

CHAPTER 6

Bahraini Exceptionalism or (Ethnic) Politics as Usual?: Sunni-Shi'i Conflict and Political Orientation in Iraq

Having seen then the way that *rentier* state reality falls short of *rentier* state theory in Bahrain, at least one nagging question remains: what is it exactly that Bahrain represents? If its case reveals how ethnic competition can come to displace economics in determining individual political behavior, political opinion, and ultimately regime stability in the Arab Gulf, does such a result apply here merely—to a single, in many ways atypical, Gulf state?—or is it generalizable to a larger class of countries? If it is more widely-applicable, upon what basis, again, is Bahrain representative of some broader category? Is its most salient characteristic that it is a *rentier* economy? That it features an ethnically-divided society? Or its combination of the two?—that it is, as described here, an ethnically-contested *rentier* state?

The present chapter seeks to help answer these lingering questions by examining the determinants of political action and opinion among citizens of another Arab nation divided notably along Sunni-Shi'i lines: Iraq. If we discover that our theory of ethnic-based political mobilization and orientation obtains also in the case of Iraq, a country that clearly differs on many levels from Bahrain and other GCC states, then we will have evidence that Bahraini politics is not *sui generis* but applies in degrees elsewhere according to the severity of ethnic competition over power and influence in a society. In that event, Bahrain's most essential attribute as it relates to our Chapter 5 findings is not the nature of its rentierism but of its ethno-religious divide, a divide that within the Arab Gulf describes Bahrain particularly but not uniquely, and one that today is only deepening and spreading. What we hope to come closer to learning, then, is whether Bahrain's ethnic-based politics results from an ineffective *rentier* state, or, as argued here throughout, Bahrain's ineffective *rentier* state from its sabotaging ethnic politics.

Of course, we have already (cf. CH. 4, 118 ff.) offered a number of reasons to suggest why Bahrain is not alone among Arab Gulf states in failing to achieve the socio-political consensus supposed to prevail in *rentier* nations. These include the observations that regime stability in the GCC tends to track closely to ethnic diversity; that ethnic competition throughout the Gulf monarchies is underpinned by a common exogenous force, fear of Iranian expansionism and resultant domestic Shi'a emboldening; and, most simply, that the current state of Sunni-Shi'i and government-Shi'i relations in the region belies the notion that Bahrain's ethnic politics, if perhaps exaggerated owing to demographics, are qualitatively unique. On the contrary, we noted, echoing Okruhlik (1999), "in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Bahrain opposition has arisen and with it a discrepancy between the expectations derived from the rentier framework and empirical reality" (297). In an increasing number of locations across the Arab Gulf, "windfall profits of petroleum exports do not translate into a politically quiescent population," precisely because rents cannot always "buy the support or loyalty of different social groups" (295)—especially when, as we saw in the last chapter, the social groups most in need of buying-off are the ones disproportionately excluded from *rentier* benefits.

By investigating the effect of Sunni-Shi'i division on political behavior in Iraq, we aim therefore to offer more systematic evidence in support of this line of argument. Critically, this evidence will operate once again on the individual level in line with the causal story of *rentier* theorists, based as it is on two surveys of Iraqi citizens administered in 2004 and 2006. These data offer several practical and theoretical advantages. First and most importantly, they exist, something that cannot be said, unfortunately, of data from elsewhere in the Arab Gulf save for in my Bahrain survey. Indeed, Gulf governments refuse to publish statistics even on the aggregate populations of confessional groups in their societies, so one may imagine their willingness to allow survey research that asks about ethnic and religious membership. In the second place, these Iraq data provide not only cross-country variation but also temporal variation, allowing us to connect changes in ethnic and political orientations at the individual level with known changes in the Iraqi political arena (for example, the results of elections) and in inter-ethnic relations (for example, the onset in 2006 of what would approach a full-scale civil war fought mainly between Sunni insurgents and Shi'a militias). Finally, the Iraq surveys fielded questions relating more directly to respondents' orientations toward their ethnic rivals than those asked in Bahrain (cf. CH. 5, 169, note 15), affording alternative and indeed improved measures of the strength a person's ethnic identity vis-à-vis the opposing group. For all these

reasons, the investigation of Iraq to follow, if more limited in scope, is no mere afterthought to our Chapter 5 analysis, but rather clarifies and extends it.

Iraq *Contra* Bahrain

A comprehensive treatment of the nature and historical development of Sunni-Shi'i relations in Iraq is beyond the scope of this section. Yet it is worth noting the major differences that distinguish the Bahraini and Iraqi cases. First and most obviously, Iraq's ethnic composition is not a product of conquest as in Bahrain but of internal socio-political transformation and redefinition of boundaries. In his respected volume *The Shi'is of Iraq*, Nakash (2003) argues persuasively that the larger part of Iraqi Shi'a are relatively new converts from the early twentieth-century, brought to Shi'ism via the settlement of nomadic Arab tribes in the area around the shrine cities of Najaf and Karbalā' following the completion of several vitalizing irrigation projects. Accordingly, the ethnic narrative of Iraq does not overlap with a nativist discourse such as colors relations in Bahrain. Neither Sunnis nor Shi'is can lay claim to the title of "العراقيين الأصليين"—the "original" Iraqis. Indeed, the category "original" Iraqis includes more than a dozen ethno-religious groups, many of which are non-Muslim. If Bahrain likewise is home to more than just Arab Sunnis and Shi'is—with Persian Shi'a, Hawala, and so on—still its ethnic composition is not nearly as heterogeneous as that of modern-day Iraq, a product of the Ottoman and British imaginations whose boundaries pay no heed to societal cohesion. Thus is included within its borders a separate nation entirely in the historically-autonomous region home to some five million ethnic Kurds, whose rivalry with Arabs constitutes yet another source of conflict in Iraq. To preserve theoretical continuity and to facilitate a more direct comparison with our Bahrain results, however, we shall exclude Kurdish respondents from our coming quantitative analysis.

A second key factor differentiating the cases of Bahrain and Iraq is the nature of their respective political institutions. It is obvious enough that Bahrain is a tribal monarchy and Iraq a military dictatorship-turned-consociational democracy. Yet more important than this is the way these institutions condition the balance of ethnic power and influence in the two societies. Our argument about the institutionalization of Sunni ascendancy in Bahrain is well-known, as is the way the ruling Āl Khalīfa manipulate society's ethnic fault line in service of their own political survival. In Iraq, until the U.S.-led overthrow of the old regime in 2003, Sunni power had been institutionalized for nearly a half-century in their domination of the

ruling Ba'ath Party, the military, and a brutal security apparatus. The forced transition to democracy instantaneously turned the long-standing confessional balance of power on its head, with Iraq's Shi'a majority suddenly thrust into the political driver's seat following Iraq's first parliamentary elections under its new constitution in December 2005. The nascent legislature would come to mirror the country's larger consociational arrangement, with the three largest vote-getters a united Shi'a bloc, a Kurdish bloc, and a Sunni bloc, respectively. As is Bahrain, then, Iraq's legislature would be divided conspicuously along ethno-religious lines—with the difference that in Iraq the parliament would actually be endowed with political power.

Finally, we may observe that the Iraqi state, if reliant to a large extent upon rents from the sale of oil (and, since the U.S.-led invasion, from direct foreign aid), is nevertheless not a pure *rentier* state as represented by Bahrain and the other GCC nations. We observed already in Chapter 2, for example, that by Ross's (2008) respected measure of rentierism Iraq did not approach the outlying cases of the Arab Gulf, Libya, and Brunei even prior to the 2003 war. Instead, Iraq's rents per capita tend to be on par with those of Russia, Iran, and Tajikistan (cf. CH. 2, 23-24, FIGURES 2.1 and 2.2). To the extent that we understand rentierism to be a proxy a country's overall citizen-regime clientelism, therefore, and insofar as it is exactly this clientelistic relationship between ordinary citizens and the state *qua* economic patron that is supposed to underlie the link between individual economic satisfaction and political acquiescence in the *rentier* state, then one might suppose strictly on the basis of *rentier* theoretical assumptions that, all else equal, this individual-level relationship will tend to operate less strongly in Iraq than it does in Bahrain and elsewhere in the Arab Gulf. Moreover, as Iraq was at least by the time of the 2006 survey a functioning democracy, we might expect this *rentier* link to be dampened there still further inasmuch as those rents that do accrue, accrue to a popularly-elected government rather than to a single ruling tribe that then distributes them down the clientelistic food chain.

If outwardly similar, therefore, Iraq and Bahrain in fact diverge qualitatively in each of the social, political, and economic spheres. Iraq's Sunni-Shi'i division is a relatively new phenomenon compared to that of Bahrain; is the product of conversion rather than conquest; and overlaps with another prominent ethnic cleavage. Iraq's political institutions not only differ in principle and organization from those of Bahrain but serve accordingly to mediate the link between rulers and citizens in quite different ways. Moreover, particularly at the time the surveys were administered, Iraq's democratic system constituted a mode of governance

that diverged essentially not only from that of Bahrain but from the country's own modern and premodern history, representing no less than an experiment in democratic state-building unprecedented in the Arab world. Lastly and relatedly, the Iraq of 2004 or 2006 is a model *rentier* state neither in the extent of its economic reliance upon resource rents nor in the way that those rents that do accrue are distributed by the state apparatus, facts that may prove to alter the economic-*cum*-political clientelism by which private material benefits are supposed to translate into political deference in rent-based regimes.

For all these reasons, therefore, one might expect that in Iraq the individual-level link tying economic well-being to political acquiescence may not be conditioned by the effects of ethnic conflict in the manner witnessed already in Bahrain. It may be, in other words, that in determining Iraqis' opinions of and actions toward the state, ethnic group membership and orientations toward the rival ethnic group play no role—or in any case not the decisive role seen in Bahrain—over against that of personal economy. On the other hand, however, if we do find evidence from our survey analysis that the same causal processes are at work in Iraq and Bahrain alike despite their historical and institutional dissimilarities; if we find that Iraqis' political orientations too tend to be ethnically- rather than economically-determined, then we must conclude that Bahrain's ethnic-based politics is unique only in representing an especially acute case of Sunni-Shi'i division, one that within the Arab Gulf region describes it particularly but not uniquely. What we will have learned, to repeat the earlier formulation, is that Bahrain's ethnic-based politics does not follow from a dysfunctional *rentier* state, but Bahrain's dysfunctional *rentier* state from a disruptive ethnic politics.

The Determinants of Political Opinion and Action in Iraq

In investigating the effect of ethnicity on the political behavior and orientations of Iraqis, the present section proceeds as far as possible in line with the foregoing analysis of Chapter 5 so as to maximize cross-national comparability. Thus our basic theoretical hypotheses remain the same, as does the mode of testing them.¹ In general, we seek here again to understand the relative explanatory power of ethnic group membership and identification *contra* economics in determining the political opinions and actions of ordinary (Arab) Sunnis and Shi'is. Yet several

¹ As the respondents to the Iraq survey were not asked their sector of work, however, we are unable to examine patterns of public-sector employment in Iraq. Of course, the country's public sector having been so drastically altered just prior to the fielding of the two surveys, not least via the notorious program of "de-Ba'athification," the insights offered from this analysis would likely have been in any case relatively limited.

key contextual differences demand revision of our empirical expectations. First, while in Bahrain it is the Shi'a who comprise the political out-group, in post-2003 Iraq this position is occupied by the Sunni community. Accordingly, we should expect that it is not the Shi'a but Iraqi Sunna that will tend to report more negative orientations toward the government led by their ethnic rivals, and increasingly so the more negative their orientations toward Iraqi Shi'a *qua* political force. On the other hand, Shi'a should tend to exhibit more positive orientations vis-à-vis the Iraqi government, and increasingly so the greater their apprehensions toward Sunnis *qua* political force.

The second complication is the matter of temporal variation. Between the fielding of the first Iraq survey in late 2004 and the second in the spring of 2006, the nation's political and social landscapes changed radically. In late 2004, Iraq was administered by the caretaker Interim Government installed by the U.S.-led coalition. Having itself replaced the infamous Coalition Provisional Authority less than six months earlier, the Interim Government, while headed by Shi'i Prime Minister Iyād 'Allāwī, was a conspicuously secular government. Indeed, 'Allāwī's strong stance against Sunni insurgents (he was accused of killing six in cold blood²) as well as the rebel militia of Shi'i cleric S. Muqtadā al-Ṣadr earned him wide criticism from Sunni and Shi'i alike. His support for coalition military incursions into Najaf and Fallujah in August and September of 2004 further cemented his reputation as a friend to neither group.

Beyond being simply unelected, then, the Iraqi Interim Government of late 2004, if nominally headed by a Shi'i and certainly a break from Iraq's erstwhile Sunni monopoly on power, was by no means a Shi'a-led government. As such, while we might expect more pro-government orientations from Iraqi Shi'is compared to Sunnis in 2004 simply on the basis of their much-improved political position compared to the pre-2003 status quo, we may question whether individuals who more strongly identify as Sunni or Shi'i in 2004 will be more or less supportive of the regime. That is to say, while it seems reasonable to expect an absolute Sunni-Shi'i discrepancy in orientation toward the interim government, we may doubt whether the secondary relationship between ethnic orientation and political orientation operates at all in 2004, or at least as strongly as it should in 2006.

For in the latter period Iraqi politics clearly had reached a state of direct Sunni-Shi'i confrontation. As described previously, following the country's first parliamentary elections

² Paul McGeough, 2004, "Allawi shot prisoners in cold blood: witnesses," *Sidney Morning Herald*, July 17. Available online: <<http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2004/07/16/1089694568757.html>>.

under its new constitution in December 2005, political fault lines exactly mirrored ethnic cleavages, and the resulting government of then and current Prime Minister Nūrī al-Mālikī, even as it was billed a coalition of “national unity,” signaled the unmistakable arrival of Shi‘a political dominance in Iraq. Underground revolutionary movements just years earlier, Shi‘a parties such as the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq and Iraqi al-Da‘wah now governed the country through the United Iraqi Alliance. Sunnis and Kurds countered with electoral blocs of their own, but Iraq’s ethno-religious demographics proved immutable. Furthermore, this political battle famously was fought in parallel on the streets of Iraq, culminating in what by 2007 approached all-out Sunni-Shi‘i civil war.

In 2006, therefore, the individual-level relationships between ethnicity and political orientations should tend to be the opposite those expected for 2004. As argued already, in the latter case Shi‘is should tend to be more supportive of the regime on principle as it opened the door for their political inclusion; yet since neither group could claim the 2004 government as its own, the additional impact of ethnic identification should be relatively weak. In 2006, by contrast, the regime does not represent merely the potential for Shi‘a empowerment but the fulfillment of it, and this amid armed inter-ethnic conflict. More than by ethnic group membership per se, then, Iraqis’ political views and behavior should be determined above all by their orientations toward the opposing group. Shi‘is with stronger in-group orientations—those who tend to view Sunnis as ethnic-cum-political rivals—should offer more support for the 2006 government, Sunnis with stronger in-group orientations less support. And this, of course, independent of any influence of personal economy.

A final issue arises regarding our predictions about the effect of ethnic membership and orientation on political action. In Bahrain, it was argued, political action took the form not only of Shi‘a versus state but also of Sunna versus Shi‘a, the latter in defense of the regime itself. Thus, for example, were Sunnis called to the polls to counter the “probable harm” of not voting, and Sh. al-Sa‘īdī exhorted his *majlis*-goers to protest an anti-naturalization rally (cf. CH. 3, 69). More generally, Sunni counter-mobilization is likely in Bahrain whenever mass political action by the Shi‘a-led opposition is seen to threaten the status quo. In the context of the armed Sunni-Shi‘i conflict playing out at the time of the 2006 Iraq survey, however, we must recognize the existence of an alternative to political action proper that individuals could opt to take against the government or against the rival ethnic group, namely physical violence. In Iraq, that is, more negative other-ethnic orientations may not push individuals

toward increased political action and interest—toward legitimate forms of political protest such as demonstration, petition, and so on—but toward terrorism, insurgency, or some other actual physical confrontation either with the state or with members of the rival group. It may be, accordingly, that Iraqis who most strongly identify with their own ethnic group are not more likely to be politically active and interested as in Bahrain, precisely because their other-ethnic orientations find expression through non-political means. While strictly speaking the same could be true of Bahrainis in 2009, what is known about the environment of 2006 Iraq makes such a result here considerably more likely.

