SNSAP
SAUDI NATIONAL SECURITY ASSESSMENT PROJECT

Fragmented Iraq:
Implications for Saudi National Security

March 15th, 2006

Fragmented Iraq
Implications for Saudi National Security

Cover Letter

Riyadh

March 10th, 2006

During an official visit to Washington DC on September 20th, 2005, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal proclaimed: "US policy in Iraq is widening sectarian divisions to the point of effectively handing the country to Iran…. We fought a war together to keep Iran out of Iraq, now we are handing the whole country over to Iran without reason…. Iraq is disintegrating."

This report was prepared by the *Saudi National Security Assessment Project* (SNSAP) in order to explore the ramifications of these comments and to provide a factual background to them. The SNSAP is a Riyadh-based consultancy that provides independent national security and intelligence assessments to the Saudi government. **This report reflects solely the views of the SNSAP. In no way should the opinions, analyses, or recommendations within be construed as official Saudi government policy.**

This study has been a five month endeavor to collect and assess the most credible information about the current situation in Iraq. In doing so, we have received excellent cooperation from certain officials in Iraq and neighboring governments which have a stake in a unified and stable Iraq. Our analyses are based upon these and dozens of interviews with current military and intelligence officials throughout the region. We have also had numerous conversations with Iranian officials. Finally, we have analyzed a great deal of classified information, although much of it was ultimately found to be unreliable. In itself, this lack of credible intelligence on the security situation in Iraq is a cause for alarm.

Although this report does not have a security classification, it is not being publicly distributed. However, revealing the names of the senior security, intelligence, and military officials who cooperated with us poses a high security risk for those individuals. Thus, they remain anonymous. Revealing names could also compromise the sourcing and methodology of the SNSAP.

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It is important to note that the purpose of this report is not to criticize US policy in Iraq. The failings of the Bush administration's occupation are well-documented and assigning blame serves no purpose. Instead, we hope this report will be of value to the Saudi government as an independent intelligence assessment of the current situation in Iraq and the possibility of civil war. The potential for such a catastrophe is growing daily, and Saudi Arabia has an enormous stake in preparing for such a calamity.

Sincerely,

Nawaf E. Obaid
Managing Director
Saudi National Security Assessment Project

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Introduction

Iraq is at a crossroads and faces a myriad of challenges, including economic, social and most importantly, security issues. The 2003 US invasion opened a bloody Pandora's Box of deep-rooted sectarian tensions as well as rival communal interests. It also ignited a tinderbox of violence brought on by an insurgency that is proving difficult to contain and even harder to eradicate — to date, the country has seen no respite from violence, which has targeted US and Iraqi forces and terrorized civilians with almost daily bombings, drive-by shootings, kidnappings and assassinations. A civil war may well be inevitable. Such a development would have the gravest implications for the entire region, especially Saudi Arabia, which shares its longest international border with Iraq.

The importance of a stable and cohesive Iraq to Saudi Arabia cannot be overstated. King Abdallah, as the most powerful leader in the Arab Muslim world, has a vested interest in preserving the integrity of Iraq and safeguarding the rights of Sunnis in a country dominated by Shi'ites.

Although the recent elections represent a milestone in the country's move towards democracy, they have done little to foster a sense of unity among Kurds, Sunnis, and Shi'ites, the three principal communities in Iraq. On the contrary, they have largely served to emphasize communal differences. As Chart 1 shows, the election results fell primarily along ethnic lines (see Appendix I for complete election results). The new government appears to be unable or unwilling to resolve these disparities, but this situation must be addressed if the political process is to move forward with any legitimacy. Whether the new government can meet the test is still uncertain.

The Kurds, who have long enjoyed the privileges of living in a semi-autonomous state, are unlikely to be willing partners in a government that, when fully functional, might offer them considerably less. Since the US invasion, the Kurds have demonstrated a tendency to use their dominance in the provinces that comprise the Kurdish area in a manner that gives them a distinct advantage over other ethnic groups in the region. The soft ethnic cleansing now underway in Kirkuk is a prime example of this.

Pervasive interference from Iran further complicates the situation. Iran's influence over the post-Saddam government in Iraq has been significant, and the most predominant Shi'ite parties in Iraqi politics have long enjoyed the sponsorship of Tehran. Iranian levers of influence include a broad network of informants, military and logistical support of armed groups, and social welfare campaigns. Most importantly, Tehran has sought to influence Iraq's political process by giving support new various parties, in particular, to the SCIRI.

For their part, the Sunnis, who occupied positions of power under Ba'athist rule, may find it difficult, if not impossible, to reconcile their now subordinate status in the new Iraq. Basic issues of governance, such as the nature of the central government and the role of Islam, will be points of contention for many years to come. Finally, although they constitute only a fraction of the insurgency, foreign fighters will continue to remain a seriously destabilizing force in the country.

While the situation in Iraq may be too far gone to salvage, there are several policies that may assist the Kingdom in mitigating the grave situation that has been created in the country. These include: The development of a comprehensive national strategy which takes into account the possibility of a civil war; improving communications between the Kingdom and the United States regarding the extent and strength of the insurgency; and neutralizing Iranian interference. When the security situation allows, the Saudi leadership should also work to strengthen its diplomatic ties with Iraq and cultivate relationships with its religious and political leaders. These proposals are more fully discussed at the conclusion of this report.

Map 1: Three Iraqs

The Iraqi state is a fairly arbitrary 20th century creation, with externally imposed borders bringing together disparate ethnic and religious groups that remain fiercely sectarian to this day. Map 2 shows this fragmentation in greater detail. *Source: National Geographic.*

Chart 1: Iraqi Election Results by Major Group - 12/05

National Iraqi List
(Alawi)
9.1%

Turcomen
0.4%

Other
0.7%

Kurdish
21.1%

Sunni
21.5%

Religious Shi'ite
47.3%
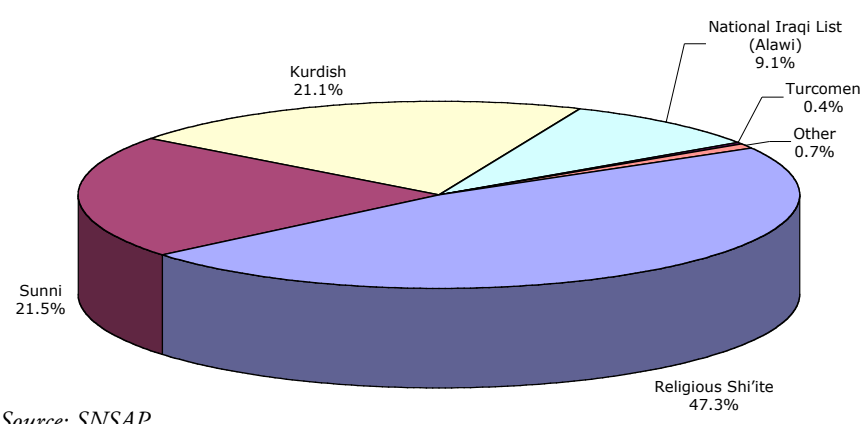
Source: SNSAP.

Map 2: Distribution of Ethnoreligious Groups and Tribes

Majority Groups
- Kurd
- Sunni Arab
- Sunni Arab/Kurd mix
- Shia Arab
- Shia/Sunni Arab mix
- Sunni Turkoman
- Sparsely populated

Sinjar Tribe name

Boundary representation is not necessarily authoritative.

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Ethnic Group	Estimated Population	Also Found In	Religion	Language
Arabs	16 to 20 million	Throughout North Africa and the Middle East, Iran	65-80 percent Shia, 20-30 percent Sunni, less than 5 percent Christian	Arabic (Iraqi dialect)
Kurds	3.6 to 4.8 million	Turkey, Iran, Syria, Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan	Mostly Sunni, Shia, and Yazidi minority	Kurdish
Turkomans	300,000 to 800,000	Related to other Turkic peoples in Turkey, Azerbaijan, Iran, and Turkmenistan	Primarily Sunni	South Azeri Turkish
Others	As many as 1 million	Mostly Christians, Iranians, and other groups found in the Middle East	At least 50 percent Christian; Shias, Sunnis, and members of other religions account for the balance	Mostly Arabic, some Persian and other languages

Source: www.lib.utexas.edu

The Kurds

The most critical problem confronting the architects of a post-Saddam Iraq is the question of national unity—or more simply, whether the various ethnic and sectarian communities can come together and find common ground for creating a cohesive nation state. One of the greatest challenges on this front has been the reluctance of the Kurds (who constitute 18-20 percent of the population) to accept limits on their autonomy. A decade and a half of self-governance, along with preferential financing, revenues from smuggling, and the oil for food program has provided the Kurds with a sense of ethnic identity and independence. It is highly improbable that they will willingly surrender the gains won by force of arms for a compromised position in a state with an unstable and uncertain future.

For all intents and purposes, the administrative region of Kurdistan is a semi-autonomous state. Its borders might be a work in progress, but those that do exist are jealously guarded by the Peshmerga. The Kurds may well be uniting under the idea of an Iraqi nation, but this unity is in name only, and despite the best efforts of the US, the Iraqi constitution may prove to be little more than paper.

Historical Overview

On August 10, 1920, the Allies and the Turkish government signed the Treaty of Sèvres. This Treaty, which established the right of the Kurds to a political autonomy, also allowed for the possibility for the creation of an independent state incorporating the eastern portion of Turkey and the Iraqi province of Mosul. The 1923 Treaty of Lausanne nullified Sèvres, and in the process, cancelled concessions made to the Kurds. As a result, the Kurdish issue disappeared from the international landscape for the next seventy years.

Although the Ba'athist regime conceded an autonomous region and granted certain rights to the Iraqi Kurds, it also made them the target of severe repression. During the Anfal Campaign of 1988, the Iraqi regime engaged in a host of human rights abuses against its Kurdish population in retaliation for its support of Iran in the First Persian Gulf War (Iran-Iraq War). These included mass deportations, arrests, kidnappings, and chemical attacks against Kurdish villages—most notably, Halabja. Near the end of the second Gulf War in March 1991, Saddam's Republican Guard brutally crushed an uprising in Northern Iraq (Southern Kurdistan). Scenes of refugees fleeing from the terror again brought the Kurdish issue to the forefront.

In response to the international outcry, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 688 in April 1991 calling for an end to the repression of the Kurds by Saddam's regime. It also called for the establishment of a safe haven no fly-zone above the 36th parallel, a region that covers roughly half of the Kurdish settlement areas of Northern Iraq. These actions brought a fragile but significant measure of stability to the Iraqi Kurds.

On May 9, 1992, The Kurdistan Front organized free elections for the selection of a 105 member National Assembly in the Kurdish-controlled area of Iraqi Kurdistan. The Front, which consists of a coalition of eight political parties, was created in 1988, and had acted as the de facto governing authority in the region since the Iraqi withdrawal in 1991. The elections of 1992 did not result in the establishment of a stable government, but created two regional rival governments. The Democratic Party of Kurdistan (KDP), led by Mas'oud Barzani, controlled the northern area extending to the Turkish border, and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), represented by Jalal Talabani, held the region in the south extending to the Iranian border.

