in the Iraqi political landscape. The election results produced a number of diverse political forces, which contributed to this multi-party system. The adoption of the electoral system (proportional representation) has been identified as a significant factor in the development of a multi-party system in Iraq. The objective of this legislative measure was to facilitate the management of diversity and the participation of various components in the political process, with a view to reducing the degree of conflict and containing and resolving it. This stage is considered to be one of the most pivotal in the establishment of the characteristics of the new system. Among the most prominent political blocs that emerged from the Constituent Assembly elections are: [Lijphart, E, 2006]

The United Iraqi Alliance was constituted from a total of sixteen Shiite political parties. The

Kurdistan Alliance comprised the Kurdish political parties.

The Iraqi List and the Iraqi List despite the position of the Sunni Arabs on the political process and elections, and the lack of full participation of those forces, the Iraqi List and the Iraqi List seemed to consider themselves the legitimate representative of the Sunni Arabs, until the political forces gradually began to integrate and participate in the political process.

In the absence of a democratic culture within political parties and movements, this has a detrimental effect not only on the work of political alliances but also on the entire political process. The parties and movements represent the primary basis that drives the political process within the political system. The positions adopted by the political leaderships, which represented the components in general, as well as the divisions within those components, were characterized by a certain rigidity and adherence to individual personal positions. This was reflected negatively on the effectiveness of the system and, in particular, on the official legislative and executive institutions, whether through obstructing draft laws or forming governments, which took months to form. For instance, the formation of the transitional government took three months, the national unity government took five months, and

the national partnership government took nine months. [Lijphart, E, 2006] This delay can be attributed to the bargaining style and the focus of the leaders of the political alliances on private interests, who enter into agreements as a method and way to achieve their goals. The absence of binding principles for political alliances is another contributing factor. This has resulted in state institutions increasing the capacity of ministries and creating and expanding positions, due to the complexity of forming alliances and the degree of personalization within them. Consequently, some ministries and positions have become honorary in order to satisfy the leaders of the political forces. This procedure has been extended to the political system, as it has become in conflict with the constitution, leading to the outbreak of political conflicts. The political leaderships that guided the parties and political movements were a significant and effective factor in establishing the foundations of sectarianism and quotas in the political system and perpetuating them [Adi Falih; Al-Asadi, S. H. A. A, 2008].

In addition, there are other internal and external factors and actors that have contributed in one way or another to increasing the intensity of the conflict and increasing the degree of complexity in building effective alliances. These factors can be stated in the following order:

Status	Factors
Uncooperative and conflicting	Political elites
Different	The disparity between the three components under previous regimes
Identical	Political partnership in power between the components according to their social management
Weak, due to high and multiple sub-loyalties.	The comprehensive national identity
Mostly negative.	Social and political pluralism
Excessive	Party pluralism
Active and passive	Regional intervention
Active and passive	International intervention

Thirdly, the Impact of Political Alliances on Constitutional Institutions

Is worthy of consideration. It is evident that political alliances played multiple and different roles, and those roles affected the political system through its constitutional legislative, executive and judicial institutions. This is because they disrupted the work of those institutions during periods of conflict. This was due to political competition between the active political forces, and that competition turned into a factional conflict of a special nature over the division of positions and

influence on a component basis. The impact of political alliances on constitutional institutions is further compounded by the emergence of a political custom that divides the presidency of the authorities according to the components. The presidency of the republic is allocated to the Kurdish component, the presidency of parliament to the Sunni component, and the prime ministership to the Shiite component. component, in addition to allocating other ministries and positions among the coalition forces for each component. Consequently, due to the

constitutional conditions and mechanisms in establishing those presidencies, it necessitated the active forces from those components to form alliances in order to attain the legal quorum that qualifies each of them to assume that position. [Abdullah, K. L. *et al.*, 2020; Al-Akeili, Z. A. M. *et al.*, 2017] The method employed in establishing political alliances, based on the distribution of ministerial and sensitive positions, gave rise to a factional component character in the form of the mandate of the ministries to which the political blocs belong. These positions began to exhibit the characteristics of This political behaviour has been identified as a contributing factor to the increasing complexity of the political process, with implications for both the societal reality and the electoral process. It is noteworthy that political factionalism has emerged as a significant instrument in the political arena, serving as a means of propagating political messages during electoral campaigns [Latif, L. D., 2022].