More generally, political involvement among Iraqi citizens is conceptually distinct from that among Bahrainis and other Gulf populations. Iraq, though still a fledgling democracy at the time of the 2004 and 2006 surveys, was a democracy nonetheless. As such, in stark contrast to the situation in the Arab Gulf, where political action and interest itself is a form of protest, post-2003 Iraq is premised exactly upon citizen involvement in politics. Unlike the Shi'a of Bahrain, accordingly, the Sunnis of Iraq should be neither more nor less likely to take part in political action strictly on the basis of ethnic membership, for there is no expectation that they abstain from politics as in the Gulf. Political action among Bahraini Shi'a *qua* ethnic out-group, in other words, represents something rebellious and even dangerous; action among Iraqi Sunnis just another quotidian feature of participatory, democratic politics.

These caveats noted, our study of ethnic- versus economics-based political orientation in Iraq will now proceed to examine the following familiar hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1.1: Ethnic affiliation is equally significant as, or more significant than, economic well-being in predicting individual political opinion in Iraq; where

Hypothesis 1.1_A: Sunni ethnicity is associated with more negative political opinion; further,

Hypothesis 1.2: The strength of ethnic identity is a significant predictor of individual political opinion and action in Iraq; where

Hypothesis 1.2_A: Among Shi'is, stronger ethnic identity is associated with more positive political opinion; while

Hypothesis 1.2_B: Among Sunnis, stronger ethnic identity is associated with more negative political opinion; and

Hypothesis 1.2_C: Among Sunnis as well as Shi'is, the strength of ethnic identity is positively associated with political action. Finally,

Hypothesis 1.3: In 2004, the relative influence on political action and opinion of ethnic affiliation is stronger than that of ethnic identity, while in 2006 the reverse is true.

The method and measures to be used in testing these propositions closely follow the formula of Chapter 5. Yet, as noted already, among the virtues of the Iraq survey data is that they offer a much more direct measure of other-ethnic orientations than that used in our Bahrain analysis. There, in the absence of a direct question about a respondent's orientations towards the rival ethnic group, an individual's level of personal religiosity was used as a proxy for the strength of one's ethnic identity, the latter overlapping as it does with religion. While the measure was shown to be valid, and while it did serve to bear out our theoretical predictions about the determinants of political orientation in Bahrain, nonetheless it also posed several difficulties that one would be remiss not to rectify here when the opportunity arose. In the first place, our primary RELIGIOSITY measure was itself a proxy based on another question about the qualities one deems most essential in a prospective suitor for a family member. For exactly this reason, moreover, we also checked our results with an alternative measure of religiosity that had more outward validity—"Are you religious or not?"—but was thought to be less reliable. Finally, to complicate matters further, it was found that although both measures of RELIGIOSITY tended to demonstrate the expected associations with political action and opinion, the former consistently was a better predictor of political orientations among Shi'i respondents, the latter better among Sunnis.

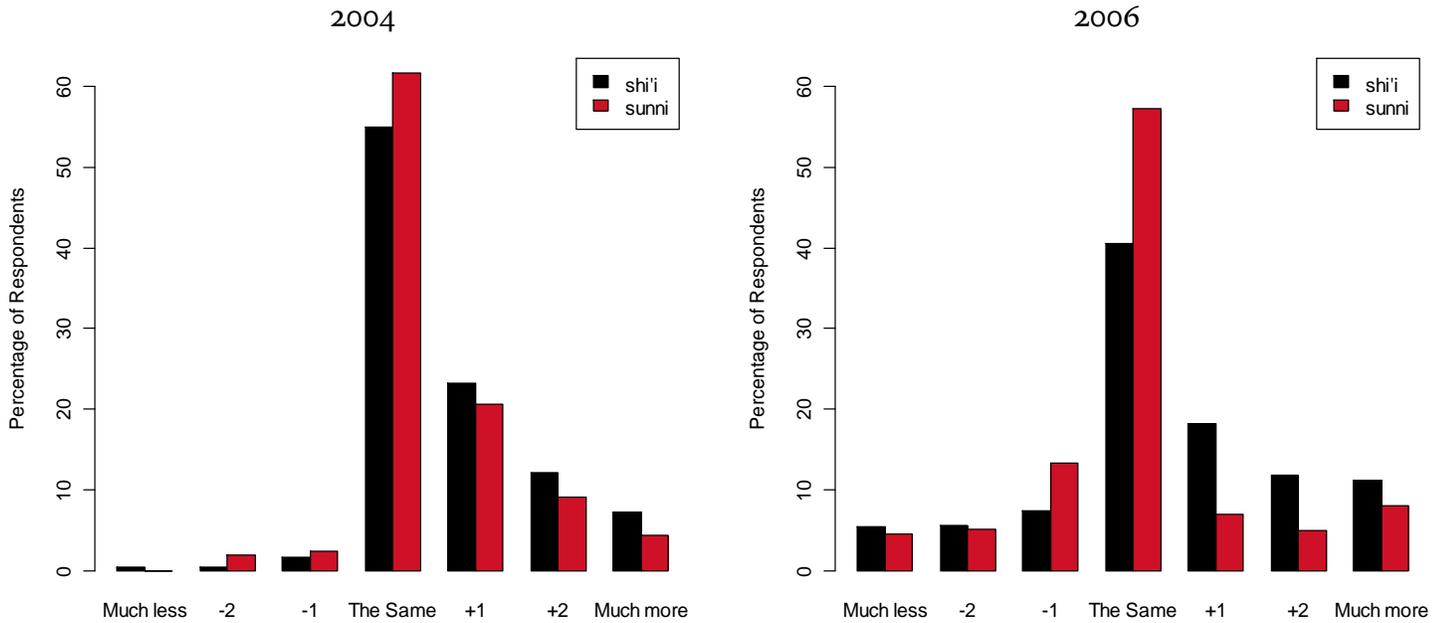
For all these reasons, the impending Iraq survey analysis employs a different and no doubt much-improved measure of ethnic orientation among Sunnis and Shi'is. It is based on a direct question about the extent to which a respondent considers the empowerment of one's own group and the rival ethnic group *qua* political forces as obstacles in a future Iraq.³ In other words, since we hope to capture an individual's orientation toward the other group *relative to that toward one's own group*, our IDENTITY indicator measures the difference between a respondent's worry about his own group gaining power and his worry about the other group gaining power. This variable, coded by subtracting the in-group response from the out-group response for Sunnis and Shi'is, offers a scale of ethnic orientation that ranges from -3 to +3, where -3 signifies much more apprehension about one's own group gaining power

³ The exact wording of the question is: "To what extent, if any, do you think each of the following would be an obstacle for the formation of an independent, prosperous Iraq?":

1. "Shi'i groups gain a great deal of power in Iraq."
2. "Sunni groups gain a great deal of power in Iraq."

The valid response codes are (1) "a great deal," (2) "quite a lot," (3) "not very much," and (4) "not at all."

FIGURE 6.I. Concern about Empowerment of Rival Ethnic Group vis-à-vis that of Own Group (IDENTITY)



compared to the other group, and +3 much more worry about the empowerment of the rival group vis-à-vis that of one's own group. Apart from the clear conceptual validity of this measure, it also offers the practical advantage of standardized responses: by comparing one's other-ethnic orientations to an in-group orientation baseline, the measure can differentiate a respondent who is apprehensive about *either* ethnic group gaining power (say, a secular Sunni or Shi'i) from one worried specifically about the *other* group gaining power, who if we based our measure only upon other-ethnic orientations would be indistinguishable.

The distributions of this IDENTITY variable for the years 2004 and 2006 are depicted in FIGURE 6.I above. In general, one sees that although a majority or plurality of both Sunnis and Shi'is report no difference in apprehension toward the empowerment of the other ethnic group over against that of their co-ethnics, in 2004 this other-ethnic concern was much more pronounced than that in 2006. Indeed, in the latter case nearly a quarter of Sunnis and Shi'is report more apprehension about the empowerment of their own group than that of the rival, a result one might attribute to respondent reaction to the armed inter-ethnic conflict being fought at that time. Finally, one perceives that across both surveys Shi'i respondents tend to report more negative other-ethnic orientations than Iraqi Sunnis. In 2004 some 43% of Shi'a

were more worried about the empowerment of Sunni groups, while the reverse was true among only 34% of Sunnis. In 2006 the difference is even more pronounced, with 41% of Shi'a indicating more worry about other-ethnic empowerment, compared to only 20% of Sunna.

Apart from this change in ethnic identity measure, the only other difference between our models of political orientation in Bahrain and Iraq is the inclusion in the latter of two additional control variables.⁴ The first, a ten-category scale of respondent household *INCOME*, was not used in Bahrain because of an extremely low response rate for this question. The second, not at all applicable in Bahrain, is a measure of respondent attitudes toward the U.S.-led coalition in Iraq.⁵ This control is meant to separate respondents' orientations toward the Iraqi government per se from their views about the U.S.-led intervention. Particularly at the time of the 2004 survey, when the Iraqi government was still coalition-appointed, this US control is important in order to avoid spurious associations, since it is probable that those individuals more strongly-oriented against their ethnic rivals are also more likely to reject the U.S.-led involvement in Iraq and by association the Western-backed interim government.⁶

Regarding our other independent variable of theoretical interest, household economy, its operationalization is substantively unchanged from the Bahrain survey analysis, though it does here offer wider variation in response. Iraqi respondents were asked to rate from one to ten their overall satisfaction with the financial situation of their household.⁷ The remaining control variables are also unchanged from the Chapter 5 model and include education level on a nine-point scale, respondent age, and a dummy for female gender.

As clarified already, finally, the model specification itself retains its previous form:

$$RESPONSE = B_0 + ETHNIC \cdot B_1 + IDENTITY \cdot B_2 + IDENTITY \times ETH \cdot B_3 + AGE \cdot B_4 + FEM \cdot B_5 + EDUC \cdot B_6 + ECON \cdot B_7 + ECON \times ETH \cdot B_8 + INC \cdot B_9 + US \cdot B_{10} + US \times ETH \cdot B_{11} + \epsilon,$$

⁴ Of course, as previously noted, the Iraq survey data lacks information about field interviewer characteristics, so an analysis of the impact of inter-ethnic interviewing on Sunni and Shi'i responses is not possible here.

⁵ The question asks, "When do you think U.S. and other Coalition Forces should leave Iraq?" Valid responses are: (1) "They should leave now"; (2) "They should remain until after the new government is formed"; (3) "They should remain for another year"; (4) "They should remain for more than a year"; (5) "They should remain until security is restored"; and (6) "They should never leave."

⁶ Indeed, the bivariate correlation between this control variable and confidence in the 2004 government is 0.21 among Shi'is and a tremendous 0.34 among Sunnis. (And even in 2006 these correlations remain substantial at 0.15 and 0.22, respectively.) At the same time, the control is also highly correlated with our *IDENTITY* variable, at around 0.10 among both Sunnis and Shi'is in 2004 (and about 0.05 in 2006).

⁷ More exactly: "How satisfied are you with the financial situation of your household? If '1' means you are completely dissatisfied on this scale, and '10' means you are completely satisfied, where would you put your satisfaction with your household's financial situation?"

where RESPONSE is a normative political opinion or a political action; and the third, eighth, and eleventh terms are all multiplicative interaction terms that allow, respectively, for separate estimates of the effects of IDENTITY, ECONOMY, and US for Sunni and Shi'i respondents. As before, the model will be estimated by OLS or probit regression as appropriate.

To conclude our introduction with some description of the dependent variables to be utilized, here too the analysis mirrors as far as possible that of the previous chapter. Thus each of the three response variables matches or closely corresponds to those investigated in the study of Bahrain. These are, as for political opinions: (1) one's overall confidence in the government and (2) one's evaluation of overall government performance; and, with respect to political actions, (3) the extent of one's participation in protest demonstrations. Note that the final indicator is only available in the 2006 survey.

The Sources of Political Orientation in Iraq

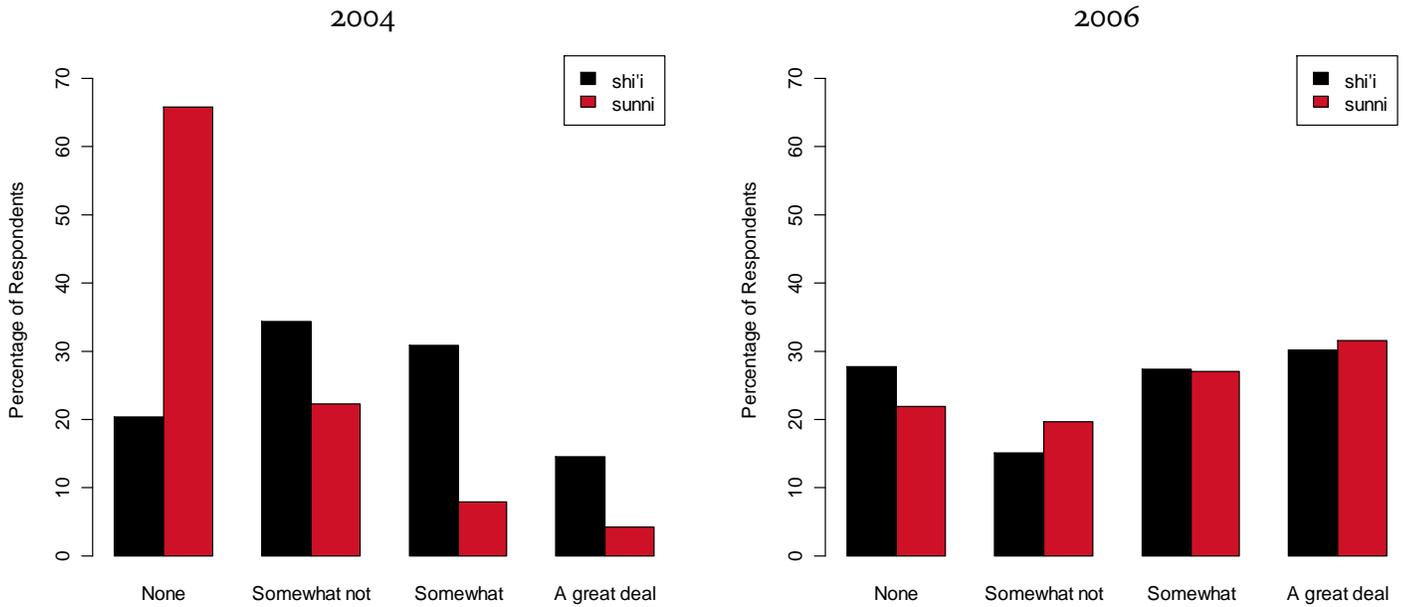
The first political opinion to be examined is overall confidence in the Iraqi government (in 2004, "the interim government").⁸ The 2004 and 2006 distributions of responses are depicted below in FIGURE 6.2, which demonstrates the difference a mere two years can make. In 2004, only 12% of Sunnis were either "somewhat" or "a great deal" confident in Iraq's government, while some two-thirds reported no confidence at all. Although a combined majority (55%) of Shi'a also were less confident than confident in 2004, still Shi'a confidence was almost five times the magnitude of that among Iraqi Sunnis. Yet by 2006 this marked between-ethnic difference had all but disappeared: now a combined 59% of Sunnis were "somewhat" (27%) or "a great deal" confident (32%) in the government, as were 57% of Shi'is, a fact that offers some preliminary evidence in support of *Hypothesis 1.3* that ethnic affiliation per se should tend to be a much greater driving force of political orientation in 2004 than in 2006.

To confirm these indications, we proceed to the results of our multivariate analysis. Summarized in TABLE 6.3 are the findings from three separate OLS regression⁹ estimations: a pooled model, a 2004 model, and a 2006 model. The first is instructive mostly in illustrating the need for the latter two. Indeed, despite the benefit of a sample size that is doubled from

⁸ The exact wording is: "I am going to name a number of groups and organizations. For each one, could you tell me how much confidence you have in them: is it a great deal of confidence, quite a lot of confidence, not very much confidence, or none at all?"

⁹ Note that for the same reasons as previously (cf. CH. 5, 179, note 26), namely the ease of interpretation, OLS regression is employed here despite the ordinal coding of the dependent variable. In any case, the substantive results are identical and indeed even more robust if the models are estimated by ordered probit.

FIGURE 6.2. “How Confident Are You in the Iraqi (Interim) Government?,” by Ethnicity



the year-specific models, the pooled estimation in fact explains *less* of the total variation in government confidence than either the standalone 2004 or 2006 model, with an *R*-squared statistic of only 0.20 compared to 0.23 and 0.32, respectively. More obviously, many of the variables that are extremely significant predictors of government confidence in the pooled model—including ETHNICITY, FEMALE, EDUCATION, and US × ETHNICITY—are thereafter shown to be such only in one of the two years. In the interpretation to follow, accordingly, we focus always on the disaggregated results.

Because the substantive effects of the independent variables of interest are not directly interpretable from the raw regression output alone, we again follow the procedure established in Chapter 5.¹⁰ Namely, we represent the marginal effects of our explanators visually, showing the range of the modifying variable across which a given effect is statistically-significant. At the same time, we offer plots of the predicted values of a dependent variable given those of the independent variables of interest. The latter is especially illustrative as it allows one to visualize the effects of ethnic group membership and ethnic identification simultaneously.