In 1994, armed confrontations erupted between members of the two leading parties for control of the region. International intervention was necessary for several years to quell the unremitting violent confrontations.

In 1998, under pressure from the US, the four-year civil war ended and an agreement to create separate administrations for governing the region was reached. Kurdistan was partitioned into eastern and western zones. The western zone would be controlled by Barzani with Irbil as its capital, while the eastern zone would be the domain of Talabani with Sulaymania as its capital. Each would have a respective government, prime minister, and democratically elected parliament.[1]

In 2002, in anticipation of a US led invasion of Iraq, representatives of the PUK and the KDP met for the first time in eight years in an unusual show of political solidarity. Both leaders emphasized that the meeting was not a step towards independence, but a step towards the creation of a semi-autonomous region. The stated goal of the meeting according to Barzani was "…not just to make Kurdistan free, but to make Iraq free."[2]

In the Iraqi provincial assembly elections held on January 30, 2005, the PUK and the KDP ran a shared list of candidates that captured just over 25 percent of the votes, representing 75 seats in the 275-seat National Assembly. This meant that the Kurdish faction was the second largest in the new National Assembly. The Shi'ite United Iraqi Alliance, which holds 140 seats, is first.

During the January 2005 elections, an informal referendum was held in the Kurdish regions on whether Kurdistan should be an independent state or a part of Iraq. Participants seemed to overwhelmingly favor independence. While the referendum was wholly a private initiative, there are some younger government officials who believe that the older generation of Kurdish leaders might be making too many concessions for the sake of a unified Iraq.[3] In the last poll conducted by the Kurdish autonomous government, over 90 percent of younger Kurds were in favor of Kurdistan being an independent country. What is clear is that this new generation is very certain that they do not want to be part of Iraq.

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[1] N. Raphaeli. "Kirkuk: Between Kurdish Separatism and Iraqi Federalism." #215, *Memri*, March 31, 2005.

[2] "Rival Iraqi Kurdish Lawmakers Meet." *Kurdistan Observer*, October 4, 2002.

[3] Peter Galbraith. "As Iraqis Celebrate, the Kurds Hesitate." *New York Times*, February 1, 2005.

Map 3: Kurdish Iraq

Recent Developments in Iraqi Kurdistan

Following the ratification of the Constitution of Iraq on October 15, 2005, a general election was called on December 15 to elect a permanent 275-member National Assembly. In general, Iraqis voted for candidates representing their respective groups. The Kurdish Coalition, which consists of parties lead by President Jalal Talabani and Ma'soud Barzani, captured 53 seats, while the Islamic Party of Kurdistan took 5 seats.

On January 7, 2006, the KDP and the PUK concluded a power-sharing agreement for the joint administration of the Kurdistan regional government. Although the two parties will maintain the same administrations they have held since 1988, under the new agreement, KDP members will be appointed to head the ministries of Agriculture, Electricity, Water Finance, External Affairs, Higher Education, Martyrs, and Municipalities.

The PUK will oversee the ministries of Education, Endowments, Interior, Health, Human Rights, Justice, Planning and Reconstruction, Social Affairs, and Transport. Barzani will continue in his position as the interim president for the next two years and Talabani will hold the parliamentary chair. At the end of two years, the roles will be reversed.

The two parties have also agreed to nominate Talabani for the presidency of Iraq. No decision has been taken about which party will control the Peshmerga Affairs Ministry, which will oversee the supervision of more than 160,000 Peshmerga fighters.[4]

The Kurds and The Iraqi Constitution

Kurdish leaders fought hard for concessions under the new Iraqi constitution, but in the face of intense US pressure, modified many of their demands. The demands included: the addition of a clause that would allow for a vote on independence within eight years; a redrawing of regional boundaries to include oil-rich Kirkuk; the assimilation of the Peshmerga (Kurdish militia) into the Iraqi army; and most importantly, a federalist system

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[4] Mariam Karouny. "Iraqi Kurds See Government Merger Ending Civil War." *Reuters,* January 10, 2006.

that more closely resembles a confederation since it would be based upon regionalism or ethnicity. Such a system would effectively guarantee the Kurds sovereignty in everything but name.

While all political groups agree that a federal form of government should be constitutionally mandated, the non-Kurdish Iraqi majority unanimously favors a unitary type of federalism that would grant limited autonomy to each of Iraq's 18 provinces with most of the power concentrated in the central government. Since most of the provinces, especially those in the north, have a mixture of ethnic groups, this scheme would limit Kurdish control in the already autonomous provinces of Sulaymania, Irbil, and Dohuk. The Kurds, on the other hand, want an ethnic or regional federalism that would gather all provinces with large Kurdish populations into a single region under a single political configuration—this would include the city of Kirkuk. According to Talabani, a provincial federation is unacceptable because "throughout their history, the Kurdish people have struggled to prevent the separation of the Kurdish provinces from each other and to protect the integrity of the historical Kurdish borders."[5]

In August 2005, the Kurdish Parliament approved the constitution. The question still remains, however, whether the constitution has the power to bind people who share no ethnic heritage or common language (few younger Kurds speak Arabic, English being the second language of Kurdistan). This especially holds true for the 18-25 year olds who are joining the Peshmerga.

Kurdish is the official language of business and regional government, although there is an active English language press. In the Kurdish north, Arabic is a dying language, dismissed or outright rejected by a population whose collective memory conjures up images of an oppressive Iraqi Arab state. Moreover, most Kurds have serious reservations concerning the confessional aspects of the constitution and the place of religion in political life. As a result, they have duly insisted upon a separation of state and religion.

Competing National Interests-Kurdistan v. Iraq

On the official border crossing between Iran and Iraq there is a picture of Khomeini and a flag of Iran, on the Kurdish side is a picture of Barzani and a Kurdish flag. There is no sign of an Iraqi flag. This is not merely an oversight, but indicative of the deep-seated cynical views many Kurds hold towards a unified Iraq.

In contrast to the Sunni border which is virtually undefended, and the Shi'ite border which is completely open, the border between Kurdistan and Iran is well protected by the by Peshmerga. It is more than a point of interest that in a single country, the three borders should be monitored in three different ways. The US is powerless to remedy this situation since these borders are too long, and the political consequences of a US presence would be too costly.

Much of the inter-communal tension centers on oil. Ultimately, the decisive factor in whether Iraq can achieve national unity might be related more to economy than ideology or religion. The bulk of Iraq's 115 billion barrels of proven reserves are located in the Shi'ite and Kurdish populated areas. If the Shi'ites should adopt the Kurdish model and form their own regional government, Sunni Arabs would, in turn, be compelled to either establish respective governorates or form a regional government in the Sunni majority areas of Diyala, Salah Al-Din, and Al-Anbar.

According to Article 110 of the constitution the federal government:

> will administer oil and gas extracted from current fields in cooperation with the governments of the producing regions and governorates on condition that the

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[5] Raphaeli. "Kirkuk."

revenues will be distributed fairly in a manner compatible with the demographic distribution all over the country. A quota should be defined for a specified time for affected regions that were deprived in an unfair way by the former regime or later on, in a way to ensure balanced development in different parts of the country. This should be regulated by law.

The constitution, however, makes no provision for revenues that might be generated from wells yet to be exploited. This could put those Sunni Arabs located outside of the oil-rich regions at a serious economic disadvantage. Although Article 116 stipulates that the government provide "a fair share" of the federal revenues it collects to meet the "needs" of each region, the amount of support allotted to each [region] is discretionary. Consequently, Sunni Arabs are likely to demand stronger guarantees as a quid pro quo for supporting the constitution.

The Kurdish government recently began oil drilling for a new field near the city of Dohuk in Northern Kurdistan. This development represents a "direct challenge'" to the central government's control over the country's natural resources. Although reports indicate that oil fields in Kurdistan are much less significant than those in southern Iraq and Kirkuk, the regional government maintains that its reserves amount to 45 billion barrels. The reality is that oil reserves in Kurdistan can either be much higher or lower than is presently known.

Although contracts for oil exploration and production without prior government approval are regarded as "contractually void," Kurdish officials maintain that the new constitution provides for the Kurdish region to produce its own oil. The oil dispute is yet another component in a far-reaching campaign by the regional government to increase its independence. According to Adnan Mufti, speaker of the Kurdistan regional assembly, "this should be regulated by law." A law to resolve this dispute is currently in the legislature.[6]

According to senior officials, the realities of the new Iraq make the dream of a "Greater Kurdistan" a relic of the romantic past. These same officials realize that ambitions for a Greater Kurdistan is not only impractical, they are dangerous. Neighboring countries such as Turkey, Syria, and Iran with their own restless Kurdish populations and national interests would be openly hostile to such a plan, and react accordingly. Moreover, the US, the long time patron of the Iraqi Kurds, would provide little or no support for this or any other similar aspirations.

Senior officials in Kurdistan believe Kirkuk to be fully a part of Kurdistan, and will never relinquish what they consider to be their historical rights in this area. This claim is reinforced by Barzani's rejection, in 1974, of an offer for Kurdish autonomy that did not incorporate the city of Kirkuk. Withdrawing claim to the city would be tantamount to asking the leadership to invalidate 30 years of Kurdish policy and struggle, and this they will never do. Considering the competing interests, the future administration of the city is destined to become a main trigger point. Plans for the *Kurdification* of Kirkuk have already begun. Arabs who were relocated to Kirkuk by Saddam's regime are now being deported to Baghdad and elsewhere. There is also a resettlement policy underway to return the Kurds who were displaced by Saddam back to Kurdish territories.

According to a former minister that served in the Iraqi interim government and current senior advisors to Talabani, there will be no negotiations regarding future control of Kirkuk. A senior Peshmerga commander has revealed that there are plans underway for a military takeover of the city at the opportune time. Kirkuk, which is currently under the control of the central Iraqi government, is critical for the economic sustainability of a future Kurdish state. Iraq's total oil reserves are second only to those of Saudi Arabia, with Kirkuk currently producing nearly a million barrels of oil per day.[7]

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[6] David Axe. "Kurds Challenge Baghdad Over Oil Exploration Rights." *Washington Times*, January 14, 2006.
[7] Miriam Amie. "U.S. sees Iraqi Oil Production Choked for Years." *M&C News,* Jan 10, 2006.