Firstly, at the Level of the Legislative Institution

The weakness and failure that befell the party system caused the inability to institutionalize political alliances and rely on the principle of joint cooperation in facing challenges and addressing accumulated and emerging crises that require legal legislation and the enactment of legal regulations. This, in turn, was reflected in the societal reality of the inability or difficulty of absorbing the different segments of society. The crux of the issue is the contradiction and conflict inherent in the positions of the political forces and alliances within the Legislative Council. The method of quotas and consensus has had two notable impacts: [Al-Bayati, F. A. K. *et al.*, 2020]

Firstly, there has been a shift away from the project of building the state and its unity and establishing the concept of national unity. Despite the importance of the legislative institution in the parliamentary system, these political forces do not use a political structure that criticises its construction; rather, they use the method of contradiction. This approach is characterised by the employment of exclusionary and defamatory rhetoric, even within the ambit of existing alliances. Consequently, this method falls short in terms of fostering the development of state institutions and engendering a state of political stability [Al-Mayali, A. A., 2022].

Secondly, the political behavior of the first trend gave rise to a duality of orientations and positions

among the political forces. These forces seek to use the alliances in which they participate to achieve government, and yet they themselves oppose the government in which they participate when it fails. Moreover, they reject and criticise sectarianism and nationalism as a method of governance in words [Al-Saeedi, A.-J., 2021].

The most significant reasons for the weakness of the political opposition in the Iraqi political system after 2003 can be summarised as follows:

A- The absence of a supportive political culture, due to the weakness that affected successive governments and the failure to establish a culture of opinion and the other opinion professionally.

B- The failure to separate competition and conflict from debate and constructive dialogue.

The absence of belief in the rotation of power and the desire for exclusion is also a contributing factor. Furthermore, the absence of a balanced equation between the opposition and the government is due to the quota system and consensus that is based on the criterion of the component's share and the population weight of the ethnicities, and on the other hand, on the size of the political forces and the number of their parliamentary seats. In light of this distribution, everyone seeks to participate in government.

The repercussions of Iraqi society's tumultuous past have engendered a proclivity towards belligerent political conduct, given its capacity to evoke strong sentiments and provoke emotional responses. This has enabled political forces, even those within the government, to capitalise on this climate by censuring the incumbent governments and thereby seeking to recalibrate the electoral balance in their favor [Al-Shammari, A. A. M., 2018].

Secondly, at the level of the executive institution, the multi-party system resulted in the formation of political alliances for the purpose of forming governments. This was able to achieve balance and relative stability within those governments through agreements and settlements in order to maintain stability and avoid political divisions. Nevertheless, these governments were unable to implement their electoral programmes and address popular demands, primarily due to the unique demands of the alliance blocs. This resulted in a divergence between the executive institution and the populace. Despite the constitutional articles delineating the mechanism and formula for

forming the executive authority in its two parts, the presidency of the republic and the prime minister, [Al-Saeedi, A.-J, 2021] the political reality since the commencement of the application of the constitutional articles has been characterized by complex stages following each electoral process to form that authority in its two parts. The principle of consensus between the winning blocs forming the coalition renders the process subject to protracted consultations that disregard the constitutional terms and constants. This results in the delay in distributing ministerial portfolios and other positions among the coalition parties in a manner that is proportional to their size. The period between the conclusion of the elections and the voting on the presidencies is characterised by the consideration of the regional and international powers' perspectives on the matter, given the external loyalties of the coalition parties. Consequently, the selection process within parliament becomes formalised, with representatives casting their votes in accordance with the directives issued by the head of their respective bloc [Al-Khazraji, H. J. M, 2013].