¹⁰ More generally, this procedure is that recommended by Brambor, Clark, and Golder (2006) in “Understanding Interaction Models: Improving Empirical Analyses.” Cf. CH. 5, 177, note 23.

TABLE 6.3. *The Determinants of Government Confidence among Iraqis, estimated by OLS Regression*

Variables	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	Combined			2004			2006		
	<i>B</i>	<i>s_b</i>	<i>p > t </i>	<i>B</i>	<i>s_b</i>	<i>p > t </i>	<i>B</i>	<i>s_b</i>	<i>p > t </i>
ETHNICITY	-0.503	0.116	0.000	-0.838	0.151	0.000	-0.00219	0.166	0.989
IDENTITY	0.286	0.0165	0.000	0.0616	0.0309	0.047	0.389	0.0181	0.000
IDENTITY × ETH	-0.546	0.0451	0.000	-0.0968	0.0526	0.066	-0.602	0.0568	0.000
ECONOMY	0.0491	0.0107	0.000	0.0320	0.0139	0.022	0.0843	0.0165	0.000
ECON × ETH	-0.00774	0.0200	0.698	-0.0177	0.0229	0.440	0.0229	0.0284	0.420
AGE	-0.000484	0.00147	0.741	0.00408	0.00190	0.032	-0.00457	0.00200	0.023
FEMALE	0.127	0.0390	0.001	0.0590	0.0486	0.225	0.213	0.0545	0.000
EDUCATION	-0.0326	0.00759	0.000	-0.0117	0.00941	0.213	-0.0542	0.0108	0.000
INCOME	0.0154	0.0119	0.195	0.00125	0.0150	0.934	-0.0142	0.0167	0.394
US	0.0780	0.0153	0.000	0.140	0.0189	0.000	0.144	0.0293	0.000
US × ETH	0.202	0.0349	0.000	0.173	0.0563	0.002	-0.00124	0.0474	0.979
Constant	0.969	0.0871	0.000	0.692	0.119	0.000	1.190	0.121	0.000
<i>N</i>	2838			1451			1387		
Prob. > $F(\chi^2)$	0.0000			0.0000			0.0000		
R^2	0.2012			0.2313			0.3204		

Note: Robust standard errors reported for all models

The predicted values plots corresponding to the 2004 and 2006 models are given below in FIGURES 6.4 and 6.5, respectively. One sees that, as suggested already by FIGURE 6.2, in 2004 ethnic membership itself plays the largest role in determining the extent of Iraqis' confidence in the government. While this between-ethnic gap is seen to increase—indeed, nearly double—as in-group ethnic orientation increases from its minimum of -3 to $+3$, still the substantive impact of ethnic membership remains stronger. In the first place, the IDENTITY variable in 2004 is distributed with a mean of about 0.6 and standard deviation of around 1. So

FIGURE 6.4. Predicted Levels of Government Confidence in 2004, by IDENTITY

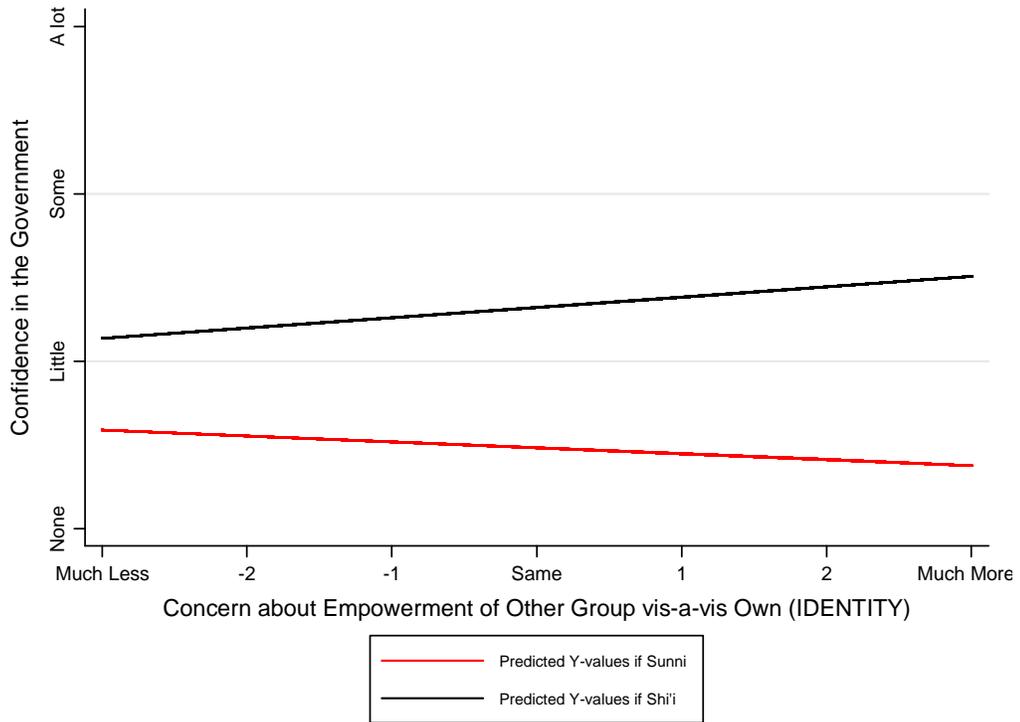


FIGURE 6.5. Predicted Levels of Government Confidence in 2006, by IDENTITY

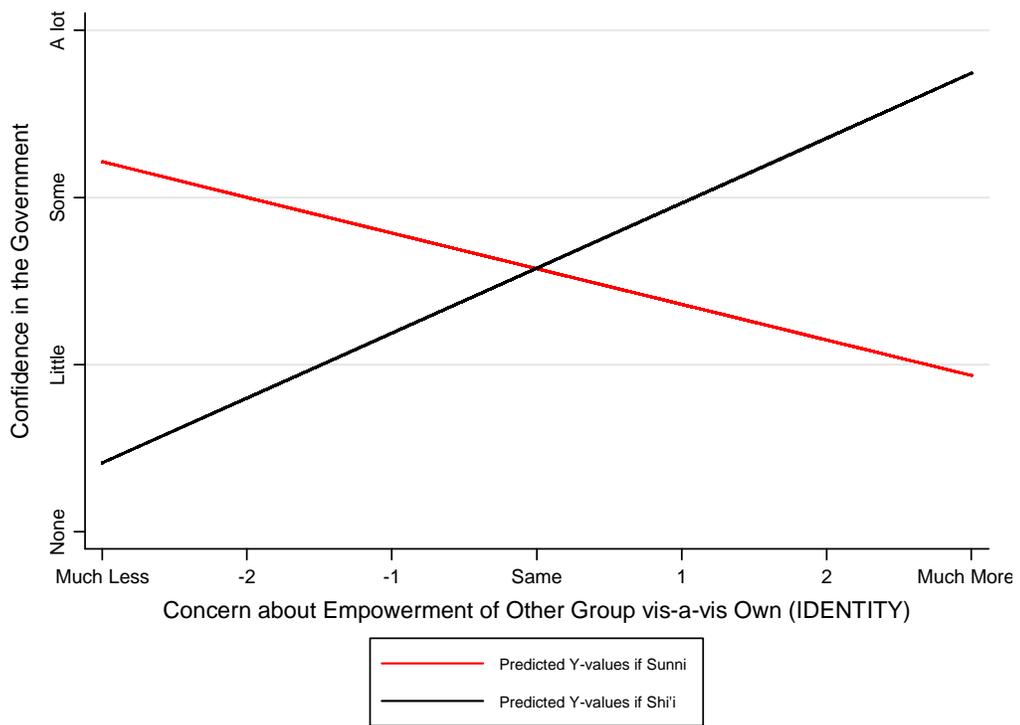
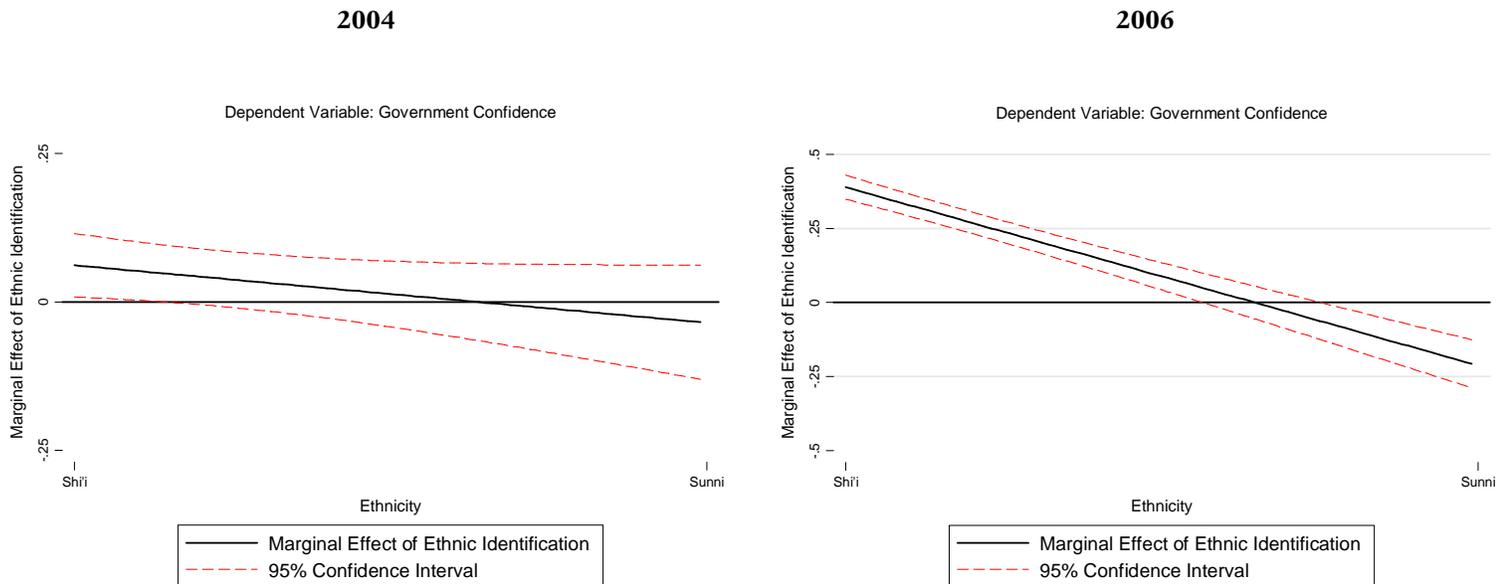


FIGURE 6.6. *The Marginal Effect of IDENTITY on Government Confidence*

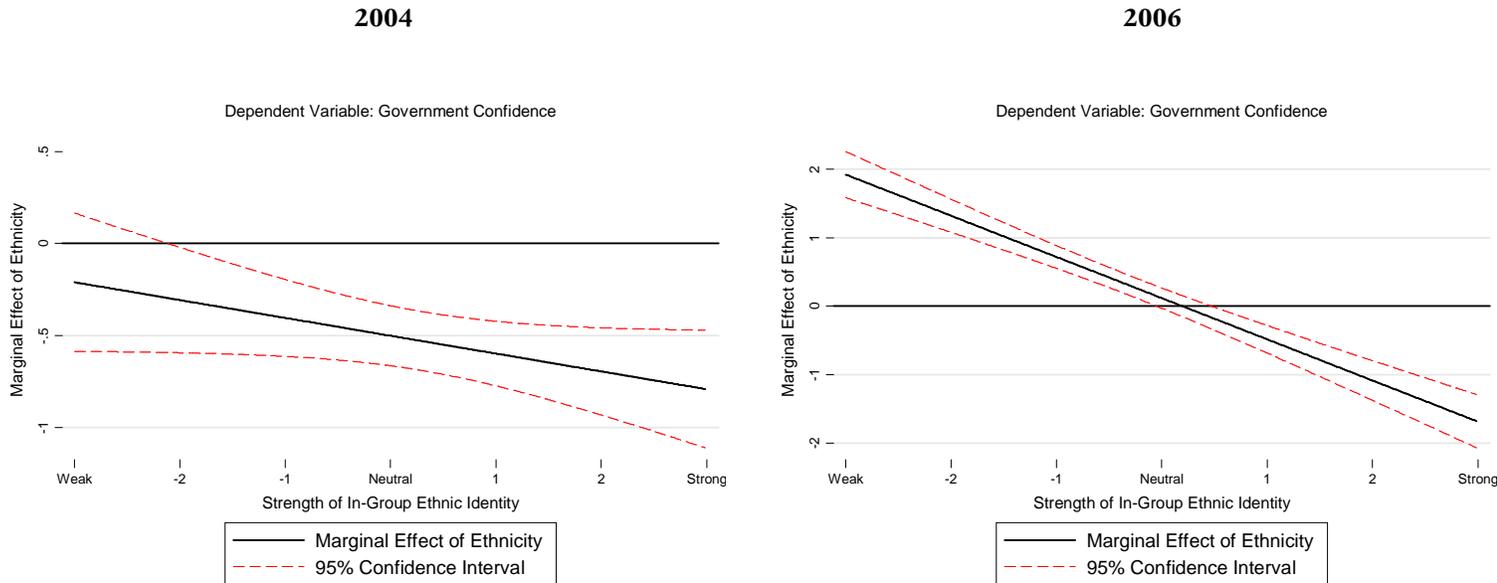


while the additional augmenting influence of *IDENTITY* on government confidence appears great when viewed across the entirety of its range, in fact a more substantively-significant range would be that of ± 1 standard deviation, i.e. from -0.6 to $+1.6$. Furthermore, as seen in the left-hand side of FIGURE 6.6, the effect of identification among Sunnis in 2004, though in the expected direction, is not even statistically-significant at a tolerable level.

In 2006, by contrast, the substantive impact of ethnic in-group identification is no less than staggering among both Sunnis and Shi'is. Indeed, the bivariate correlation between the *IDENTITY* and *GOVERNMENT CONFIDENCE* variables is -0.15 among Sunnis and an astounding 0.53 among Shi'a, and the *t*-statistics associated with these *Model 3* coefficients are -12.87 and 18.84 , respectively.¹¹ The statistical significance of these effects is most easily appreciated from the right-hand panel of FIGURE 6.6, which tells that a one-unit increase in *IDENTITY* is associated with a 0.39 -unit increase in government confidence among Shi'is, while at the same time it produces a 0.21 -unit *decrease* in government confidence among Sunnis. Since in 2006 *IDENTITY* has a standard deviation of approximately 1.5 , a ± 1 standard deviation change in *IDENTITY* is associated with an increase in *GOVERNMENT CONFIDENCE* of around 1.17 among

¹¹ Note that the relatively lower bivariate correlation among Sunnis is due to the confounding influence of their more oppositional orientations toward the U.S. occupation, for which we control in the multivariate model.

FIGURE 6.7. *The Marginal Effect of ETHNICITY on Government Confidence*

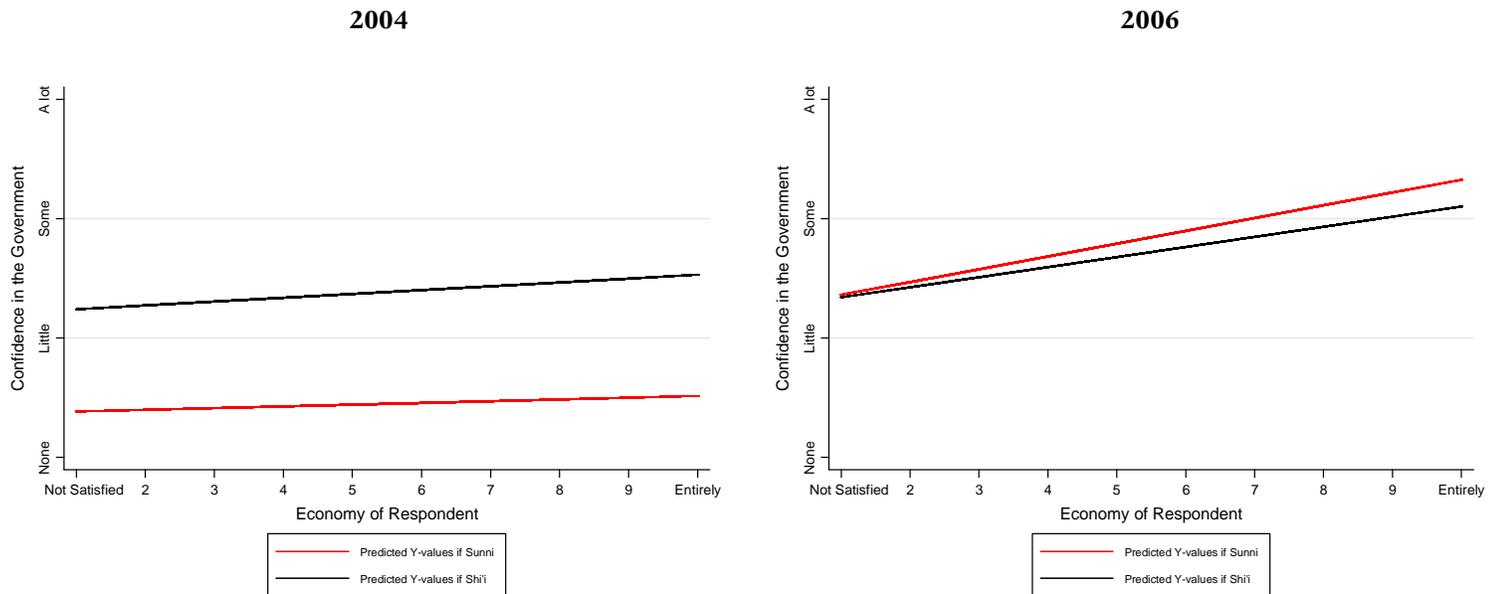


Shi'is and a *decrease* of 0.63 among Sunnis. In substantive terms, these changes correspond to about 39% and 21% of the entire 3-category range of the dependent variable, respectively.