Kurdistan will never be closer to the rest of Iraq than it is now, and the endgame is clearly independence. This will be achieved through a combination of patience and political maneuvering. After the American military, the Peshmerga is by far the strongest military force in Iraq. According to a senior Kurdish military leader, the US military is the only force holding the country together and there is a belief that as the US position becomes untenable, they will become stronger.[8]

With Talabani now installed in the Baghdad government, much of the nationalist rhetoric has been moderated. This, however, is merely a political calculation and it is only a matter of time before he and the rest of the leadership reassert their irredentist claims.
At a news conference held during the 2005 elections, Barzani commented that he was "certain" he would see "an independent Kurdistan" during his lifetime.[9] In a recent interview for Turkish television station NTV, he also stated that Iraqi Kurds would have no choice but to exercise their "right" to independence in the event of a civil war. Although an independent Kurdistan is not official government policy, such talk does not bode well for a unified Iraq.[10]

The relationship between the government in Baghdad and the Kurdish north is virtually non-existent. In most respects, the central government has little control; orders from Baghdad generally go ignored. Iraq is more and more resembling Yugoslavia on the eve of dissolution when the central government was dispensing orders that went unheeded.[11]

The last point, especially, has serious ramifications for dealing with the Sunni insurgency, since there is effectively no coordination between the Kurdish intelligence and the central government in Baghdad. Thus, it is all but impossible to devise an effective counter-terrorism strategy. Moreover, it clearly illustrates that the Kurds have a very precise view of what is Kurdistan and what is Iraq.

The Kurds are deeply suspicious of Shi'ites in general and Iraqi Shi'ites specifically. This is especially true of the Kurdish leadership and the senior Peshmerga commanders. They believe a Shi'ite advantage in the government will make the country a *de facto* satellite state of Tehran. This is one of the key reasons they so closely guard their border with Iran. The extent of their suspicion is illustrated by the fact that they have engaged foreign advisors and built a training center where military consultants instruct the Peshmerga in advanced counter-terrorism tactics and intelligence gathering methods. The Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), which is the strongest Shi'ite political force in the country, is perceived as the enemy, and the Kurds make no secret that they believe this.

Peshmerga commanders have privately expressed the belief that it is only the US military that currently holds the country together. Similarly, officials in the Kurdish government, along with Peshmerga leaders, privately express a complete lack of confidence in the American's ability to ever be able to contain the insurgency. The Kurds also realize that their own forces, although formidable, are no match for what they believe is a homegrown Sunni uprising — and they are very alarmed by this. Although they readily admit they know little of the inner workings of the insurgency, the one point of which they are certain is that it continues to grow — and they have little appetite to be part of a state that will inevitably fall into chaos.

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[8] Confidential interview conducted by the SNSAP with senior advisor to Barzani.
[9] Galbraith.
[10] "Barzani: We Have no Choice but Independent Kurdistan if Civil War Broke Out in Iraq." *AFP*, November 18, 2005.
[11] Galbraith.

The Shi'ites

Kurdish moves toward independence are not the only obstacles confronting Iraqi unity. After decades of political exclusion, the Shi'ites, the largest group in the country with 65 percent of the population, have an agenda of their own to promote—namely, a unified federal state that includes "one entire region in the south."[12] This would provide them access to Iraq's rich oil fields, an outlet to the sea, and the opportunity to consolidate their vision and promulgate their policies in a region almost entirely under their control. This threat, combined with a victory in the elections and Iranian meddling, are further fueling uncertainty for the future of a unified and democratic Iraq.

Key Shi'ite Policies and Parties

Shi'ite politics is dominated by three parties that joined the United Iraqi Alliance (UIA) in the December 15, 2005 elections (see Table 1 for complete list of parties in the Alliance). Its leader, Abd-al-Aziz al-Hakim, also controls the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI). The three parties are the SCIRI, Risaliyoun (the party of Muqtada al-Sadr), and the Dawa party. The SCIRI is by far the largest, best organized, and wealthiest. It has its own private militia, the 25,000-strong Badr Organization for Reconstruction and Development (formerly the Badr Brigade),[13] and is backed by Iran. It is estimated to have between 2.5-3 million supporters. The party of anti-American cleric Muqtada al-Sadr commands, according to intelligence estimates, the support of between 1–1.5 million people across the country, with strongholds in the Sadr City ghetto of Baghdad and in Najaf. His supporters ran as independents in the January election as the National Independent Cadres and Elites (NICE). Al-Sadr controls the Mahdi Army, which battled Coalition forces and the Iraqi Interim government in the early days of the occupation. Although no definite figures are known, intelligence estimates put the Mahdi Army at just under 10,000. The SCIRI and the Mahdi are the only Shi'ite parties that have their own militias. The Islamic Dawa, which is led by Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari, came in second on the Alliance's list after the SCIRI.

All three of these groups endorse the UIA platform that calls for the enforcement of the Iraqi Constitution and the promotion of national unity. It also calls for reform of government institutions; the establishment of regional governments; the prosecution of Ba'athist criminals; improved economic conditions through investment and job creation; improvement of living standards; guaranteed freedom of speech; adoption of a social security system; and free education. In addition, the platform advocates Islam as the state religion.

The United Iraqi Alliance won 128 seats in the December election. The Risaliyoun captured an additional two seats. Although this is an impressive result, it falls short of a majority, and means that the Shi'ites have to find partners in order to form a government. Under the Iraqi constitution, the largest bloc in the assembly has the right to nominate a prime minister who is then required to form a majority-approved government. After having gained the support of Muqtada al-Sadr, Ibrahim al-Jaafari was re-elected to head the new Iraqi government on February 12, 2006.[14]

Abd-al-Aziz al-Hakim, leader of the SCIRI, recently indicated that the Shi'a were unwilling to "negotiate" on what they perceive to be the "core principles" proposed in the

Table 1: United Iraqi Alliance
Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq, SCIRI
Dawa Party
Centrist Grouping Party
Badr Organization
Dawa Party/Iraq's Organization
Justice and Equality Grouping
Iraqi National Congress INC
Islamic Virtue Party
First Democratic National Party
Islamic Union of Iraqi Turcomen
Turcomen Al-Wafa Party
Islamic Faili Group (Iraq Shi'ite Kurds)
Islamic Action Organization
Future Iraq Grouping
Hizb'allah Movement in Iraq
Islamic Master of Martyrs Movement

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[12] Kathleen Ridolfo. "Iraq: Shi'ite Leader Says No Negotiations On Core Constitutional Principles." *RFP*, January 13, 2006.

[13] In 2003, this militia changed its name from the Badr Brigade to the Badr Organization of Reconstruction and Development after pledging to disarm and dedicate itself to peaceful activities. It is now the armed wing of the SCIRI.

[14] Mariam Karouny. "Iraq's Shi'ite Struggle to Agree on Premier." *Reuters*, January 16, 2006.

new Iraqi Constitution.[15] Al-Hakim is also the leader of United Iraqi Alliance, the frontrunners in the December 15, 2005 parliamentary elections. In a recent address to his followers, he stated that any political group that wishes to be included in national unity government must demonstrate a willingness to adhere to a set of particular "constants." These include de-Ba'athification, rejection of terrorist activities, and acceptance of the constitution:

> We have a group of constants that we will never relinquish; they became constants after long, immense suffering. These constants, therefore, should be taken into consideration in any future coalitions. Any party seeking alliance with us in order to participate in the government should abide by these constants.

Sunni Arabs, however, especially the Iraqi Islamic Party, have some deep-seated reservations regarding the constitution in its present form. The two most emotional and contentious issues are de-Ba'athification and federalism. Hakim's remarks are unchanged from demands he made in August 2005, prior to ratification of the constitution: "Regarding federalism, we think that it is necessary to form one entire region in the south." Hadi al-Amery, a senior officer of the Badr Organization, made a similar statement, "federalism has to be in all of Iraq. They are trying to prevent the Shi'ites from enjoying their own federalism."[16]

While the UIA insists it has an investment in a national unity government, Hakim's thinking symbolizes a disturbing tendency among the Shi'ite leadership to resist compromise. The Shi'ites, although not a majority, represent the largest bloc in the parliament. While it is unlikely that Al-Hakim's boldness will significantly influence government participation by the Sunni Arabs, they do not inspire confidence, and may well restrict efforts to construct an authentic national unity.

Moreover, some Shi'ites, Muqtada al-Sadr for example, are wary of federalism and fear that it will ultimately result in the dissolution of Iraq. Al-Sadr, who rose to prominence following the US invasion, led two anti-US uprisings in Iraq. On a recent trip to Saudi Arabia, while performing the Hajj, he conveyed to the Saudi leadership: "I have a bleak assessment of Iraq's future and don't think it will remain unified."

Finally, each of these groups is beholden in some way to Iran and has ties to its intelligence and security services. These connections, as well as the specific ways in which they are manifested in Iraq, will be explored in detail below.

The SCIRI

The SCIRI (Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq) was founded in 1982, following the obliteration of the original Islamic Dawa Party after its unsuccessful assassination attempt against Saddam Hussein. It was the principal opposition group of the Ba'athist regime. During the Iran-Iraq War, the group was based in Tehran and was recognized as the government of the "Islamic Republic of Iraq." The SCIRI's former leader, Ayatollah Muhammad Baqr al-Hakim, was among those killed in a car bombing in the holy city of Najaf in August 2003. Abd-al-Aziz al-Hakim, brother of the former leader, assumed leadership following this assassination. Since the organization receives all of its financial and logistical support from Iran, it is likely that Abd-al-Aziz al-Hakim and the other SCIRI leaders (of which numerous members are today ministers and senior officials in the current Iraqi government) will remain beholden to Iranian ambitions and policies.

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[15] Ridolfo.
[16] Farhan, Khalid. "Iraq Shi'ites Hammer Home Autonomy Demands." *Kurdish Media,* August 11, 2005.

The SCIRI is active in creating and administering a wide variety of social programs, which have proved to be its greatest source of strength. While the SCIRI assists the disenfranchised, its military wing – the 25,000-strong Badr Organization – is in charge of military affairs. During the Ba'athist period, the SCIRI was the main vehicle that Muhammad Baqr al-Hakim used to rally his base of support. The force of his personality combined with his reputation as a pious leader helped him build and retain loyalty within the ranks. This devoted following was a critical factor after the fall of Saddam Hussein since it helped to consolidate SCIRI's power in Iraq.

In only a few short years, the SCIRI has expanded its infrastructure to include schools, mosques, social centers, and primary care facilities for the poorest Shi'ites in Iraq. It also runs private colleges for its supporters. All these initiatives do much to explain al-Hakim's enduring strength and popularity among the Shi'ite population. According to intelligence reports, the SCIRI has between 2.5–3 million supporters, the largest base of support of any organization in Iraq today.

Overall, the activities of the SCIRI are making an enormous positive difference in the lives of its constituency in Iraq, with the majority of support coming from the major Shi'ite urban centers of Baghdad, Karbala, Najaf, and Basra.

Muqtada al-Sadr

Muqtada, al-Sadr, the junior cleric who rose to prominence at the beginning of the US occupation, leads the second most powerful Shi'ite political party in Iraq. Al-Sadr himself comes from a prominent religious family and is the son of Iraqi Shia cleric, Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Sadeq al-Sadr, and the son-in-law of Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Baqir al-Sadr. His father and two of his brothers were murdered on Saddam Hussein's orders in 1999.