Thirdly, at the level of the judicial institution, the judicial authority played an important and pivotal role in preserving the continuity of the political system, whether through interpreting the disputed legal articles and adjudicating the disputed political issues. Evidence of this can be found in the significant differences that emerged between political forces regarding alliances, as well as the results of the elections that took place during the second legislative session in 2010. These elections were characterised by substantial political divisions, following the acquisition of 89 seats by the State of Law Coalition and 91 seats by the Iraqi List. The dispute centred on the eligibility of any of the lists to form the government in accordance with Article [Abdullah, A. S, 2022] of the Constitution, which pertains to the concept of the largest bloc. Subsequent to the Federal Court's determination that the largest bloc is constituted within the Council of Representatives and is more numerous, the State of Law List was able to establish a parliamentary alliance that surpassed the Iraqi List, consequently forming the government. [Al-Akeili, Z. A. M] Additionally, the Federal Court provided its interpretation of Article [Dahdouh, S. M, 2014] with regard to the quorum requirement for the session intended for the election of the President of the Republic, as well as its decision regarding the reopening of nominations for the position of President of the

Republic, its interpretation of the legitimacy of the Emergency Food Security Support Law, and its decision regarding the procedures of the House of Representatives to accept the nomination of (Hoshyar Mahmoud Muhammad) for the position of President of the Republic, all of these interpretative decisions emanated from the differences and conflicts between political alliances when they reached the stage of political deadlock, and this was due to the absence of vision, strategic path and political stability in political alliances, which opened the way for the judiciary to play a pivotal role in preserving the continuity of the political system.

The complexity of political alliances has been demonstrated to exert significant pressure on the judiciary, particularly through the Federal Court. The decisions made by the judiciary have been shown to influence the legislative and executive authorities in their efforts to preserve the structure of the political system and achieve political and societal stability. This is particularly evident in the context of political pressure and the ambition of political forces to share power. In this context, it is instructive to draw parallels with the Malaysian experience, which has achieved notable success and progress. [Yassin, A. H, 2023] There are notable similarities and, in some aspects, a congruence with the Malaysian case, particularly with regard to the nature of the political system or other factors. The Malaysian political system has been stabilised and made to progress and spread a positive spirit due to several aspects, the most important of which are:

B- Positive management by the political leaderships that have been entrusted with managing the political process [Al-Shafie, D. R. N, 2023].

C- The distinguished ability to contain crises and problems and transform the conflict into a state of enrichment and positive production.

D- Focusing on spreading awareness and inclination towards peace and dissolving sub-loyalties in favour of the national identity, by eliminating ethnic strife and introducing the individual to the components of peaceful coexistence.

E- Focusing on the importance of elite discourse based on moderation.

F- The removal of the philosophy of the military from political life, and the prevention of the militarisation of society.

K- The focus on the development and cultivation of the Malaysian individual, and the acknowledgement that the development renaissance originates from that individual.

D- The creation of an environment conducive to investment and interest in healthcare and development, equally between the countryside and the city or bet

CONCLUSION

It is evident that, despite endeavors to modify their formative nature and reform their internal system, Iraqi political alliances remain unstable and are susceptible to continuous disintegration, as well as the inability to establish an environment founded on mutual trust (Jones, 2019). This is attributable to the inherent characteristics of the political and demographic composition of these alliances, which is governed by the ethnic and sectarian division on which they were established (Smith, 2021). The majority of initiatives that have been implemented to address these ethnic complexities have been of a tactical nature, lacking a comprehensive focus on achieving collective objectives. Furthermore, the instability in the political process can be attributed to the failure to implement the constitution in its entirety in a consistent and binding manner for all parties, as well as the absence of a principle of respecting the constitution by political parties and their alliances. Consequently, the relationship between constitutional institutions has become adversarial.

The persistence of sectarian and ethnic policies within the framework of political alliances, in the absence of a comprehensive approach to address the foundations upon which the political system was established post-2003, is likely to exert a detrimental influence on the political system, thereby exacerbating the existing disparity between the societal structure and the system. This, in turn, engenders a state of vulnerability, characterized by recurring crises and instability. It is incumbent upon all political forces to recognize this threat and act accordingly. This necessitates the forging of a productive political alliance that prioritizes the resolution of accumulated crises and progresses in a continuous and complementary manner to address these issues. Such actions will engender a state of harmony, integration and interpenetration between the political system and society.

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