Thus, each of our theoretical hypotheses regarding the impact on political opinion of ethnicity and ethnic orientations in Iraq finds evidence in this first indicator investigated. In 2004, confidence in the government is determined above all simply on the basis of one's being a Sunni versus a Shi'i. While neither group expresses great confidence in absolute terms, still Sunni confidence tends to be some 0.3 to 0.8 units lower (depending on *IDENTITY*) and, as depicted in FIGURE 6.7, systematically decreases as ethnic in-group identity grows stronger. This Sunni-Shi'i difference obtains among all citizens except those with the weakest in-group ethnic identity (i.e., when *IDENTITY* equals -3). In 2006, meanwhile, one sees from the other half of FIGURE 6.7 that the operative variable is not ethnic group membership itself but ethnic orientation: Sunnis with a stronger than neutral ethnic identity report much less confidence in the Shi'a-led government;¹² those with a weaker than neutral identity report much more confidence. In similar fashion, Shi'a hold much less confidence in the government if they are wary of their own ethnic group becoming too powerful, and much more confidence as their

¹² Recall that *ETHNICITY* is coded 1 for Sunnis, so its marginal effect is always expressed in terms of Sunni ethnicity.

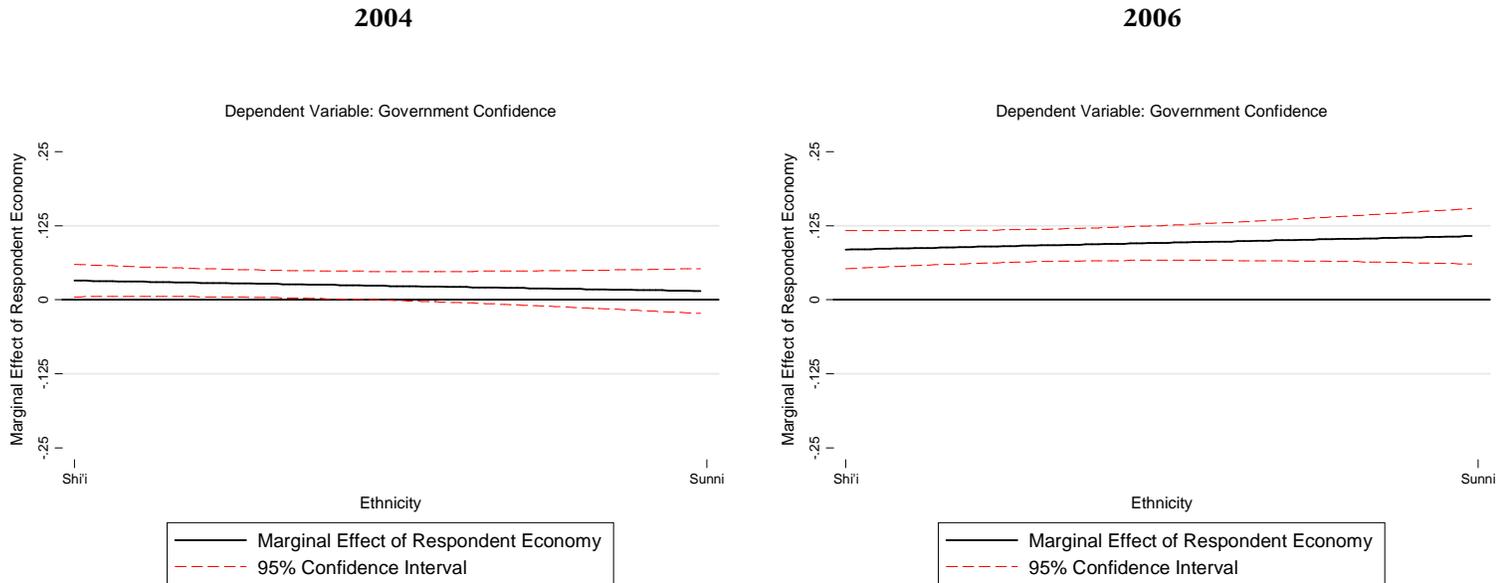
FIGURE 6.8. *Predicted Levels of Government Confidence, by ECONOMY*



concern for Sunni empowerment mounts. The influence of ethnicity, in other words, depends inextricably upon an individual’s orientation toward the rival group vis-à-vis his own. In Iraq as in Bahrain, “the government” is not understood as a neutral executor of state power but as an institutional embodiment of ethnic domination, and Iraqis’ views toward it—both in 2004 and in 2006—are fashioned accordingly.

The only remaining question, then, is how far these ethnic effects are drowned out by the competing individual-level influence of economics. Depicted in FIGURE 6.8 are the predicted values of GOVERNMENT CONFIDENCE according to a respondent’s level of satisfaction with the financial situation of his household. Both results tend to agree with the foregoing: in 2004, the scant effect of household economy is entirely overshadowed by that of ethnic group membership, whereas in 2006 the orientations of those from both communities are influenced in identical fashion by ECONOMY. Relatively-speaking, therefore, in 2004 ethnicity is doubtless the more powerful determinant of government confidence among Sunnis and Shi’is. In fact, as shown below in the right side of FIGURE 6.9, the marginal effect of economy among Sunnis (like that of IDENTITY before) is not even statistically-significant in the 2004 model. And this effect among Shi’is is estimated at only 0.03—or about $0.03 \times 4.55 \approx 0.14$ for

FIGURE 6.9. *The Marginal Effect of ECONOMY on Government Confidence*



a ± 1 standard deviation-increase in the *ECONOMY* variable. In 2006, by contrast, the effect of household economy is substantively- and statistically-significant. As illustrated in the right-side panel of FIGURE 6.9, the marginal effect of *ECONOMY* is an estimated 0.08 among Shi'is and 0.11 among Sunnis—or 0.36 and 0.49, respectively, across a ± 1 standard deviation range of the *ECONOMY* measure, which in 2006 corresponds to around 4.45 units.

In comparative terms, therefore, the substantive influence of *ECONOMY* on government confidence is weaker than that of the combined influence of *ETHNICITY* and *IDENTITY* both in 2004 and in 2006. In the first year, the substantive impact of economic satisfaction is some 4 to 5 times less than that of ethnic affiliation and nearly equals that of the additional, augmenting influence of *IDENTITY* among Shi'a,¹³ at 0.14 compared to 0.12. Then, in 2006, even as the effect of household economy increases substantially to an estimated 0.36 among Shi'a and 0.49 among Sunna, nonetheless it is still surpassed by that of *IDENTITY*, a ± 1 standard deviation-increase of which produces an estimated increase in *GOVERNMENT CONFIDENCE* of 1.14 among

¹³ In reality, the lack of statistical significance of the *ECONOMY* and *IDENTITY* variables among Sunni respondents is more likely a product of a small sample size than of absence of an empirical relationship. At only 500 observations, the Sunni sub-sample comprises only 28% of all (Arab) respondents in both 2004 and 2006. That the estimates here offer less statistical confidence than those among Shi'a, then, may be forgiven, especially since the direction and magnitude of the estimated relationships with *GOVERNMENT CONFIDENCE* accord with our theoretical expectations.

Shi'is and a decrease of 0.63 among Sunnis. Especially among Iraqi Shi'a, then, in 2006 concern for the empowerment of the rival ethnic group far outstripped that for material well-being in determining the extent of an individual's confidence in the Iraqi government.

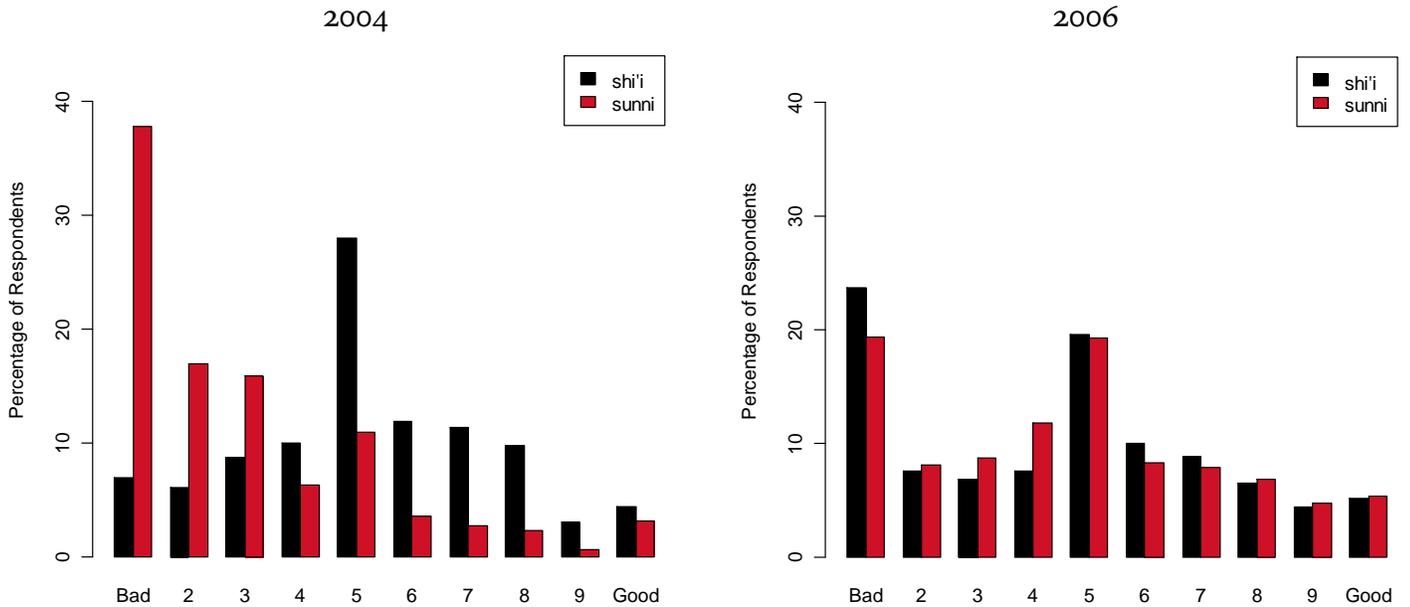
We may conclude this opening analysis, finally, with a brief discussion of two issues related to the several control variables employed in the regression model. The first of these is the extreme statistical significance of the measure of anti-U.S. orientations in both the 2004 and 2006 models, a result which, if little surprising, still serves to demonstrate precisely why its inclusion in the model was necessary. The second notable finding regarding the control variables is the lack of importance of respondent income per se in determining government orientations, at least as measured here. Indeed, the *INCOME* variable has coefficients of just 0.00125 in the 2004 model and -0.0142 in the 2006 model, both of which estimates lack any statistical significance.¹⁴ The main reason we highlight this result is that it supports the use here and in Chapter 5 of a respondent's subjective economic satisfaction in testing the logic of *rentier* theory rather than a measure of household income. Here the difficulty is not so important as we may simply include *INCOME* as a control variable and allow the estimation results to speak for themselves. However, in Bahrain, recall, we did not have this luxury due to a very high refusal rate there for questions asking about respondent and household income (cf. CH. 5, 171, note 18). That our choice of the independent variable *ECONOMY* is justified in the case of Iraq, then, gives us more confidence that this is true also in the case of Bahrain.

The other political opinion to be examined here is doubtless the most direct measure of government orientation of all the questions asked in the Iraq surveys. Iraqis were asked to rate on a 1 to 10 scale "how well the government is doing" in leading the country.¹⁵ The year-specific distributions of responses are given in FIGURE 6.10, whose two panels bare an obvious resemblance to those before corresponding to *GOVERNMENT CONFIDENCE*. In 2004, almost four in ten Sunnis give the Iraqi interim government a lowest possible 1 rating of overall performance. More generally, only 12% of Sunni respondents give of rating of more than 5, or neutral. Among Shi'a, meanwhile, a strong plurality (28%) offers a neutral rating of government performance, while another 40% reports a positive evaluation, i.e. one above 5.

¹⁴ Note that the same result obtains if one allows separate estimates of *INCOME* for the two ethnic groups; or if one excludes the *ECONOMY* and *ECONOMY* × *ETHNICITY* variables altogether from the model, leaving *INCOME* as the sole regressor measuring respondent wealth.

¹⁵ The exact wording is: "People have different views about the ideal way of governing this country. Here is a scale for rating how well the government is doing: 1 means very bad; 10 means very good. What point on this scale would you choose to describe how well the government [in 2004: "interim government"] is doing."

FIGURE 6.IO. Overall Evaluation of (Interim) Iraqi Government Performance, by Ethnicity



By 2006, however, once again the Sunni and Shi'i distributions essentially converge in a single bimodal distribution, with one peak corresponding to the plurality of respondents from both ethnic groups (19% of Sunnis and 24% of Shi'is) that give the government the lowest possible rating; another to the 20% of Shi'is and 19% of Sunnis who report a neutral rating. In general, then, the year-specific response patterns seem to follow those of the previous dependent variable in revealing a considerable Sunni-Shi'i discrepancy in 2004, at which time Sunnis tend to report more negative government opinions, but no such between-ethnic gap in 2006.

These visual impressions are confirmed once more in the results of our multivariate estimation, summarized in TABLE 6.II. To see this we turn to the plots that follow. The first, FIGURE 6.I2, shows that even after controlling for the other individual-level factors included in our model of GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE, still the predicted evaluation of a Sunni Iraqi is an estimated $1\frac{3}{4}$ to $2\frac{1}{4}$ points lower than that of a Shi'i, a gap that increases with the strength of a respondent's ethnic identity but, as demonstrated in the left-hand panel of FIGURE 6.I4, remains statistically robust even at the lowest values of its modifying variable IDENTITY. All this is to say that, in 2004 Iraq, simply being a Sunni rather than a Shi'i citizen is associated with a government rating that is over one and a half times more negative.