Although al-Sadr has a huge base of support, he does not have the vast civil network of the SCIRI. His base is largely concentrated among the Shi'ites in the Sadr City section of Baghdad, Najaf, and now in some neighborhoods of Basra. However, it is large enough to make him a major political force in Iraq (as the last elections clearly demonstrated). In terms of money, overall support, and military manpower, however, he is a distant second to the SCIRI.

The 10,000 strong Mahdi Army, which forms the core of al-Sadr's power base, is fiercely loyal to him since they are all related to men who have served his family for centuries. Al-Sadr has developed strong contacts within the Iranian theocracy and has received substantial financial support from Iran's various governmental organs and charitable foundations. He also has a close working relationship with the IRGC and the al-Quds Forces. Hence, he is every bit as reliant upon Tehran as is the SCIRI.

The Dawa Party

The Dawa party was established in 1958 by a group of Shi'ite leaders, with Muhammad Baqr al-Sadr (the uncle of Muqtada al-Sadr), playing a prominent role. It was originally created to counter secularism, communism and the Baathist ideology of Arab socialism. The Dawa supported the Islamic Revolution in Iran and thus received support from the Iranian government, especially during the Iran-Iraq War. During this conflict, Dawa members either joined the Iranian military or refrained from political activity entirely. In July 1982, party members staged a major assassination attempt against Saddam Hussein and various other attacks against the regime.

Although founded by Shi'ites, it has worked closely with Sunni groups and a significant portion of its members are Sunni. The current leader of the Dawa party is Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari, who spent many years in exile in Iran, and has made an attempt to "forge a strategic alliance with Tehran." He has even gone so far as to call for the official

recognition of Iranians in Iraq as a minority group.[17] The Dawa has no militia at its disposal.

The Sistani Factor

Iraq's most important unelected figure, Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Husayni al-Sistani plays a major role despite that fact that he is not formally part of the political process. Sistani backed the general elections, although he did not endorse any political parties. He supports a strong Shi'ite presence in the government, and his role may well be a decisive factor in determining how vigorously the Shi'ites pursue their own agenda.[18] Although he may try to limit Iranian influence, the Iranian-born Sistani is unlikely to directly oppose Tehran.

Sistani is the only Shi'ite leader with enough political and religious influence to moderate the growing tensions between Shi'ites and Sunnis. A recent intelligence assessment predicts that if he were to be killed or seriously incapacitated, an all-out civil war would inevitably follow. Sistani also has strong support among Shi'ites in those Gulf States with Shi'ite minorities, including Saudi Arabia. However, the country with the most to fear from the death of Sistani is Bahrain, where Shi'ites constitute a majority. The potential backlash that might result from his demise could lead to serious instability in that country.

A vast majority of Shi'ites in the Kingdom regards Sistani as the theological leader of their community. However, even in the worst-case scenario, Shi'ites are far too few in number (recent intelligence estimates put their size at between 7.2 – 8.8 percent of the total population) and too weak to present any viable threat to stability in the Kingdom. Still, any country that has a Shi'ite minority cannot disregard Sistani's influence, since he is the only figure in Iraq who can use his moral leadership to avert a civil war, an outcome that would have dire consequences far beyond Iraq's borders.

Iranian Interference in Iraq

In the aftermath of the fall of the Ba'athist regime, it remains to be seen if the newly invigorated Shi'ite majority will attempt to install an Iranian style theocracy in the country or agree to a power-sharing alliance with the other religious and ethnic factions in Iraq. According to intelligence assessments, there are strong indications that Iran continues to be deeply involved in shaping the future direction of Iraq. Given Iran's Islamist orientation, hostility to secularism, and stated aim to expand the influence of Shi'a Islam, this development can only have the gravest consequences for the stability and unity of Iraq. While the US has been occupied with the insurgency, the Mullahs in Tehran have been working to promote their own interests in Iraq by helping to install officials sympathetic to Iran in the Iraqi government, channeling money and arms to militants, and creating intelligence-gathering networks.

The Iranian presence will continue to be a source of concern for Saudi Arabia, which has a vital stake in the creation of a peaceful and unified Iraq. The Mullahs and their proxies have the power to disrupt the political process, create chaos, and threaten the emerging Iraqi state. If the recent polls are any indication, however, there appears to be little appetite for an Iranian style Islamic government among the Iraqi population. Although many Iraqis felt compelled to vote along sectarian lines, an ABC-Time Oxford Research poll revealed that there was "no strong support" among the population for an Islamic government. "Preference for a democratic government political structure advanced to 57 percent of Iraqis, while support for an Islamic state lost ground to 14 percent."[19] (See Appendix II.)

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[17] Michael Ware."Inside Iran's Secret War for Iraq." *Time*, August 22, 2005.
[18] Anthony Cordesman. "The Real Meaning of the Iraqi Elections."*CSIS*, January 10, 2005.
[19] Anthony Cordesman and Patrick Baetjer. "The Impact of the Iraqi Elections: A Working Analysis."*CSIS,* August 10, 2006.

Infiltration of Shi'ite Militias

There are two main methods by which Iran is insinuating itself into Iraq. The first is through the activities of the al-Quds Forces, the special command division of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard (IRGC). The second approach is by funding and arming Shi'ite militias, the most prominent of which is the SCIRI's 25,000-strong armed wing, the Badr Organization of Reconstruction and Development. Senior members of the Badr Organization and the al-Quds Forces have a closely coordinated relationship. Intelligence reports have indicated that Iranian officers are directing operations under cover in units of the Badr Organization. The Mahdi Army also receives important Iranian assistance, but on a much smaller scale.

The IRGC Commander is General Yahya Rahim-Safavi and the Deputy Commander is General Mohammad Bager Zulgadr. The al-Quds Forces Commander is General Qassem Soleimani. Generals Zulgadr and Soleimani are two most senior officers responsible for Iran's large covert program in Iraq and have a direct link to the Office of the Leader. Additionally, intelligence estimates have identified four other IRGC generals and nine IRGC colonels that are directly responsible for covert operations in Iraq.[20]

The al-Quds Forces mainly functions as a large intelligence operation skilled in the art of unconventional warfare. Current intelligence estimates puts the strength of the force at 5,000. Most of these are highly trained officers. Within the al-Quds Forces, there is a small unit usually referred to as the "Special Quds Force" which consists of the finest case officers and operatives. The senior officers attached to this unit conduct foreign covert unconventional operations using various foreign national movements as proxies. The forces operate mainly outside Iranian territory, but maintain numerous training bases inside Iran as well. Al-Quds international operations are divided into geographic areas of influence and various corps. The most important and largest cover Iraq, Saudi Arabia (and the Arabian Peninsula), and Syria / Lebanon. The smaller corps cover Afghanistan, Pakistan/India, Turkey, the Muslim Republics of the former Soviet Union, Europe / North America, and North Africa (Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Sudan, and Morocco).

The goal of Iran is to infiltrate all Iraq-based militias by providing training and support to their members. For example, al-Sadr's estimated 10,000-strong Mahdi Army, which gets logistical and financial support from al-Quds, also receives training in IRCG camps in Iran. Moreover, nearly all of the troops in the Badr Organization were trained in these camps as well. In addition, most senior officers acquired their skills in specialized camps under the control of the al-Quds Forces. Intelligence estimates that al-Quds currently operates six major training facilities in Iran, with the main facility located adjacent to Imam Ali University in Northern Tehran. The other most important training camps are located in the Qom, Tabriz, and Mashhad governorates. There are also two similar facilities operating on the Syrian-Lebanese border.

According to a senior general in the Iraqi Defense Ministry and a critic of Iran, the Iranians have set up the most sophisticated intelligence-gathering network in the country, to the extent that they have infiltrated "every major Iraqi ministry and security service." There is also an intelligence directorate that has been set up within the Revolutionary Guard that is under the command of the al-Quds Forces devoted exclusively to monitoring the movements of US and Allied forces in Iraq.

Many members of the newly created police and Iraqi forces are controlled by Shi'ite officers who, in some form or another, previously belonged to SCIRI or other groups affiliated with Iran. Recent intelligence indicates that IRGC officers are currently operating in Iraq in certain Shi'ite militias and actual army and police units. The degree of penetration of these organizations is difficult to assess, and it is virtually impossible to

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[20] Because of their central ongoing role in the current clandestine operations in Iraq, revealing them by name will jeopardize sources and methodologies.

distinguish between Iraqi Shi'ite militias and police units, both of which are profoundly influenced by Iran, and in some cases are under Iranian control.

Iranian manipulation has filtered down to street level as well. Ordinary police and military officers now have a stronger allegiance to the Badr Organization or the Mahdi Army than to their own units. And of course, these organizations are deeply connected to Iran. According to the head of intelligence of an allied country that borders Iraq, "the Iranians have not just pulled off an infiltration, in certain regions in Baghdad and Basra, it's been a complete takeover."[21]

According to a senior Iraqi military advisor to the Iraqi Defense Minister, "there is no operational independence in the Badr Organization from the Iranian Revolutionary Guard." This assessment is corroborated by intelligence reports from regional allies. The Badr Organization is the key vehicle Iran is using to achieve its military, security, and intelligence aims. Moreover, while the Mahdi Army may be smaller, less threatening, and not as well organized as the Badr Organization, it too has been infiltrated by Iran – a development that cannot be ignored.

Finally, it is important to note that the porous border between Iraq and Iran makes it easy for the IRGC and the Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS) to organize the transport of equipment, weapons, and money into Iraq. More often than not, this is done with the full knowledge and cooperation of members of the Iraqi forces. At one point, British soldiers who discovered and began monitoring this activity were captured by Iraqi forces. They were later freed by force.

Iranian "Charities" and other Modes of Interference

The Iranian theocracy is also the single largest financier of the Shi'ite shrines in Najaf and Karbala, as well as seminaries in Qom and Mashad in Iran. These institutions have trained tens of thousands of Iraqi and other Arab nationalists in Shi'ite jurisprudence and theology, providing yet another source of strength and influence. Iranian charities also play an enormous role, funding hospitals, social centers, mosques, orphanages, and other social services. By creating a welfare network in Iraq–at times through the use of proxies and at others in their own names–multi-billion dollar charities such as the *Foundation for the Disabled and Oppressed*, the *Imam Reza Foundation*, and the *Martyrs Foundation* have enormous influence. In addition, some of the more active charities include *The Welfare Foundation, The Islamic Propagation Organization, The Islamic Economic Foundation*, and *The Foundation for the Construction of Housing*. Table 2 lists the estimated assets of these organizations. Even the Iranian Red Crescent has been used as a front by al-Quds Forces in establishing armed underground cells in southern Iraq.[22] Each of these groups have laid the foundation for continued influence in Iraq well into the future. Finally, well-known businesses with close ties to Tehran have financed schools, mosques, food distribution centers, health clinics, and provided housing for the poor. This has led to wide support for the groups providing these services – groups beholden to their patrons in Tehran.