TABLE 6.II. *The Determinants of Iraqis' Evaluations of Government Performance, estimated by OLS*

Variables	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	Combined			2004			2006		
	<i>B</i>	<i>s_b</i>	<i>p > t </i>	<i>B</i>	<i>s_b</i>	<i>p > t </i>	<i>B</i>	<i>s_b</i>	<i>p > t </i>
ETHNICITY	-0.959	0.271	0.000	-2.018	0.400	0.000	-0.472	0.384	0.218
IDENTITY	0.572	0.0387	0.000	0.109	0.0674	0.107	0.778	0.0480	0.000
IDENTITY × ETH	-0.955	0.105	0.000	-0.123	0.151	0.414	-1.112	0.140	0.000
ECONOMY	0.167	0.0268	0.000	0.0996	0.0344	0.004	0.211	0.0424	0.000
ECON × ETH	0.0392	0.0489	0.422	-0.00643	0.0623	0.918	0.132	0.0710	0.063
AGE	-0.00373	0.00339	0.272	0.00382	0.00434	0.379	-0.0128	0.00503	0.011
FEMALE	0.121	0.0912	0.186	-0.0341	0.117	0.772	0.262	0.133	0.050
EDUCATION	-0.0700	0.0176	0.000	-0.0499	0.0230	0.030	-0.0888	0.0256	0.001
INCOME	-0.00206	0.0281	0.941	0.0575	0.0366	0.116	-0.0918	0.0410	0.025
US	0.384	0.0356	0.000	0.471	0.0427	0.000	0.202	0.0698	0.004
US × ETH	-0.0275	0.0785	0.726	0.176	0.147	0.231	-0.131	0.111	0.235
Constant	3.361	0.217	0.000	3.327	0.292	0.000	4.014	0.322	0.000
<i>N</i>	2885			1476			1409		
Prob. > <i>F</i> (χ^2)	0.0000			0.0000			0.0000		
<i>R</i> ²	0.2052			0.2719			0.2328		

Note: Robust standard errors reported for all models

Also as found in the analysis of GOVERNMENT CONFIDENCE, the additional influence of IDENTITY is quite weak in 2004, and it operates only among Shi'i respondents. Its marginal effect is plotted in FIGURE 6.15. The estimate among Shi'a of 0.11 corresponds to a 0.22 point increase in GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE for a ± 1 standard deviation-increase in IDENTITY, a far cry indeed from the considerable substantive impact of ETHNICITY. Yet it is a farther cry still from the effect of IDENTITY in 2006, and this among members of both ethnic communities. As depicted strikingly in FIGURE 6.13, the government ratings of Sunnis and especially of Shi'is are

FIGURE 6.12. Predicted Rating of Government Performance in 2004, by IDENTITY

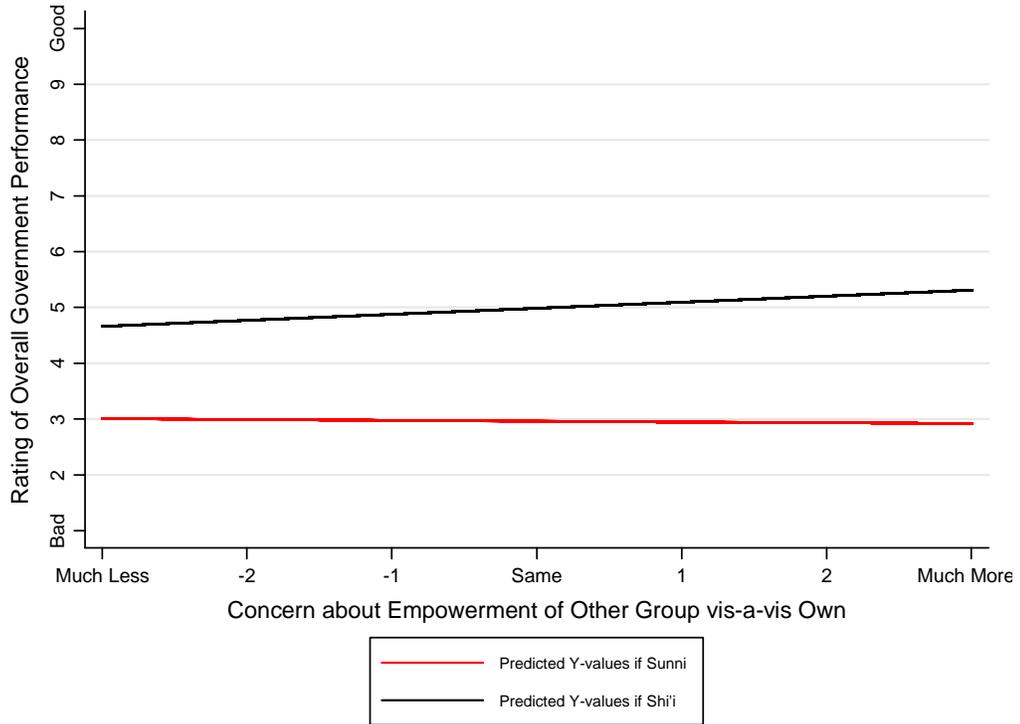


FIGURE 6.13. Predicted Rating of Government Performance in 2006, by IDENTITY

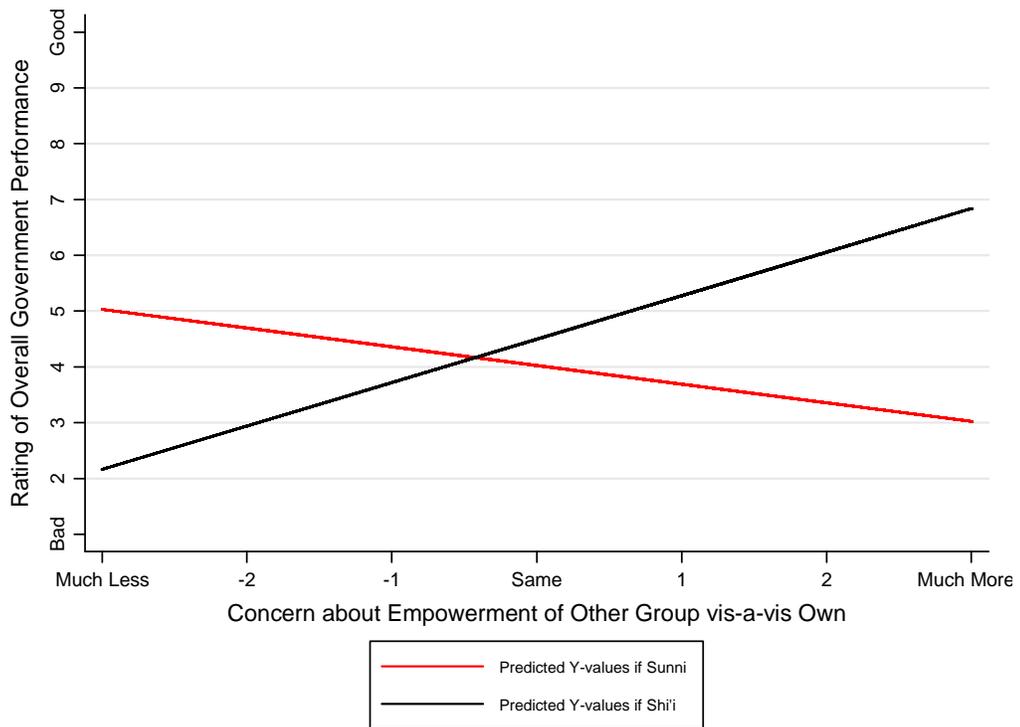
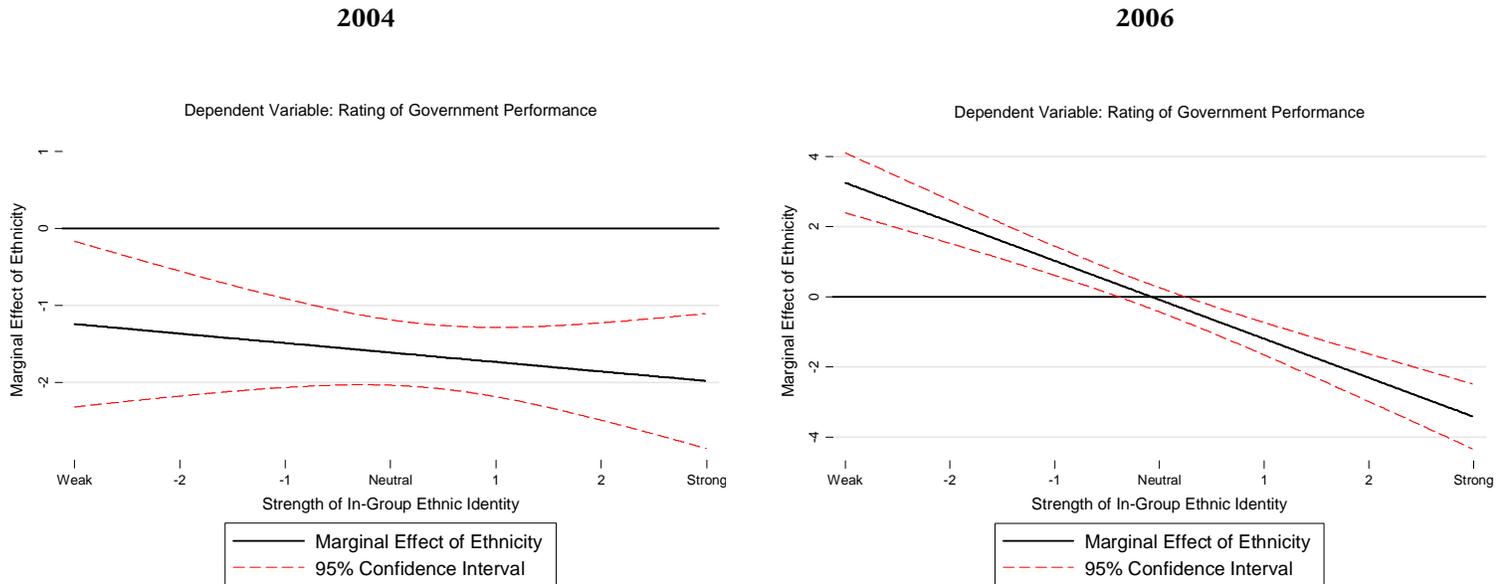


FIGURE 6.I4. *The Marginal Effect of ETHNICITY on Rating of Government Performance*

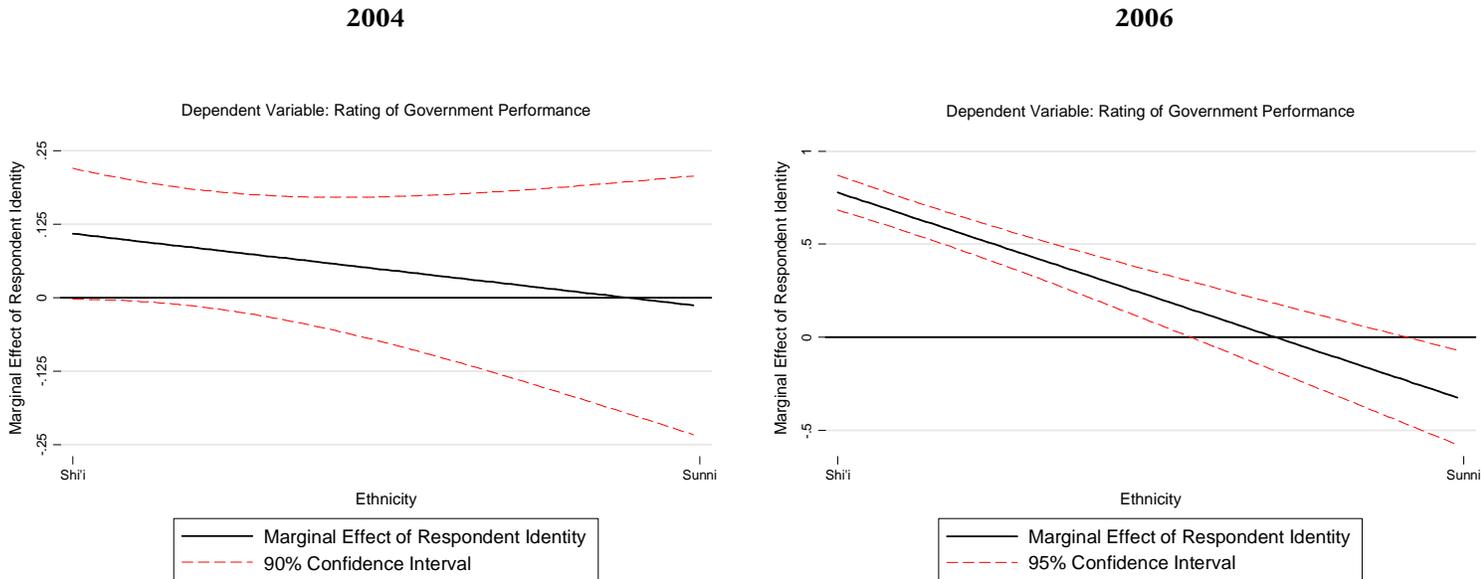


determined in no small part by their in-group versus out-group ethnic orientations.¹⁶ Sunnis with strong in-group identification tend to report much more negative views of Iraq’s 2006 government, while Shi’a of equivalent orientations report much more positive views. Indeed, the difference separating Sunnis and Shi’is of the strongest in-group identity (+3) approaches 4 points, or 44% of the entire 10-point scale of government performance. Conversely, Shi’is who are more apprehensive of *Shi’i* rather than *Sunni* empowerment report substantially more negative government orientations, and vice versa for Sunnis who fear empowerment of their own group. In total, the estimated marginal effect of IDENTITY among Sunna in 2006 is -0.33 , among Shi’a 0.78 . These one-unit changes, given in FIGURE 6.I5, correspond to substantive effects of -0.97 and 2.29 , respectively, for a ± 1 standard deviation-increase in IDENTITY.

To see how these ethnic effects compare substantively to that of economic well-being in shaping individual political orientation in Iraq, we examine finally this other independent variable of interest in our regression models. The predicted government ratings of Sunni and Shi’i respondents according to reported levels of economic satisfaction is found in FIGURE 6.I6.

¹⁶ As before, the bivariate correlation between the dependent variable here and IDENTITY is astounding, especially among Shi’a where it reaches 0.45. And the associated *t*-statistic on the regression coefficient in the multivariate model is over 16 (that on the interaction term corresponding to IDENTITY among Sunnis is approximately 8).

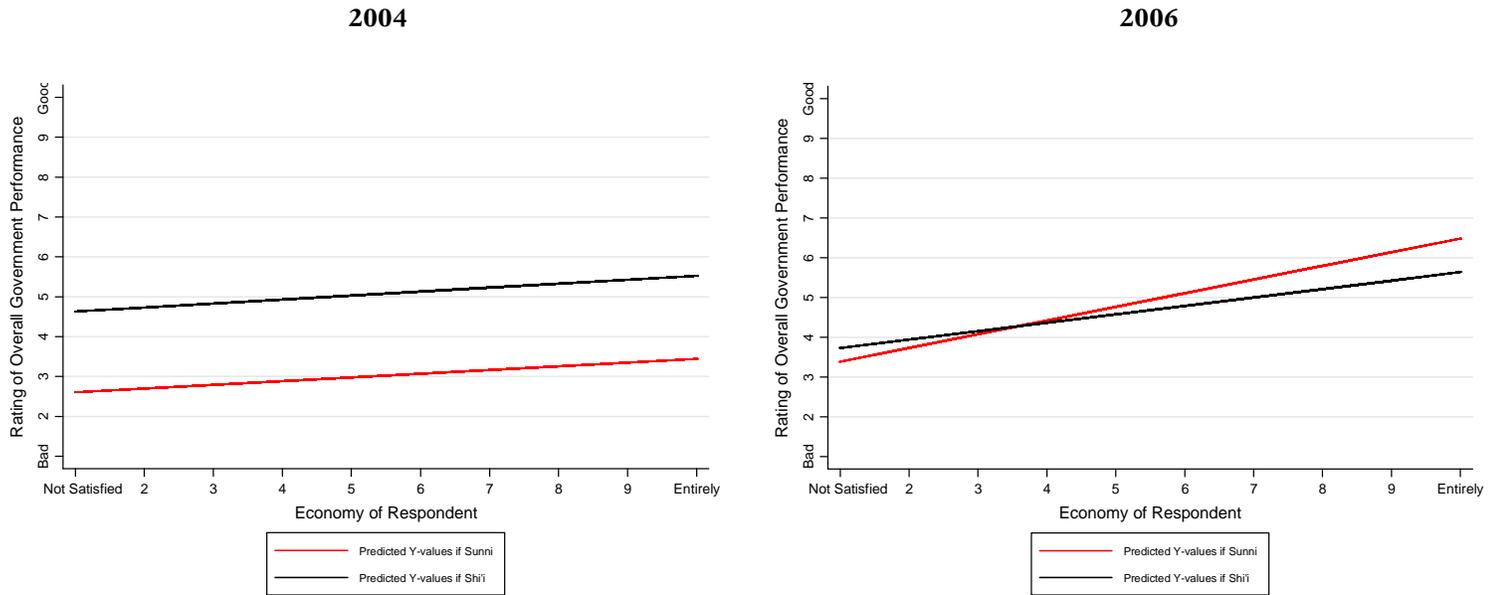
FIGURE 6.15. *The Marginal Effect of IDENTITY on Rating of Government Performance*



Like those of FIGURE 6.8, the two predicted values graphs reveal that, while members of both communities tend to report more positive government ratings the more satisfied they are economically, nonetheless this influence of household economy does nothing to erase the considerable Sunni-Shi'i gap that exists in 2004, and cannot eclipse the substantive impact of ethnic identification in 2006. In the first place, in 2004 the marginal effect of *ECONOMY* is an estimated 0.10 among Iraqi Shi'a and 0.09 among Sunnis, as per FIGURE 6.17.¹⁷ For a ± 1 standard deviation-change in *ECONOMY*, these correspond to changes in *GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE* of 0.45 and 0.41, respectively, substantive effects that are thus dwarfed by that of ethnic group membership at between 1.75 and 2.25, depending on *IDENTITY*. Secondly, even the relatively more substantial effects of *ECONOMY* on Sunnis and Shi'is in 2006—an estimated 0.34 and 0.21, respectively, amounting to 1.51 and 0.95 in substantive (± 1 standard deviation) terms—are merely on par in magnitude with those of *IDENTITY*, at 0.97 among Sunnis and 2.27 among Shi'is. Far from dominating competing factors that may influence political opinion as assumed in the *rentier* state literature, then, economic contentment is just one among many individual-level determinants of citizens' orientations toward their regime, be it in Bahrain or in Iraq.

¹⁷ As already discussed, one can overlook the relatively lower statistical confidence of the latter estimate.

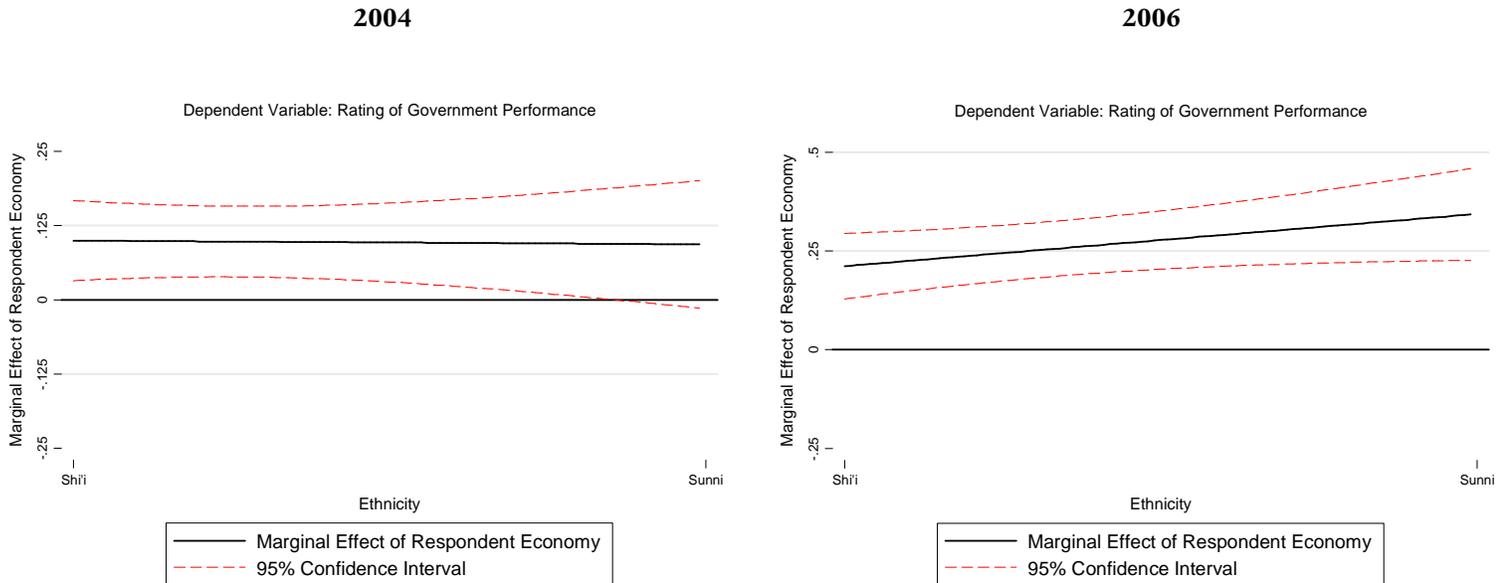
FIGURE 6.16. Predicted Ratings of Government Performance, by ECONOMY



Together with the preceding, these empirical findings lend strong evidence in favor of our theoretical predictions about the ethnic bases of normative political opinion in 2004 and 2006 Iraq. In fact, each of our hypotheses regarding the determinants of political opinion among ordinary Iraqis found compelling support in the analyses of GOVERNMENT CONFIDENCE and PERFORMANCE. Sunni ethnicity was found to be powerfully associated with more negative political opinion in 2004 (*Hypothesis 1.1_A*); stronger co-ethnic orientations were associated among Shi'is with more positive opinions of the Iraqi government (*1.2_A*), among Sunnis with more negative regime orientations (*1.2_B*); and the overriding determinant of citizens' orientations in 2004 was shown to be ethnic affiliation per se, whereas in 2006 it was the strength of one's ethnic identity (*1.3*). Overall, it was demonstrated that the combination of ethnicity itself as well as ethnic orientation was considerably more important than economic satisfaction in shaping citizen opinion toward the Iraqi government in 2004, and at least equally as important as the latter in 2006 (*1.1* and *1.2*).

All that remains, then, is to discover whether a similar result obtains also in the realm of political action. Unfortunately, since questions about Iraqis' political activities were not asked in the 2004 survey, here data from 2006 must suffice. We focus in particular on the most

FIGURE 6.17. *The Marginal Effect of ECONOMY on Rating of Government Performance*

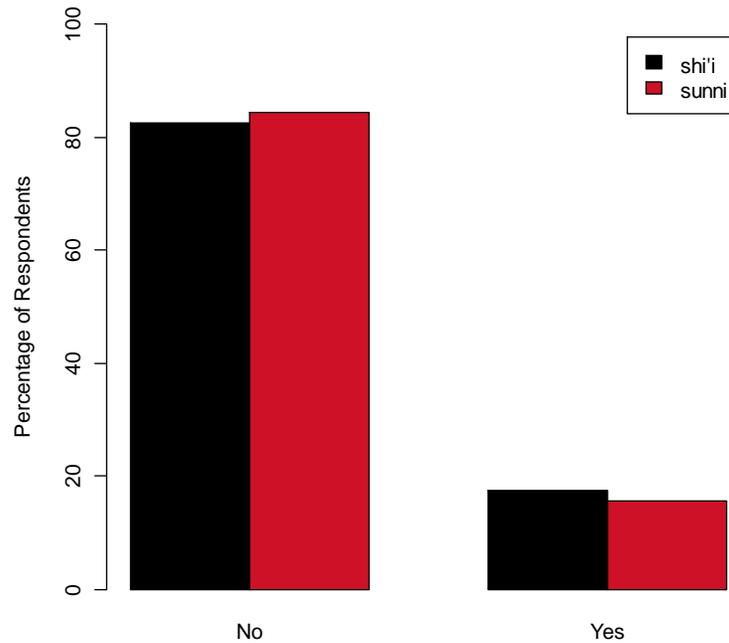


powerful of the activities inquired about: respondent participation in mass demonstrations.¹⁸ Respondents were asked whether they have attended, might attend, or would never attend a “peaceful demonstration.”¹⁹ Since the interest here is in participation versus non-participation, this indicator is recoded to be dichotomous, generating a variable *DEMONSTRATION* that takes a value of 1 for those who report having attended a demonstration and 0 otherwise. By this measure, around 17% of Iraqi Shi’a and 16% of Sunnis report having participated, as depicted in FIGURE 6.18. Though we have no corresponding data from 2004 to which to compare these proportions, the fact that demonstration attendance appears statistically-equivalent across the

¹⁸ Beyond its substantive significance, we choose to focus in the limited space here on demonstration participation also because it allows a more direct comparison with our Bahrain survey results. As mentioned before (*supra*, 299), other indirect indicators of political action such as were employed in Bahrain—political interest, following of political news, and so on—are more specific to the Arab Gulf context, where mere political interest itself is, or is supposed by the *rentier* state framework to be, an exception. In obvious contrast, the Iraq of 2006 is premised exactly upon citizen interest and participation in politics. Conceptually, therefore, the relationship between ethnic orientations and political interest is unlikely to be consistent across the two country contexts. While one might note the same about demonstration participation—that the right to peaceful demonstration is likewise tolerated and even encouraged by democracy—still at least one may be confident that the latter indicator measures in Bahrain as in Iraq the same underlying concept: participation in corporeal political protest.

¹⁹ The full question reads, “Now I’d like you to look at this card. I’m going to read out some forms of political action that people can take, and I’d like you to tell me, for each one, whether you have done any of these things, whether you might do it or would never under any circumstances do it.”

FIGURE 6.18. *Participation in a Peaceful Demonstration (2006), by Ethnicity*



two groups would seem to agree with our previous findings showing the lack of explanatory power in 2006 of ethnic affiliation alone.

The determinants of Iraqis' demonstration participation are given in TABLE 6.19 and, as per usual, are illustrated in the subsequent plots. Overall, the multivariate results closely follow those of our preceding 2006 analyses: the effect of ethnic membership itself depends entirely on that of ethnic identity (FIGURE 6.20), the latter exercising a powerful influence on the propensity for demonstration among both Sunnis and Shi'is (FIGURE 6.21). Yet, that these two marginal effects are substantively equivalent to those witnessed in the analysis of political opinion in fact runs contrary to our theoretical expectations. Whereas *Hypothesis 1.2_c* predicts that "Among Sunnis as well as Shi'is, the strength of ethnic identity is positively associated with political action," the present results evidence a different, ethnically-contingent relationship: that, among Shi'is, IDENTITY is positively associated with demonstration participation, among Sunnis negatively associated. Such a result does not, however, come entirely by surprise. In our introductory discussion (*supra*, 298-299) we noted that the environment of 2006 Iraq, which bordered then on open inter-communal warfare, made possible or even likely an alternative to the type of non-violent political action represented by peaceful demonstration, namely

TABLE 6.19. *The Determinants of Iraqis' Participation in Demonstrations, estimated by Probit*

Variables	Model 1		
	2006		
	<i>B</i>	<i>s_b</i>	<i>p</i> > <i>z</i>
ETHNICITY	0.429	0.244	0.079
IDENTITY	0.217	0.0338	0.000
IDENTITY × ETHNICITY	-0.476	0.0841	0.000
ECONOMY	0.0826	0.0253	0.001
ECONOMY × ETHNICITY	-0.0471	0.0425	0.267
AGE	-0.000527	0.00316	0.868
FEMALE	-1.140	0.101	0.000
EDUCATION	0.0322	0.0166	0.053
INCOME	-0.0681	0.0269	0.011
US FORCES	0.0672	0.0395	0.089
US FORCES × ETHNICITY	-0.169	0.695	0.015
Constant	-0.909	0.203	0.000
<i>N</i>	1444		
Prob. > <i>F</i> (χ^2)	0.0000		
Pseudo <i>R</i> ²	0.1704		

Note: Robust standard errors reported

physical aggression against the rival ethnic group. That is to say, in the context of 2006 Iraq stronger ethnic in-group orientations may find expression not through the ordinary channels of politics only but also through direct confrontation with the rival group, a path that history suggests was chosen by many Iraqis.

What our findings may reflect, accordingly, is a divergence in the political strategies adopted by Iraqi Sunnis and Shi'is, with individuals from the latter group tending toward more traditional forms of protest and lobbying as in-group orientations increase, individuals from

FIGURE 6.20. *Marginal Effect of ETHNICITY on Demonstration Attendance, by IDENTITY*