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[21] Confidential interviews conducted by the SNSAP.
[22] Raymond Tanter. "Iran's Threat to Coalition Forces." #827, *Policy Watch*, January 15, 2004.

Table 2: Iranian Charities Operating in Iraq	
Charity	**Assets ($ Billions)***
Imam Reza Foundation	12-14
Foundation for the Disabled and Oppressed	10-12
Martyrs Foundation	5-7
The Foundation for the Construction of Housing	4
The Islamic Propagation Organization	2-3
Welfare Foundation	N/A
Islamic Economic Foundation	N/A

* Note: 70-80% of the value of these assets are contained in real estate holdings granted by the Iranian government.

Finally, the IRGC, with the support of other Iranian agencies, has been able to place key operatives in strategic positions in the new Iraqi administration. These include the Office of the Prime Minister, the Ministries, and the local governorships that have a majority Shi'ite population. Consequently, the major administrative positions are now populated by Iranian sympathizers who belong to Iranian-backed groups with strong ties to the IRGC and government ministries in Tehran. For example, the current Interior Minister, Bayan Jabr, was a former senior commander of the Badr Organization and spent his formative years training in IRGC camps in Iran working to overthrow Saddam Hussein. In addition, there is currently a senior general in the Iraqi Interior Ministry who is the coordinator for the clandestine smuggling operations between the two countries. These operations provide the Badr Organization, Mahdi Army, and other Iranian-backed militias with weapons and funds. According to intelligence assessments, this is the same general responsible for the establishment of the infamous "death squads."

The Death Squads

The death squads are organized by a directorate headed by the aforementioned general, who coordinates with an Iranian colonel from the al-Quds Forces. (This Iranian colonel is also the man who leads a special unit within the al-Quds Forces responsible for assassinations and suicide attacks.) This directorate has been linked to the death squads believed to be responsible for the assassinations of important Sunni tribal leaders, prominent Sunni academics, and former Sunni military officers. One of their main targets was Lt. General Raad al-Hamdani, the senior commanding officer of Saddam's Republican Guard. After several attempts on his life by various death squads (as well as by the Badr Organization), he and his family were forced to flee to a neighboring country.

While the attack against Lt. General al-Hamdani was unsuccessful, most others achieve their aims. In fact, several of Lt. General al-Hamdani's aides have been murdered. Political dissidents, especially those with ties to the predominantly Sunni Association of Muslim Scholars, have also been targeted. In recent months, assassinations havebroadened to include engineers, lawyers, and academics. More than 1000 leading Iraqi professionals and intellectuals have been assassinated since April 2005, among them such leading figures such as Dr Muhammad al-Rawi, the president of Baghdad University.[23]

Iran's Strategic Goals in the Region

All the above factors have conspired to create a state within a state. Where the Americans have failed, the Iranians have stepped in. By channeling its efforts towards containing the

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[23] Juan Cole. *Informed Comment,* March 31, 2004,
http://www.juancole.com/2004_03_01_juancole_archive.html

Sunni insurgency, the US failed to develop a viable public policy program, allowing SCIRI and other Iranian backed groups to move in and fill the void.

Since they lack the financial, political, and religious credentials to do so, Iraqi Shi'ite secular leaders such as Iyad Allawi, who are critical of Iranian influence in Iraq, are powerless to challenge or check the growth of these militias and other Iranian-backed entities. According to a senior general in the Pershmerga, "direct Iranian occupation of Iraq, or the perception of an occupation, would have never worked. Hence, they've funneled everything through SCIRI and related groups to give it an Iraqi banner. These leaders are Iranian puppets, and Iran is now in *de facto* control of the Shi'ite portions of Iraq. They are saying: Iraq is ours.'" He went on to praise the accuracy of the statement by Saudi Foreign Minister, Prince Saud al-Faisal when he said, "US policy in Iraq is widening sectarian divisions to the point of effectively handing the country to Iran…. We fought a war together to keep Iran out of Iraq after Iraq was driven out of Kuwait. Now we are handing the whole country over to Iran without reason."

Iranian influence in Iraq is not only strong, but growing stronger. Tehran now sees an opportunity to fulfill one of the most cherished aims of the Iranian revolutionary experiment, "to export the revolution." More simply stated, it wants to expand the reach of Shi'ite Islam.

The Iranian theocracy is determined to increase its geographical influence and expand its power. And as the commander of the al-Quds Forces, Brig. Gen. Qassem Soleimani, has said, "the more the situation slips toward anarchy, the weaker the US position will be and the stronger the Islamic Republic's standing will be. Iran's revolution will prevail in Iraq."[24] And Iraq – in addition to Bahrain on a smaller scale–is the only state where the demographics are such that this can be achieved. Saudi Arabia, on the other hand, is the site of the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, and King Abdullah's position as Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, makes him the natural representative of the Sunni Muslim community at large. The Iranian leadership recognizes that the Kingdom is the one country that poses a direct challenge to its regional ambitions. As a senior official in the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence stated, "Iran sees Saudi Arabia as its chief competitor, not only in the region, but in the Muslim world, and our operations in Iraq and in the Gulf are our primary means by which to balance this."

While Iraqi Shi'ite leaders may want an autonomous region, none are advocating dissolution of the country or outright independence. There is, however, a conflict between that which the Iraqi Shi'ites want and what is being foisted upon them by Tehran. The vision that prevails will have tremendous repercussions not only for the Iraqis, but also for Saudi Arabia and the region at large.

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[24] This statement was derived from intelligence sources monitoring a meeting that took place in Tehran in the early days of November 2003, between Soleimani and senior case officers who were directing operations in Iraq.

The Sunnis

Sunni Muslims – which currently make up 12-15 percent of the Iraqi population–have long dominated the country. Following the Ba'athist takeover in 1968, Sunni Islam remained the official state religion despite the enforced secularism of Saddam Hussein and other members of the Sunni ruling elite. The 1979 Shi'ite Revolution in Iran, and subsequent Iran–Iraq War, helped to transform Sunni Islam into an important identity symbol for Ba'athist rule in Iraq.[25] The US invasion of 2003, of course, ended Saddam's regime and swept the Sunni elite from power. Many, confronted with the prospect of marginalization by the majority Shi'ites, spurned the new political process. Others took up arms. These individuals have launched an insurgency that presents a major threat to lasting peace and stability in Iraq.

Although most Iraqi Sunnis are ethnic Arabs, many are also Turcomen, Kurds, and other minorities, many of which have different political objectives. Some are former Ba'athists who favor a strong centralized government. Others are deeply religious and are motivated by tribal concerns. Not all sympathize or support the Sunni-led insurgency, but nearly all share a consensus regarding the importance of a unified state.[26]

Most Sunni Arabs live in central Iraq, including the central region to the northwest of Baghdad that incorporates Saddam's birthplace, Tikrit, Ramadi, and the cities of Samarra and Fallujah. Since the 2003 invasion, it has been the center of the armed resistance against the Coalition occupation. Iraqi Sunnis are the mainstay of the country's middle and educated classes. Urban Sunnis also tend to be secular, and many believe that the current Iraqi constitution makes too many concessions to Islamic law. In fact, approximately three quarters of Iraqi Sunnis support the formation of a secular state.[27] The majority of Sunnis are rural, less educated, and more diverse. They tend to be driven by tribal or regional objectives.

Sunni Political Associations

While the insurgency shows no sign of abating, many Sunnis have belatedly joined the political process. Currently, they consist of several parties, blocs, and coalitions. Since the December 15th elections, some of these entities have split or reorganized and emerged as components of other larger groups.

The Iraqi Accordance Front (IAF) is a coalition led by Adnan al-Dulaymi and Tariq al-Hashimi. It includes the Iraqi National Dialogue Council, the Iraqi Islamic Party, and the Iraqi People's Conference. The IAF captured the largest number of seats (44) in the December 15th election. These three groups, which boycotted the January election, have several common political objectives—including amending the constitution, the elimination of Shi'ite and Kurdish dominated Iraqi forces, and the inclusion of former Ba'athists in the political process. They largely oppose federalism in Iraq. The Iraqi People's Conference has condemned attacks on Shi'ites, calling for national reconciliation. The Iraqi Islamic Party, which is tangentially affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, encouraged its members to vote "yes" on the referendum after the Shi'ite and Kurdish leadership agreed to eleventh hour concessions on reforming the constitution.[28]

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[25] Saddam frequently alluded to the Islamic conquest of Iran in his frequent anti-Persian diatribes. He was especially fond of evoking the defeat of Persia in the 7th century battle of *al-Qadisiyyah* to rally support for the war effort. Moreover, Saddam's weakened position after the 1991 Gulf War led him to publicly embrace Islam in a cynical attempt to bolster his legitimacy. He opened hundreds of mosques as well as establishing Saddam University, a theological university that specialized in the teaching of Sunni Islam.

[26] Lionel Beehner. "Iraq's Sunni Arabs." *CFR*, October 14, 2005.

[27] Zogby.

[28] Anthony Cordesman. "The Real Meaning of the Iraqi Elections." *CSIS*, January 10, 2005.

The Iraqi Front for National Dialogue (IFND) is a coalition led by Saleh al-Mutlaq, the former Sunni representative on the Iraqi National Assembly. It should not be confused with the Iraqi National Dialogue Council. The IFND was formed as a coaltion of minor parties including the Iraqi National Front, the Iraqi Christian Democratic Party, the Democratic Arab Front, the National Front For the United Free Iraq, and the Iraqi Sons Unified Movement. Although it won 11 seats in the election, the IFND has complained of widespread election fraud.

The Association of Muslim Scholars (formerly the Muslim Clerics Association) is led by Isam al-Rawi. It was created subsequent to the 2003 invasion of Iraq. The Association consists of important, hard-line Sunni Arab and Kurdish clerics. It is ambivalent towards both the insurgency and the US presence in Iraq. Its relationship with the Shi'ite clerical leaders such as Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, Abd-al-Aziz al-Hakim, and Muqtada al-Sadr is cordial. The group's leadership is concerned that the constitution may divide the country into factions that, in turn, will weaken its Arab identity.

The Reconciliation and Liberation Bloc, which won 3 seats, is closely linked to the powerful Juburi tribe and is supported by former Ba'athists. It is currently led by Mish'an al-Juburi. The Iraqi Nation List, the party of Mithal Alusi, former leader in the Iraqi National Congress, won 1 seat. Alusi's unprecedented visit to Israel in 2004 earned him an indictment by Iraq's highest criminal court for visiting an "enemy state."[29]

Although many Sunnis voted in the December election, participation does not necessarily translate into support for the government or the constitution in its present form. Nor does it mean that they oppose the insurgency. Some leaders affiliated with the insurgency and many Sunni leaders hostile to the federation and the present constitution called for participation in the electoral process merely to provide a counterbalance to the Shi'ites and Kurds.