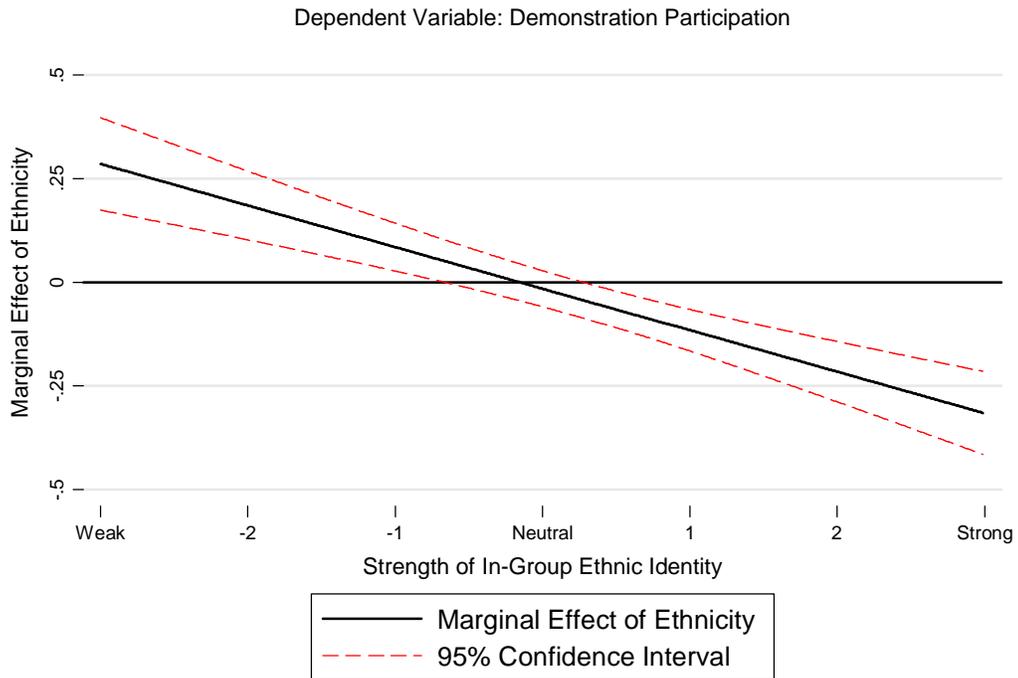


FIGURE 6.21. *Marginal Effect of IDENTITY on Demonstration Participation*

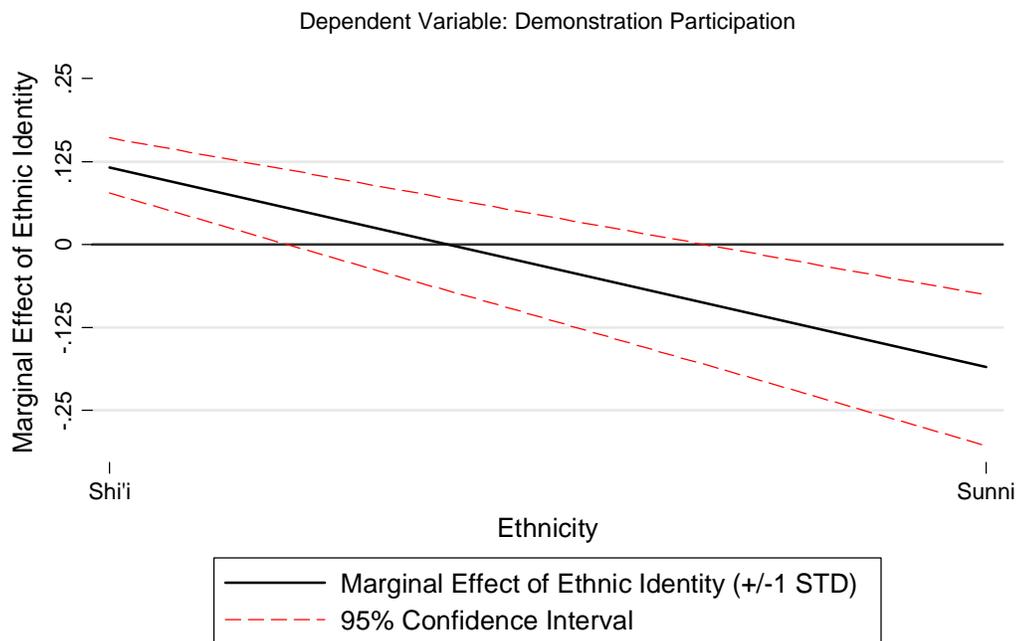


FIGURE 6.22. Predicted Probability of Demonstration Participation

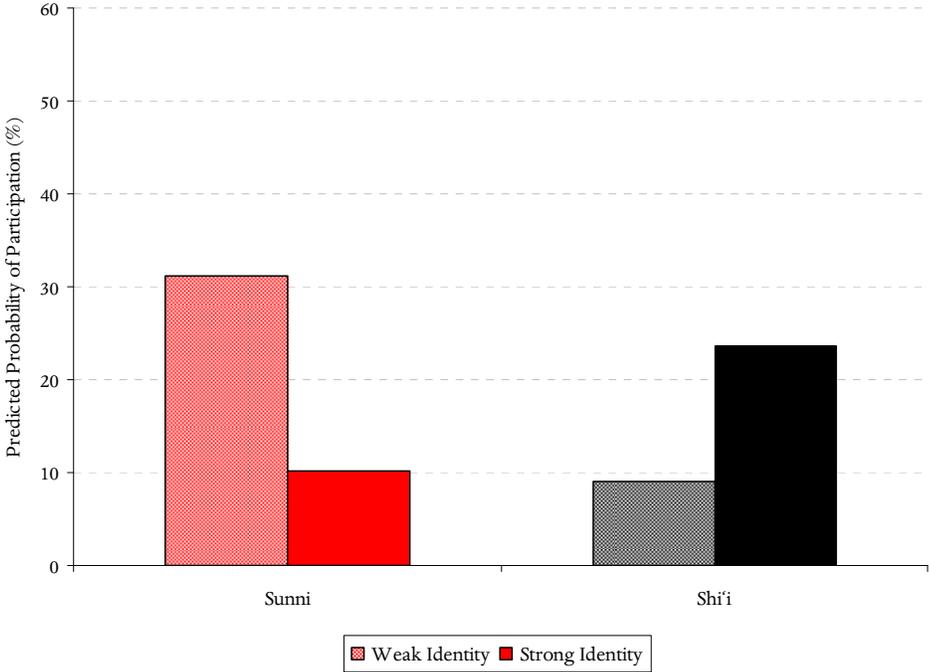
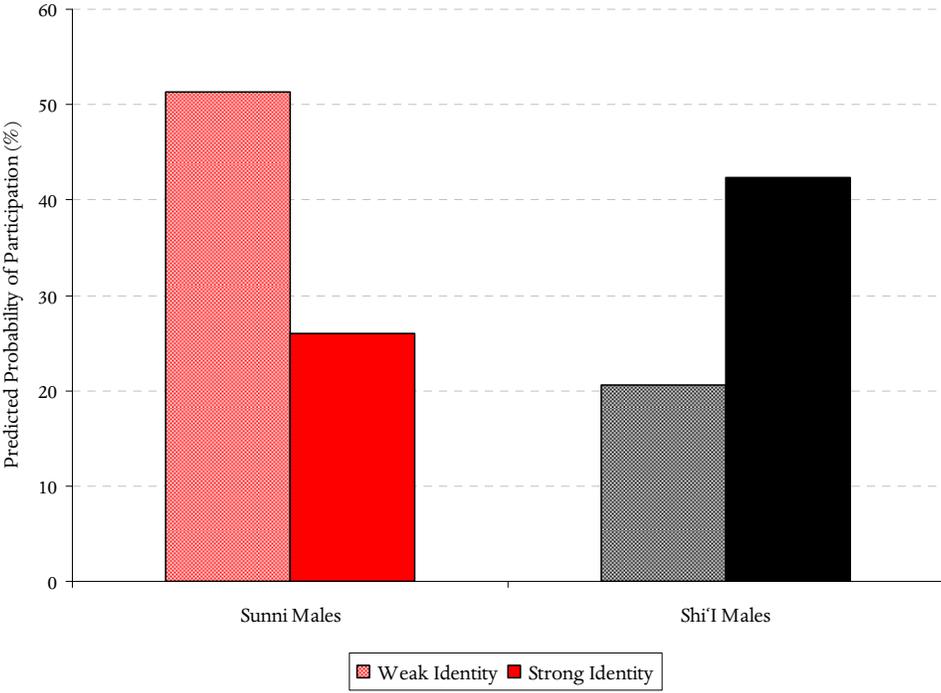


FIGURE 6.23. Predicted Probability of Demonstration Participation, among Males Only

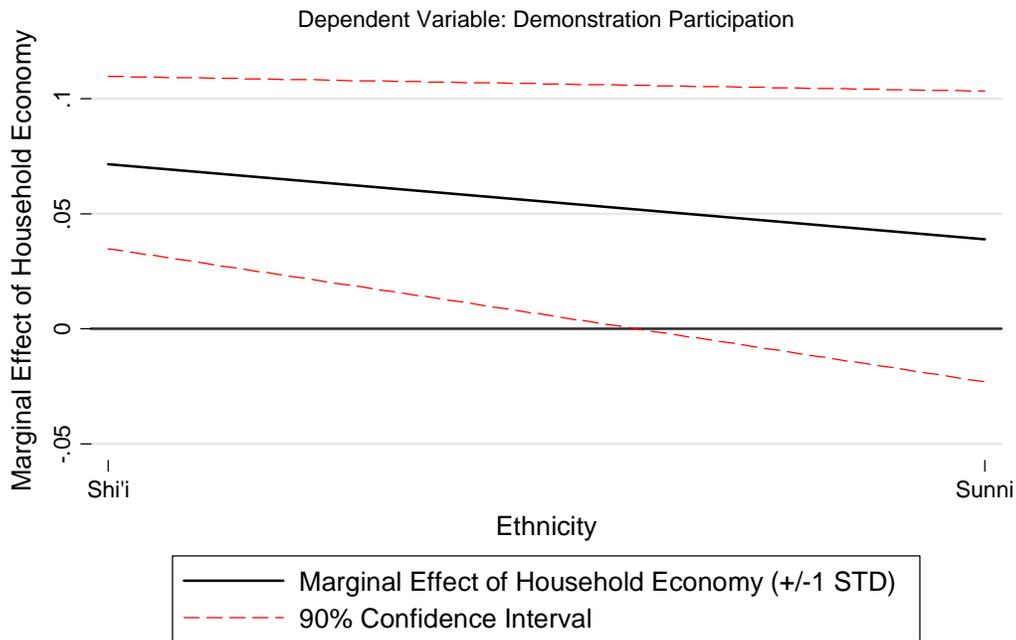


the former toward more direct actions against their political competitors. Not only does such an interpretation conform to our understanding of the Sunni-Shi'i civil war period, which saw Shi'a neighborhoods, religious sites, and ceremonies routinely targeted, leading to revenge killings of Sunnis,²⁰ but it also stands to reason intuitively insofar as Iraqi Shi'a, enjoying a considerable numerical superiority over the nation's Sunnis (and all the more so with respect to Arab Sunnis), may be relatively more confident in their ability to achieve political aims through regular democratic means. For Sunnis unsatisfied with their political position vis-à-vis their ethnic rivals, on the other hand, such mass action is likely to appear by comparison a far less efficacious if not altogether futile prospect, as a concerted Shi'a majoritarianism will always carry the day in a fair democratic fight. One assumes that it must be precisely this sort of logic underlying Iraqi Sunnis' repeated boycotts of the post-2003 political process.

This conditional relationship linking Iraqis' ethnic orientations to the likelihood of demonstration participation is depicted above in FIGURES 6.22 and 6.23. The first reports the estimated probability of DEMONSTRATION for Sunnis and Shi'is of "weak" and "strong" identity, where weak is defined as usual as -1 standard deviation from the 2006, ethnic-specific mean, and strong as +1 standard deviation. The second plot reports these predicted probabilities for male respondents only, in light of the considerable if predictable negative effect of female gender on an individual's propensity to demonstrate, as conveyed in TABLE 6.19. Both plots demonstrate the same basic finding: among Iraqi Shi'a, stronger ethnic in-group orientations are associated with a much higher likelihood of taking part in peaceful demonstrations; among Sunnis this influence of ethnic identity is similarly strong but in the opposite direction. More exactly, a change in ethnic orientation from weak to strong reduces the estimated probability of DEMONSTRATION among Sunnis from around 31% to 10%, a relative decrease of more than two-thirds. Among Shi'is, on the other hand, this change *augments* the likelihood of participation, from 9% among individuals with a weak identity to 24% among those with a strong one, a relative increase of 163%. When estimated for male Iraqis only, these relative effects are reduced somewhat, though they remain immense: a -1 to +1 standard deviation

²⁰ Indeed, the February 2006 bombing of the revered al-'Askarī shrine in Sāmarrā' by Sunni militants linked to al-Qā'ida is often cited as the opening salvo in the conflict. More generally, the point here is not that Iraq's civil war was prosecuted only by Sunnis against Shi'is, but that the pattern of violence typically involved a spectacular attack on a Shi'a target (e.g., the al-'Askarī shrine, Ṣadr City in November 2006, a Baghdad market in February 2007, and 'Āshūrā' celebrants in March 2004) followed by Shi'a reprisals. In this sense, then, although the conflict was fought by both sides, Sunni insurgents tended both to be the aggressors and to target sites and occasions of religious significance.

FIGURE 6.24. *Marginal Effect of ECONOMY on Demonstration Attendance, by ETHNICITY*



change in IDENTITY among Shi'i males increases the likelihood of DEMONSTRATION from about 21% to 42%, or by 100%. Among Sunni males the estimated probability of DEMONSTRATION decreases from 51% to 26%, a relative change of -49%.

If this latter finding therefore runs contrary to our theoretical expectations about the determinants of demonstration participation in Iraq (our likely explanation notwithstanding), yet more unanticipated still is the effect on participation of household economy. For it turns out that, more than there simply being *no effect* attributable to economic satisfaction, in fact our findings reveal a *positive* relationship in 2006 between economic well-being and propensity for involvement in peaceful demonstrations, and this among Iraq's Sunnis and Shi'is alike. It is not Iraqis of poorer economic station that tend to report partaking in demonstrations, that is, but those of *more favorable* financial situations. The marginal effect of ECONOMY is given in FIGURE 6.24. It is estimated at 0.07 among Shi'a and 0.04 among Sunnis, although the latter estimate is not statistically-significant even at the 90% confidence level. So, not only is the relationship between ECONOMY and DEMONSTRATION in the opposite direction of that predicted, but its magnitude is rather weak compared to that involving IDENTITY.

FIGURE 6.25. Predicted Probability of Demonstration Participation

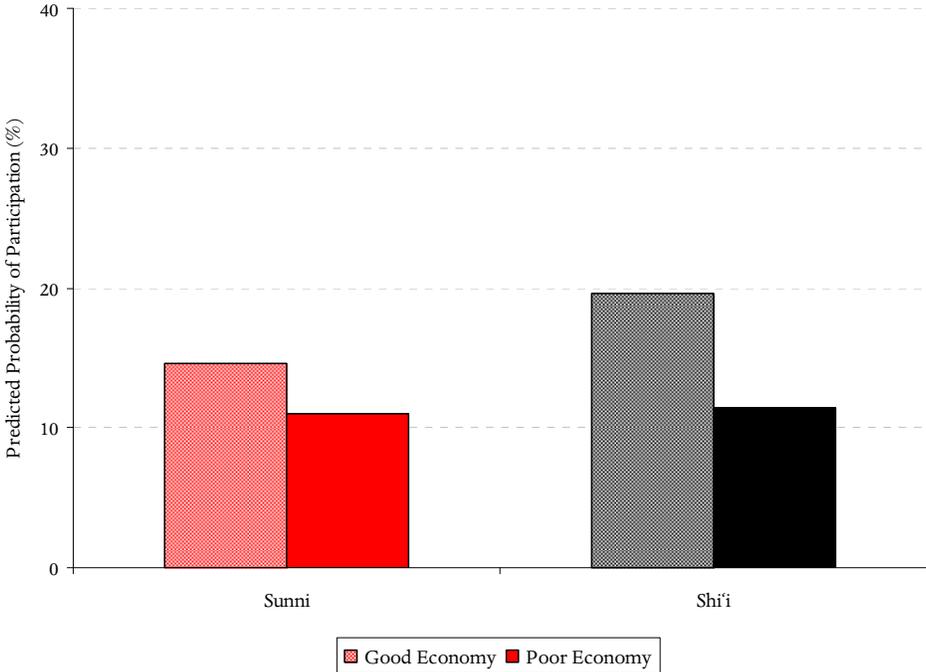
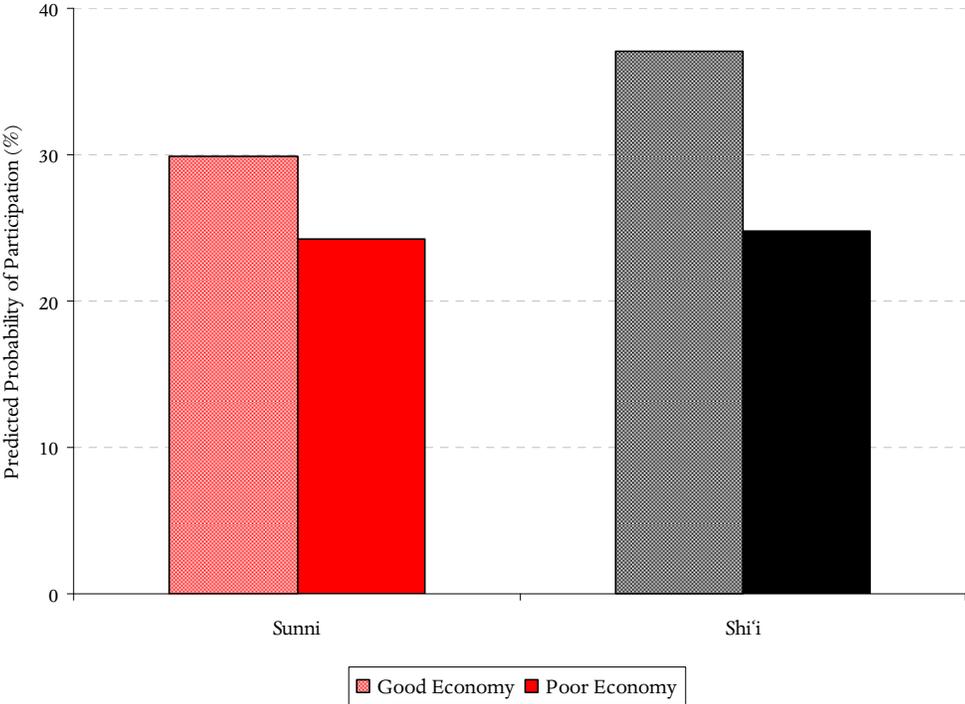


FIGURE 6.26. Predicted Probability of Demonstration Participation, among Males Only



A better indication of this can be gleaned from FIGURES 6.25 and 6.26, which illustrate the predicted probabilities of demonstration participation for Sunnis and Shi'is (in the latter case, male Sunnis and Shi'is) of "good" and "poor" economy, respectively, these being defined in the standard manner as -1 and $+1$ standard deviation from the 2006 mean of *ECONOMY*. One observes in the first place that, as per the marginal effect estimates reported already, the mobilizing effect of economic satisfaction is rather stronger among Shi'a than among Sunna. Sunnis of poor economy are 25% less likely than those of good economy to report having taken part in a demonstration, Shi'a of poor economy an estimated 42% less likely. When we restrict our sample to males only these relative changes fall by about a quarter to -19% and -33% , respectively. However one measures it, then, this relationship points to one and the same conclusion: according to the 2006 data, peaceful demonstrations are disproportionately attended by Iraqis—certainly Shi'i Iraqis and perhaps Sunni Iraqis—who are more content than not with their overall household financial situation.²¹

Conclusion: Lessons from Iraq

In Iraq as in Bahrain, citizens' orientations toward the government depend fundamentally on their perceptions of the ethnic balance of power enshrined therein. Despite Iraq's attempt to limit feelings of ethnic exclusion and inequity through explicit consociational arrangements, ethnic agnosticism is all but an impossibility for a government led by one or another bloc (or alliance of blocs²²) acting as political representative of (a) particular ethnic group(s)—whether Arab Sunnis, Arab Shi'a, or Iraqi Kurds. This means that, also as in Bahrain, concerns for the empowerment of ethnic rivals at the expense of one's own group inevitably compete with more mundane matters of economic welfare in determining the extent of an individual's support for, and actions in favor of or against, the regime. In the ethnically-divided Arab state, where political parties do not represent shifting coalitions of likeminded citizens but that bane

²¹ The fact that the *INCOME* control is found to be negatively-related to *DEMONSTRATION* (see TABLE 6.19) has no bearing on this finding. As has been demonstrated already, the *INCOME* and *ECONOMY* indicators are distinct conceptually, so the *INCOME* control should not be considered a proxy for economic satisfaction. Nor, indeed, does it act as such in our regression models. If one removes the *INCOME* control altogether from the model of *DEMONSTRATION*, for example, the positive effects of *ECONOMY* remain among Sunnis and Shi'is (decreasing only slightly to 0.05 among the latter), and their statistical significance is unchanged. In Iraq as in Bahrain, wealth in the absolute is not synonymous with material satisfaction.

²² Most obviously, one involving Sunni Arabs and Kurds, whose attempt to form a new government exclusive of the top vote-getting Shi'a coalition following Iraq's 2010 parliamentary elections led to an eight-month political impasse and fears of renewed ethnic violence. See, for example, John Leland and Steven Lee Myers, 2010, "Tentative Deal in Iraq Keeps Maliki in Power," *The New York Times*, November 10. Available at: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/11/world/middleeast/11iraq.html>>.

of liberalism, majority factions—“united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community” (*Federalist* N° 10)—in such a state, it can be no wonder when strict economic concerns take a backseat to ethnic affiliation and orientation in shaping political opinion and action.