The December 15th election results indicated that the Sunnis received only about one-fifth of the parliamentary seats. Disappointed, many in the Sunni leadership called for new elections, although according to the United Nations, no improprieties occurred. Some such as al-Mutlaq, insisted that the Sunnis be granted additional seats in the parliament to compensate for the disappointing election results.

Jalal Talabani has encouraged the Sunnis and others to accept the results so that the country may "move ahead with the tough task of negotiating a government," a process that took nearly three months following the January interim election. The Sunnis, along with the US, expect that that the constitution will be reviewed, and those components that grant too much political power and control of petroleum resources to other communities be amended.[30]
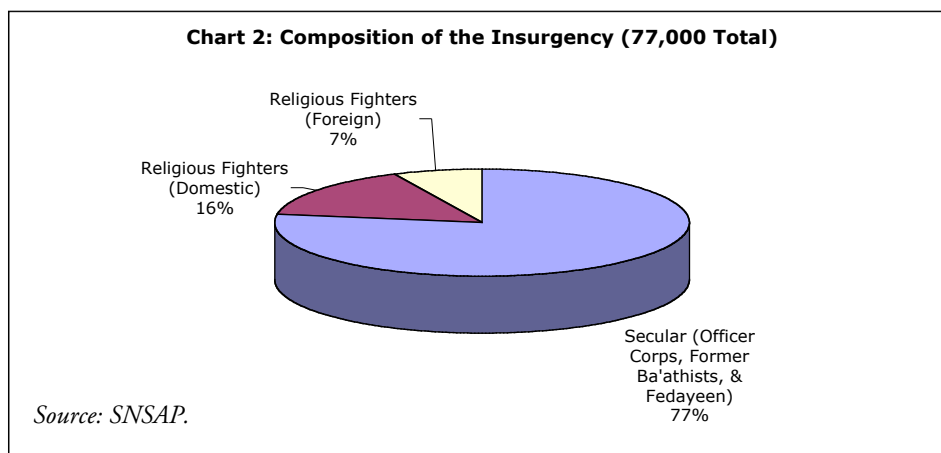
The Insurgency

While many Sunnis have reluctantly joined the political process, a significant number have decided to either directly or indirectly support the insurgency. According to recent intelligence estimates, there are approximately 77,000 fighters in the insurgency drawing upon hundreds of thousands of direct and indirect supporters. It also commands widespread support among the general Sunni population. This insurgency is the single largest threat to the new Iraqi state and may ultimately prove to be its undoing. Because of this, King Abdullah has encouraged Sunnis from the outset to put aside their differences

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[29] Johnathan Finer. "An Iraqi Underdog On the Comeback Trail." *Washington Post Foreign Service*, December 28, 2005.
[30] Mariam Karouny. "Move on and Join Govt Iraqi President Urges Sunni." *Reuters*, January 18, 2005.

and participate in the political process. But even Sunni participation in elections is no guarantee that the insurgency will be extinguished, since many Sunni representatives in Parliament consider participation in the new government an adjunct to the insurgency and not an alternative to it.

Chart 2: Composition of the Insurgency (77,000 Total)

Religious Fighters (Foreign) 7%

Religious Fighters (Domestic) 16%

Secular (Officer Corps, Former Ba'athists, & Fedayeen) 77%

Source: SNSAP.

To date, the insurgency has carried out tens of thousands of attacks and been responsible for many thousands of fatalities, both among the Coalition Forces and the general population. During all of 2005 and the first few months of 2006, it has successfully mounted an average of 500 attacks per week. This violence shows no signs of abating. Nor is it limited to human casualties; Appendix III discusses some of its economic impacts.

According to senior Iraqi tribal leaders, the insurgency is orchestrated mainly by former commanders and high level military officers from the former Ba'athist regime, combined with a sizable number of mid-level officers. Religiously inspired members of the insurgency, where the foreign fighters are found, comprise a much smaller portion. Chart 2 summarizes the estimated sizes of the various elements of the insurgency.

Organization of the Insurgency

Tribal Basis

Sunni tribal networks are central to the insurgency in that they provide the major source for its recruits. The tribal social structure itself consists of concentric associations ranging from the largest – the tribal confederacies – to the smallest, the extended family. The sub-tribe constitutes several families whose ancestry can be traced to a single patrilineal founder. There are various Sunni tribal confederations in Iraq. The largest and most important (with several hundred thousand members each in Iraq alone) are the Shammar, the Dulaym and the Jibur.[31] The tribe's activities are mostly political and include maintaining associations with other tribes and government officials. At this level, the tribe is under the leadership of a sheikh and the guidance of the tribal council.

Traditionally, tribal leaders had control over the younger members of their tribes, but as the occupation continues, these leaders are finding it more and more difficult to exert a pacifying influence over those Sunnis who are driven to join the insurgency. This is especially true among those who have lost family members as a result of US attacks. Thus, thousands have joined the insurgency despite opposition from their respective tribal leaders.

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[31] Including those in Syria and Saudi Arabia, the Shammar Confederacy has more than one million members.

A prominent tribal sheikh from Shammar described how he he had lost control over his son, when his wife, son, and two of his daughters were killed in a botched American attack. Despite the father's objections, the son took up arms and eventually recruited over 70 members of the tribe to carry out additional attacks against Americans. According to his father, these incidences have left 12 American soldiers dead and many more injured. This sheikh has since sought refuge in Saudi Arabia. Similarly, an incident in April 2003 resulted in the demolition of the home of the Kharbit family in Ramadi and killed between sixteen and twenty-two family members. This included Sheikh Malik Kharbit, a prominent sheikh of the Dulaym tribe and several women and children. The US military had mistakenly believed that it was targeting a residence harboring Saddam or his half-brother, Barzan Tikriti.[32] Although it is not certain whether any Kharbit family members joined the insurgency as a result of this tragic mistake, intelligence estimates have confirmed that this incident effectively ended all meaningful cooperation between the US and the leadership of the Dulaym federation.

Conversations with senior Iraqi tribal sheikhs reveal that they not only feel increasingly powerless to prevent their members from taking up arms, but that they believe the American enterprise in Iraq is doomed to fail. These sheikhs believe that the insurgency is no longer composed primarily of rogue elements, but is now a movement which has the support of the majority of the Sunni population. A senior tribal head in the Dulaym confederation stated that "short of the wholesale destruction of major Sunni urban populations, which would kill hundreds of thousands of innocent Iraqis, the insurgency cannot be crushed." According to a leading sheikh of a prominent family within the Shammar tribe, "our aim is to get the US out of Iraq. And we will never accept a continuous American presence in the country or an Iraq dominated by Shi'ites who are controlled from Iran." He also echoed the belief that the US lacks the numbers, resources, and the will to defeat the insurgency.

The centuries-old tribal, familial, and religious ties between the Sunni Muslims in Iraq and Saudi Arabia transcend borders and form the basis for the unique relationship that exists between the two countries. Many Saudis also have strong ties through marriage, including King Abdullah. Given this fact, Saudi Arabia has a special responsibility to insure the continued welfare and security of Sunnis in Iraq.

Operational Structure

The operational structure of the insurgency includes a variety of non-conventional methods aimed at maximizing its effectiveness against Iraqi and Coalition Forces. The Sunni portion of insurgency consists of a "distributed network," of associated and unassociated movements having well-organized cells. Since it lacks a singular hierarchical structure, it has proven to be extremely difficult to counter or defeat. The larger movements have a leadership structure that oversees the planning, financing, and "arming cadres" that are kept separate from most operational cells in the field. This means that the defeat of a specific cell, a provincial operation, or even a minor organization, does not necessarily mean the defeat of the insurgency, although it may restrict its operational capacity. The nucleus of the leadership is composed of former senior operations commanders from the different military and security services. They are the colonels and generals who were involved on the operations side, and the ones who form the main leadership core of the insurgency. Although they have been identified, to safeguard methods and ongoing surveillance their identities cannot be made public.

The insurgency uses a sort of low technology often referred to as "swarm" tactics, a strategy that has proven to be more effective than the high technology used by Coalition and Iraqi forces. These swarm tactics work by moving in a slow cyclical fashion, concentrating on soft or highly vulnerable targets. These attacks also have the added advantage of being carried out at time of the insurgent's choosing.

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[32] "Who are the Insurgents?" *United States Institute for Peace.* Special Report 234, April 2005.

Movements "swarm" slowly around prospective targets. They rely upon media coverage, word of mouth, and infiltration of Coalition and Iraqi Government operations for much of their intelligence as well as information regarding military effectiveness. Moreover, the Internet and the experiences of foreign militants provide valuable insight into which tactics are most effective. The ability to "swarm" against soft civilian and military targets and concentrate on the political and media reactions these attacks produce, vastly decreases the need for direct military confrontation. This is an advantage, particularly at times when the insurgents might be outnumbered.

The insurgency functions both above and below the level of Coalition and Iraqi conventional operations. It avoids combat whenever possible, favoring ambushes and IED attacks. It targets soft Iraqi and foreign civilian targets using suicide bombings, kidnappings, assassinations, and other methods in a manner that makes it difficult for Coalition and Iraqi forces to predict or counter.

The insurgents also take advantage of extensive popular support they have in Sunni areas. This popularity allows them to safely disperse and conceal themselves among the general population. In order to counter this tactic, the Coalition and Iraqi forces at times are forced to resort to heavy-handed tactics and detainment measures that often have an adverse affect on the population. These insurgent techniques sap the Coalition and Iraqi forces of much of their ability to use their superior weaponry, IS&R resources,[33] and conventional combat expertise. This allows the insurgents not only to exploit the weaknesses of the Coalition Forces and Iraqi government, but also grants them the luxury of confronting them on their own terms. In short, since the insurgency does not use conventional tactics, it cannot be defeated by conventional means or warfare.

The insurgency also exploits sentiments within its ranks: focusing upon fierce tribal loyalties, Sunni communalism, Iraqi resistance to foreign occupiers and Iraq "puppets," notions of Islam v. secularism, and to some extent, upon former Ba'athist allegiances. Its tactics are intended to erode the Coalition forces through attrition as well as damage their base of domestic political support. They are also intended to frustrate the Iraqi government's efforts in building a viable military force by discouraging Iraqi Sunnis from joining and supporting the government. Most importantly, the insurgents are hoping to provoke Shi'ites and Kurds to react in a manner that will further divide the country along ethnic and sectarian lines—and even provoke a civil war. The political battle is probably the most important factor in determining whether the insurgency succeeds or fails.[34]

Recruitment and Deployment

The recruitment and deployment of foreign militants is presented in two case studies in Appendix IV.

Secular Elements of the Insurgency

Of the approximately 77,000 active members of the insurgency, around 60,000 (roughly 78 percent), are former members of the military, the Ba'ath party, and the Fedayeen. ("Fedayeen" is a generic term applied to various Arab resistance movements; in Iraq, they are a paramilitary group active outside of the army and the security apparatus.) The vast majority of these derive from the Iraq's former military services, including both commanders and soldiers from the Republican Guard, Armed Forces, Intelligence and Internal Security Services. This portion of the insurgency is generally referred to as the "officer corps." They have command and control facilities in Syria as well as bases in strategic locations where Sunnis constitute the majority of the urban population. Today, it is

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[33] State-of-the-art technologies for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance.
[34] Anthony Cordesman. "The Iraq War and lessons for Counterinsurgency." *CSIS*, March 16, 2006.

difficult to distinguish between the officer corps and the Fedayeen, as members of each group cross into the ranks of the other and they often conduct joint operations.

Another portion of the "secular" insurgency comprises former officials of the Ba'ath party, although they are much smaller and lack the infrastructure of the officer corps. Recently, their strength has further diminished due to internal divisions and lack of funding (which has since been diverted to the officer corps). The Ba'athists resent the loss of their privileged positions in the new Iraq. This fact, combined with hostility towards the US occupation and the prospect of living in a country dominated by Shi'ites, has led many to take up arms.

Religious Elements of the Insurgency

Finally, there is a smaller religiously driven element within the Sunni insurgency, known as the "jihadis."Although lacking the financial resources of the officer corps, they are responsible for the more violent and spectacular attacks in Iraq. According to intelligence estimates, these groups are approximately 17,000 strong, and of these, roughly 5,340 are foreign. The jihadis are generally Salafi movements and include *Tandhim al-Qa'eda fi Bilad al-Rafidayn* (al-Qaeda of Jihad Organization in the Land of Two Rivers)[35] and *Jaysh Ansar al-Sunna* which is an outgrowth of the Kurdish group, *Ansar al-Islam*. All of these groups target American forces and Shi'ites and are informally under the leadership of Jordanian born militant, Abu Musab al- Zarqawi. Among the numerous rivals for Zarqawi's leadership, one of them is a Saudi national.[36] See Appendix V for a comprehensive list of the main Iraqi Religious insurgent groups.

These jihadi groups have carried out multiple suicide bombings, kidnappings, assassinations, and beheadings in Iraq. Zarqawi's al-Qaeda organization was responsible for the assassination of Ayatollah Mohammad Baqir al-Hakim, former principal SCIRI leader. He has also taken credit for the attempted murder of Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim, Baqir's brother, in an attack that killed 13 Iraqis and injured another 66. The operations of Ansar al-Islam have decreased substantially, but the group continues to maintain an extensive support and financial infrastructure in Europe that it uses to recruit and send jihadis to Iraq. Jaysh Ansar al-Sunna has claimed responsibility for the beheading of 12 Nepalese hostages and the kidnapping and beheading of an Iraqi who was employed as a mechanic for the American forces at the Mosul airport. They have also targeted Iraqi Kurds for alleged collaboration with the US. In September 2003, members of the Jaysh Ansar al-Sunna beheaded three Iraqi Kurdish militiamen in retaliation for the cooperation by Kurdish political parties with the US in Iraq.[37]

The first few months of 2006 have seen an increase in the total number of jihadi fighters in Iraq, although there has been a slight decrease in the percentage of the foreign element. This drop is mainly attributed to the implementation of stronger mechnanisms preventing foreign fighters from entering Iraq. Host countries have prevented the travel of potential jihadis and staunched the flow of funds to their networks. The best example is the Saudi Counter-Terrorism Program, which has prevented over 317 jihadis from entering Iraq. In addition, US forces and Iranian-backed militias have killed and captured many jihadis. However, the drop in foreign militants has been made up by an increase in domestic recruits.

Syria remains the major entry point for foreign jihadis into Iraq. One of the main reasons is that the poorly funded Syrian border guard and armed forces do not have the means to

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[35] Formerly *Tawhid wal-Jihad.*
[36] His name cannot be released because doing so would compromise sources and methodologies. However, he has had vast experience in war-torn Muslim countries and is today considered the most senior and dangerous Saudi jihadi commander.
[37] N. Raphaeli. "Iraqi Elections (III): The Islamist and Terrorist Threats." 203, *Memri,* January 15, 2005.

patrol the border and the government cannot purchase the advanced technology required to remotely monitor the illicit entry of jihadis into Iraq. Even after expending $1.8 billion since 2004 to secure its border with Iraq, Saudi Arabia still has not completely interrupted the flow of militants (although it has been enormously more successful than Syria). Intelligence estimates also reveal an alarming increase in jihadis entering Iraq from Iran, a development that will be discussed in greater detail below.

Chart 3: Foreign Fighters in Iraq (5,380 Total)
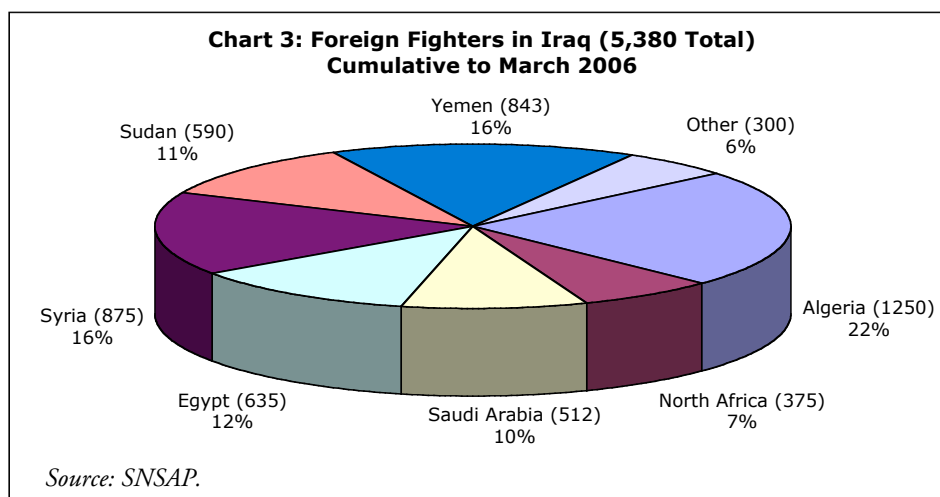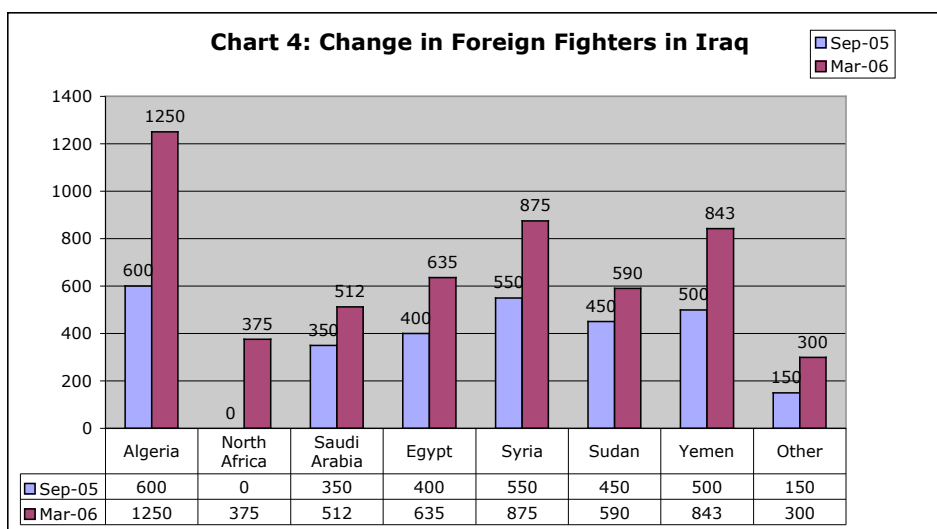**Cumulative to March 2006**

Source: SNSAP.

Chart 3 shows the estimated cumulative totals of foreign fighters who have arrived in Iraq since the US invasion. This includes militants currently operating in Iraq, along with those who have died, been captured, or returned to their country of origin. The analysis of available records, such as travel documents and death notices – as well as confirmation by captured militants and the families of those who left for Iraq – allows for more accurate estimates of Saudi fighters in the country. The same is true for Yemen, as the al-Qaeda network transcends the borders of these two states. Since other countries lack the resources of Saudi Arabia, their estimates are much less precise. These figures are based upon estimates from their respective intelligence services and research conducted by national think tanks. Although the poorest countries spawn the greatest number of jihadists, they are the least capable of tracking them.

As of early 2006, Algerians and North Africans (Moroccans, Tunisians, and Libyans) constituted approximately 30 percent of the foreign fighters in Iraq. A substantial portion are remnants from the Algerian Civil War, including many members of the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) and the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC). After the end of hostilities in Algeria, many of these fighters entered warzones in the former Yugoslavia, Chechnya and Afghanistan. The US invasion of Iraq spurred these individuals to join the insurgency there (including many who had recently laid down their arms after spending time in jail after the crackdowns following 9/11). They were joined by fighters from Moroccan, Tunisian, and Libyan Islamic and Salafist groups, which entered Iraq for similar reasons. These groups are smaller than their Algerian counterparts (who are also better funded and organized), but neverless represent an important threat. It is also important to note that a certain number of fighters from Algeria (and other North African countries), Sudan, Yemen, Egypt and Saudi Arabia made their way directly to Iraq from Afghanistan without having first transited back to their native countries. The most common route was through Iran.

Chart 4: Change in Foreign Fighters in Iraq

	Algeria	North Africa	Saudi Arabia	Egypt	Syria	Sudan	Yemen	Other
Sep-05	600	0	350	400	550	450	500	150
Mar-06	1250	375	512	635	875	590	843	300

Source: SNSAP.

In September 2005, the SNSAP prepared estimates of the foreign element of the Iraqi jihadi movement (represented by blue bars in Chart 4). As the chart reveals, these estimates have risen by over 2,000 (to 5,380). The increase is partially due to the fact that these are cumulative numbers, and six months separate the two estimates. In some cases, particularly that of Algeria and North Africa, the increase is the result of a stronger commitment by the host countries to accurately assess the number of their nationals leaving for Iraq, and to improved methodology and better intelligence gathering techniques. All of these approaches have led to a significantly higher estimate of Algerians and North Africans in Iraq. And while the number of foreign fighters has increased, their portion of the whole has actually decreased in the first three months of 2006, as more Iraqis take up arms.