This argument found consistent evidence in the preceding analysis of individual-level survey data from Iraq, the results of which are summarized below in TABLE 6.27.²³ In line with our theoretical expectations, Iraq’s Sunnis and Shi’is reported holding political views and engaging in political action in a pattern corresponding to the prevailing ethnic character of the Iraqi government. In 2004, when the coalition-appointed interim government represented neither Sunnis nor Shi’is per se, signaling instead a basic shift away from the Sunni-dominated Iraq of the pre-2003 era, citizen confidence in and satisfaction with the performance of the administration was determined above all by ethnic affiliation itself, with Iraqi Sunnis holding much more negative views of the interim government irrespective of their attitudes toward Shi’is. This Sunni-Shi’i discrepancy amounted in each case to around 20% of the entire range of the dependent variable considered—that is, to the possible response options of the survey question. By contrast, the difference in opinion separating Iraqis of below and above average economic satisfaction in 2004 barely surpassed 5%, a modest effect comparable to that the additional augmenting influence of respondents’ other-ethnic orientations (IDENTITY).

By the time of the 2006 survey, however, control over Iraq’s government had shifted in elementary fashion, and so, accordingly, did the basis of Iraqis’ political behavior. The united Shi’a bloc of Nūrī al-Mālikī now in firm charge following its victory in the first post-invasion parliamentary elections of December 2005, no longer were government orientations based upon ethnic affiliation itself but upon citizens’ views toward this newfound Shi’a empowerment and the larger shift in the balance of ethnic power that it heralded. Sunnis who expressed more worry for the empowerment of Shi’a groups over against that of Sunni groups reported much less confidence in and satisfaction with the performance of the Iraqi government *qua* Shi’a-led government, while Shi’is who were more concerned about the empowerment of Sunni groups vis-à-vis Shi’a groups reported much higher confidence and approval. This effect

²³ Like the analogous summaries of Chapter 5, TABLE 6.27 attempts to standardize the substantive impacts of all the independent variables of interest by employing a common metric, which is the raw (or ± 1 SD) marginal effect of a variable divided by the entire range of the dependent variable. For a raw marginal effect of 0.5 on a response variable with possible values of 1-10, for example, reported below would be $0.5/9 \approx 0.056$ or 5.6%.

TABLE 6.27. *The Determinants of Political Action and Opinion in Iraq, Summary of Results*

Dependent Variable	Impact of Independent Variables of Interest		
	Ethnicity ^b (Shi'i Sunni)	Identity ^e (Increasing)	Economy ^f (Worsening)
<i>Opinions</i>			
GOVERNMENT CONFIDENCE	Less ^c	More Less ^a	Less Less ^a
2004—	(20.0%)	(4.1% 2.3%)	(4.9% 2.1%)
2006—	none	More Less (38.9% 21.2%)	Less Less (12.5% 15.9%)
GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE	Less	More none	Less Less ^a
2004—	(18.9%)	(2.4%)	(5.1% 4.7%)
2006—	none	More Less (25.9% 11.1%)	Less Less (10.4% 17.0%)
<i>Actions</i>			
DEMONSTRATION ^d	none	More Less	Less Less
2006—		(104.9% 49.3%)	(33.1% 19.0%)

^a Coefficient has the expected sign, but its related *p*-value falls outside the *p* < 0.100 threshold of significance.

^b Recall that since our ETHNICITY variable is coded 1 for Sunnis, the effect of ethnic group membership is always expressed as the effect of a respondent's being a Sunni rather than a Shi'i. This choice is arbitrary of course, and to express the effect in terms of Shi'i ethnicity one merely has to reverse the sign of the coefficient.

^c Because the effect of ethnic membership is conditional on IDENTITY, the percentages reported here represent marginal effects of ETHNICITY evaluated at the 2004 mean of IDENTITY—that is, for an individual of "average" ethnic orientations.

^d Recall that because the DEMONSTRATION variable is dichotomous, the reported percentages represent relative changes in probability that a respondent answers "Yes." To offer the most conservative estimates possible, here the probabilities are calculated for male respondents only. Cf., e.g., FIGURES 6.23 and 6.26.

^e The percentages reported here correspond to the percent change in likelihood of participation associated with a change in respondent ECONOMY/IDENTITY from -1 standard deviation to +1 standard deviation.

of what we termed ethnic identity was robust among Sunnis and Shi'is in 2006, and in all but one case (that of Sunnis' evaluations of government performance) it was larger in magnitude than that of economic satisfaction. Notably, the substantive impact of ethnic identity among Shi'a averaged around three times that among Sunnis, while among the latter group the effect of economic satisfaction was consistently if not vastly greater.

Finally, although a lack of 2004 data prevented a similar cross-temporal analysis of Iraqis' demonstration behavior, still our findings from 2006 were consistent with those from the two indicators of political opinion and, more generally, revealed the importance of ethnic orientations over against economic considerations in determining individual propensity to undertake political protest action in Iraq. The former influence was found to be some three

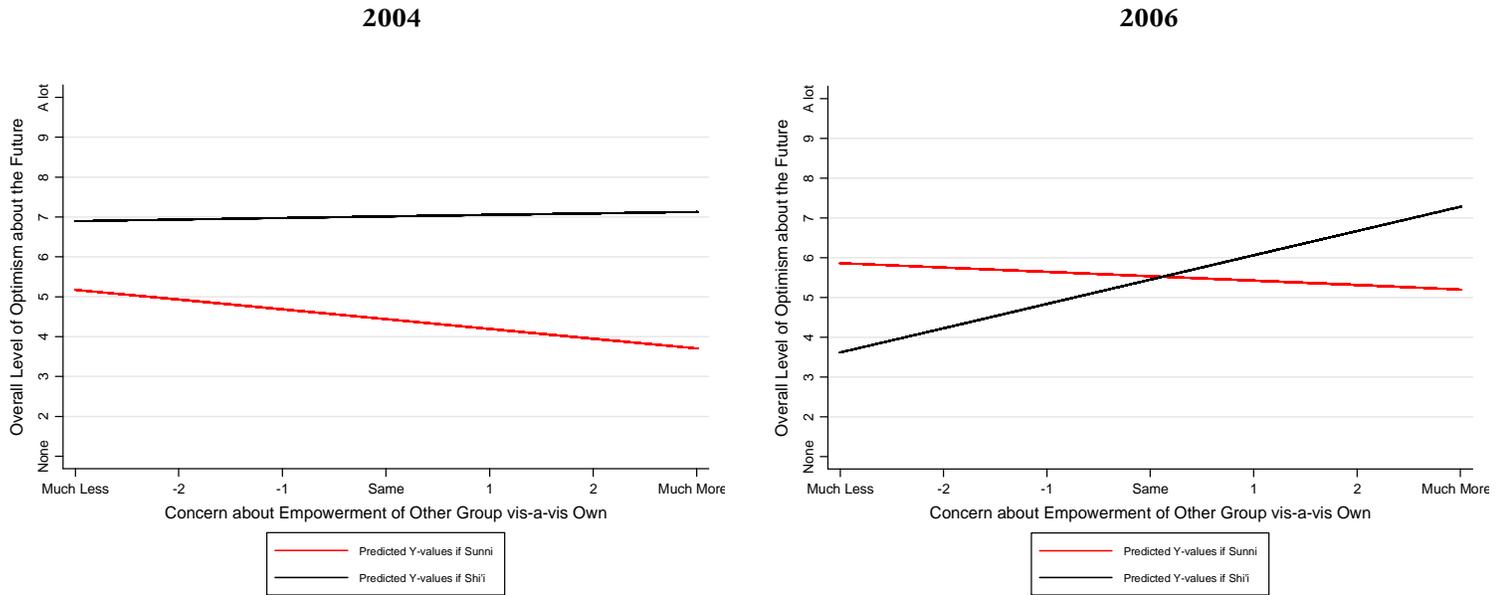
times the magnitude of the latter among both Sunnis and Shi'is. Of course, the direction of this effect among Iraqi Sunnis was not as expected: while stronger ethnic identity among Shi'a was shown to augment the likelihood of demonstration by more than 100%, Sunnis who worry disproportionately about Shi'a empowerment are nearly 50% *less likely* to report having participated in a peaceful demonstration. This we explained by our knowledge of the period during which the 2006 survey was administered, more specifically of the armed Sunni-Shi'i conflict that reached fever pitch between 2006 and 2008. The fact that Sunni Iraqis with more anti-Shi'a orientations are less likely to be involved in political demonstrations, we said, is a reflection of their disproportionate abstention from the official channels of politics (witness the several Sunni electoral boycotts) in favor of more direct societal confrontation, including violent insurgency. While many Shi'a too abandoned peaceful means of political contestation, their majority demographic status did and still does render mass mobilization a relatively more winning proposition. In a strict battle of bodies in the street, the Sunnis of Iraq are quite simply outgunned.²⁴

By now, the overall lesson from our investigation of political behavior in Iraq is clear: despite important historical and institutional dissimilarities distinguishing these cases, the same forces behind citizens' regime orientations witnessed in Bahrain are equally active in the case of Iraq and, one must suspect, in other Arab societies divided along Sunni-Shi'i lines. That Bahrain's rulers are unable to purchase the political acquiescence of their Shi'a citizens *à la rentier* state assumptions, then, is a result neither of some innate penchant for political opposition among adherents of Shi'ism, nor of larger Bahraini exceptionalism. For in Iraq today it is the Sunnis who comprise the *de facto* ethnic out-group, and their orientations toward the Iraqi government reveal as much. In Iraq as in Bahrain, political attitudes and actions are influenced not simply by the question "What has the government done for me?" but by the more elementary question "What—or who—does the government represent? By whom exactly am I being governed? and is it my interest they have in mind?"

Indeed, in the context of acute societal division, the answers to such questions go far in explaining an individual's outlook, not only toward the political regime under which he finds himself but toward the very quality of life itself. FIGURE 6.28 below shows the predicted level of future optimism of Iraqi Sunnis and Shi'is according to their ethnic orientations. For space

²⁴ And this is to say nothing of the more general organizational advantage of Shi'ism as a relatively more unified and hierarchical system of religious-*cum*-political authority.

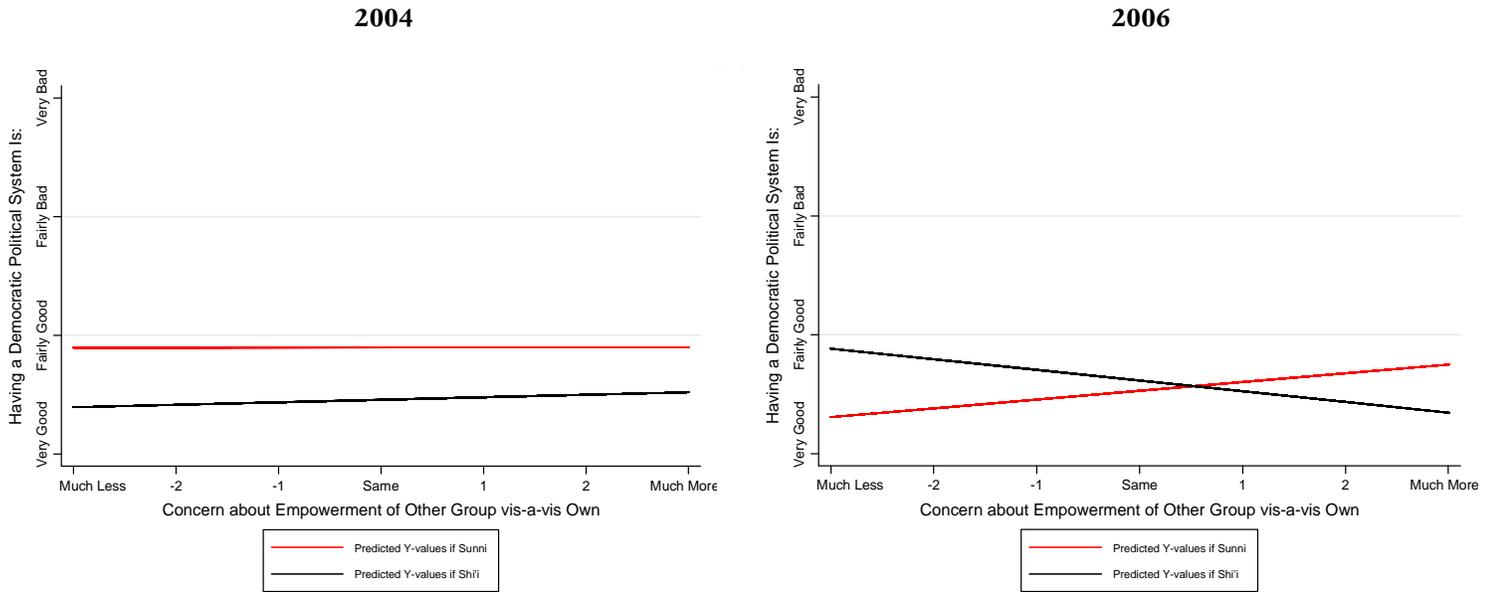
FIGURE 6.28. Degree of Optimism about the Future, by IDENTITY



considerations we need not embark on a lengthy discussion. It is enough to say that the fear of subjugation at the hands of one's rivals or, alternatively, the hope of exercising power over them, has a decisive hand in shaping one's views of the future. Indeed, though newly freed from a vicious dictatorship of three-and-a-half decades, in 2004 but a handful of Iraqi Sunnis were more optimistic than pessimistic about their future, confidence dropping precipitously as worry over Shi'a empowerment grew. The Shi'a, of course, were uniformly optimistic. By 2006 the familiar pattern had emerged, future optimism now depending for all Iraqis, but especially for Shi'a, on one's level of apprehension at the opposing group. No longer trapped under a Sunni-dominated system, the Shi'is of Iraq perceived a bright future precisely insofar as they worried about a return of the past.

Concerns for ethnic domination also mold individuals' views about how a political community should be organized. Iraqis need not be students of political science to understand that democracy in their country is and will continue to be, short of a drastic secularization of political association, tantamount to Shi'i majoritarianism. And, as illustrated in FIGURE 6.29, such knowledge strongly affects Iraqis' orientations toward democracy. All else equal, in 2004 Iraqi Sunnis reported considerably less enthusiasm than Shi'a for having a democratic political

FIGURE 6.29. Support for Democracy as a Way of Governing Iraq, by IDENTITY



system in Iraq, and this irrespective of their specific concern for Shi'a empowerment. Once the latter became a reality, however, attitudes shifted in now-recognizable fashion, with Shi'is predicted to support democracy most strongly when they fear Sunni empowerment, Sunnis predicted to prefer it least when they fear Shi'a empowerment; and precisely the opposite for those individuals who fear the empowerment of their own ethnic community. In divided Iraq, then, the term "democracy" is little more than a codeword for Shi'a-led government, a concept far from Western ideals and much closer to its original, Aristotelian definition for which it ranks among the deviant regimes: the rule of the majority for its narrow self-interest. Over the dead bodies of many ordinary Sunnis did democracy come to Iraq, and only likewise would it ever come to Bahrain.

If the causes of government support and hostility be thus similar across Bahrain and Iraq, yet we may end this section with the observation that the latter state enjoys nonetheless a decided advantage in coaxing political submission and, ultimately, regime stability. For while the present chapter has demonstrated how Bahrain's *rentier* nature is not the source of its political dysfunction, it also has shown how it works to exacerbate the problem. Whereas political acquiescence in the Iraqi context implies only that citizens agree to the principles of

democratic political competition, that they abide by the basic rules of the game, in Bahrain political submission requires precisely the opposite. Iraq need only convince citizens to take part in politics; in Bahrain they must consent to keep out. In Iraq, accordingly, even those individuals whose political views and behavior depend more upon ethnic than upon economic considerations have available a lawful outlet through which to vent their displeasure with the status quo. One might not be won over to the government by material wealth, but no matter, as one has legal means to seek its change or a change in policy. For the unhappy Bahraini unswayed by the prospect of economic enrichment, on the other hand, change cannot come by his or society's initiative but only exogenously, by royal decree sent down like manna from heaven or, alternatively, like a thunderbolt from Zeus. In Bahrain, one is either satisfied with his lot, or is a political outlaw.

The *rentier* state of the Arab Gulf must therefore sink or swim on its capacity for economic appeasement, yet in ethnically-divided societies this ability is hampered not only on the demand side by those citizens unwilling to take the bargain but also on the supply side by a state reluctant to enrich or empower members of a community it views as an open or latent political opposition with ties to foreign governments, individuals readily-identifiable moreover on the basis of geography, family names, language, and other obvious markers. The question such a state faces, accordingly, is whether its power of economic benefaction—most notably, government employment—is best used to reward friends or to attempt to convert enemies. In Bahrain, at least, the answer is known: public-sector employment does not secure political allegiance; political allegiance secures public-sector employment, especially when the work in question carries national security implications. And, in a part of the world that spends more of its wealth on internal and external security than any other, the scope of the resulting ethnic-based exclusion from this most far-reaching of state benefits is far from trivial. Paradoxically, though with only economic patronage at its political disposal, still the ethnically-contested *rentier* state chooses to forgo what has been assumed its most powerful weapon, for fear that the cure should be worse than the disease.

Notes for Chapter 6

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