Increasing Activity

In the years since the US invasion, the insurgency in Iraq has increased not only in dimension, but has grown in complexity. Insurgent activity intensified during important events such as the Iraqi Interim Government transfer of power, Ramadan, and the January 2005 election. Election day attacks numbered 300—roughly double that of the preceding one-day high of approximately 150 during Ramadan 2004. Overall, incident rates have seen a gradual but steady escalation – ranging from 8-32 attacks per day in 2003 to 19-77 attacks per day in 2004. The numbers increased to 61-100 attacks per day in 2005. These figures strongly suggest that despite coalition countermeasures and the expanded role of the Iraqi Security Forces, the insurgency continues to grow not only in intensity, but also in its capabilities to instigate strikes.[38]
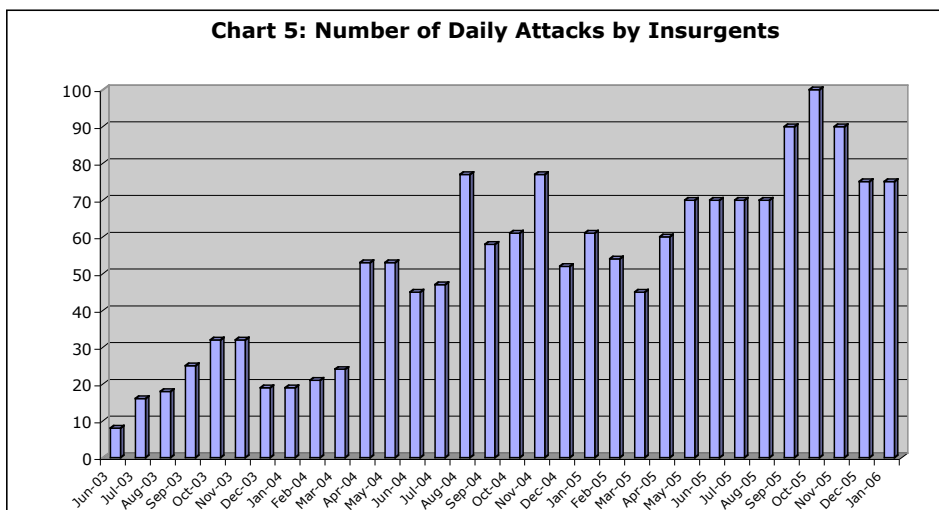
According to US military figures, the number of insurgent attacks on coalition forces, Iraqi forces, and Iraqi civilians, as well as sabotage operations increased by 29 percent in 2005. The total climbed from 26,496 in 2004 to 34,131 in 2005. These attacks have had a fairly constant average success rate of 24 percent.

Much of the insurgent activity consists of attacks on soft civilian targets intended mainly to incite a sectarian war or undermine the Iraqi political process. The insurgents appear to be highly resilient and have demonstrated the ability to learn through their mistakes. This is illustrated by the increase in the number of successful attacks against many important political and economic targets, including attacks against Iraqi forces and Iraqi officials and
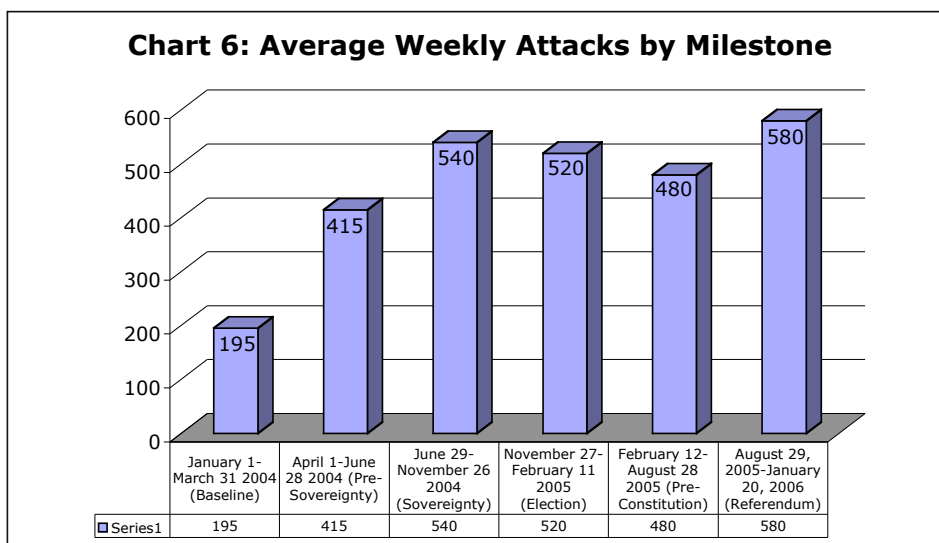
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[38] Michael Eisenstadt and Jeffrey White. "Assessing Iraq's Sunni Arab Insurgency." #50, *Policy Focus,* December 2005.

their families. More than 2,700 officials and members of the Iraqi forces were killed in 2005. This is in addition to the number of assassinations, kidnappings, extortions, and expulsions in previous years.

The number of suicide attacks that have killed and wounded large numbers of Iraqis also continues to increase. The rate of car bombings increased from 402 in 2004 to 873 in 2005. Additionally, incidences of suicide car bombs climbed from 133 to 411, and the number of attacks using suicide vests grew from 7 in 2004 to 67 in 2005.[39] Charts 5 and 6 reveal the increase in attacks from the June 2003 to January 2006.

Chart 5: Number of Daily Attacks by Insurgents

Source: Brookings.

Chart 6: Average Weekly Attacks by Milestone

	January 1-March 31 2004 (Baseline)	April 1-June 28 2004 (Pre-Sovereignty)	June 29-November 26 2004 (Sovereignty)	November 27-February 11 2005 (Election)	February 12-August 28 2005 (Pre-Constitution)	August 29, 2005-January 20, 2006 (Referendum)
Series1	195	415	540	520	480	580

Source: Brookings.

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[39] Anthony Cordesman. "Iraq's Evolving Insurgency: Nature of Attacks and Patterns in Cycles of Conflict." *CSIS,* January 2006.

Iranian Assistance to the Sunni Insurgency

Intelligence sources indicate that a specialized unit of Iran's al-Quds Forces is also providing logistical support to Sunni militants. Although much smaller than other al-Quds Forces operations, this unit has still provided important logistical support, command and control facilities, funding, and safe transit for Sunni militants across the Iranian border. In addition to jihadis, they have also aided former high-ranking officials in Saddam's armed forces. Intelligence sources have identified specific posts on the border from which these units facilitate the transport of weapons, money, and jihadis from Iran to Iraq. However, the al-Quds unit does not directly participate in Sunni militant operations, and there is an unspoken agreement that this assistance exclusively supports Sunni targeting of US troops and not of Shi'ite militias or civilians. This is in contrast to the comprehensive support given to Shi'ites militias such as the Badr Organization (which is in many ways simply an extension of IRGC). In this way, Al-Quds Forces merely provide the Sunnis with tools to create chaos without becoming directly involved.

This unit also assists networks affiliated with Zarqawi's al-Qaeda organization in Iraq. Information furnished by captured militants revealed that their entry into Iraq was facilitated by the IRGC, which also helped them leave the country for their respective destinations. Finally, the IRGC is providing safe houses in Iran where senior al-Qaeda members are currently quartered. These include numerous jihadis who escaped Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban, as well as Osama bin Laden's son and the Egyptian al-Qaeda Commander Saif al-Adel.

The IRGC (and the al-Quds Forces within it) has also been responsible for coordinating attacks in Saudi Arabia. For instance, intelligence estimates link the IRGC to the al-Khobar Bombing in 1995 and the Saudi Shi'ite Hizb'allah members responsible are still provided safe haven in Iran to this day. In fact, this unit is headed by a general who was directly implicated in the al-Khobar bombing.[40] More recently, jihadis in safe houses under the protection of al-Quds Forces have issued direct orders to senior Saudi al-Qaeda leaders to initiate terrorist attacks within the Kingdom (these individuals have since been killed or captured). These attacks began with the May 2003 Riyadh bombing. A senior Saudi al-Qaeda commander, who surrendered, corroborated the IRGC's involvement with al-Qaeda. He also admitted that his orders – prior to the first attack on Riyadh in 2003 – came via a call originating in Iran. Swiss mobile phones were used because Iranian intelligence discovered that they were the only ones that offered anonymous pre-paid cards with roaming capabilities at that time.[41] This is the explanation for the bouncing of calls from Iran to Saudi Arabia via Switzerland.

The al-Quds Forces have also been facilitating the transport of Sunni militants from the Afghanistan border to join the insurgency in Iraq. These militants are primarily Sudanese, Yemenis, Egyptians, Saudis and North Africans, along with some Pakistanis and Afghanis. Al-Quds has facilitated the transition of at least 387 fighters to Iraq and intelligence estimates that at least 500 al-Qaeda militants are still in Iran preparing to enter the country.

Furthermore, another IRGC-created network of insurgents operates in Iraq. Led by a former general in Saddam's army, Abu Mustafa al-Sheibani, the intended purpose of this network is to assist former officers from Saddam's regime in attacking Coalition forces. Al-Sheibani's group has been responsible for a type of roadside bomb – originally developed by the Iranian-backed Hizb'allah – that is more deadly than any previously known. Al-Sheibani's group now numbers over 500 members, which is divided into more than 17

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[40] His name cannot be released because doing so would compromise sources and methodologies.
[41] The Iranians discovered this unique feature of Swisscom when tracking MEK members throughout Europe. This tactic was later adopted by Khaled Sheikh Mohammed, one of the masterminds behind 9/11.

bomb-making units and death squads. It has been responsible for detonating at least 37 bombs against Coalition forces in Baghdad during 2005.[42]

Intelligence estimates regarding IRGC operations also show it to be active in Europe. As early as December of 2004, the Saudi General Security Service sounded a warning and provided information to Britain's intelligence and security services regarding the planning of a potential terrorist attack in London. The intelligence was quite specific, referring to suicide attacks on London's underground or clubs to be carried out by educated Muslims native to the UK. This information was obtained from a Saudi militant who was detained while attempting to return to the Kingdom from Iraq via Iran and the UAE. His suspicious behavior at Riyadh airport using counterfeit travel documents alerted airport security and he was quickly arrested. Upon his arrest, he confessed to having links to the al-Qaeda network in Iraq. He also provided information regarding al-Qaeda's collaboration with the IRGC, which he said had facilitated his travel to Iraq through Iran. This individual's task was to obtain funds in Iraq from this network and make his way back to Saudi Arabia. From there, he was to wire the money to a specific account that would be used to assemble a group of suicide bombers in the United Kingdom. Moreover, he provided direct information regarding the activities of Iranian funded networks in Iraq, specifically noting that it was a member of the IRGC who paid the transportation costs for his circuitous return to Saudi Arabia.

It is clear that Iranian policy in Iraq is designed to support all sides fighting the American occupation — embracing the maxim that "the enemy of my enemy is my friend." In this regard, Iran's strategy is to create a kind of controlled chaos to undermine the US and, in the process, strengten its influence in Iraq. Iran's support for the Sunnis is ancillary and most likely temporary, it is the Shi'ites who are the principal recipients of long-term Iranian patronage.

The Role of Syria

The 450 mile border between Iraq and Syria has been a windfall for the insurgency, since its forces can take advantage of its permeability and use it to cross over into Iraq unfettered and at will, as well as establish bases that are outside of Iraq proper. Most of the transit points are located in remote tribal areas.

The United States has accused Syria of failing to prevent militants from crossing the Syrian-Iraqi border to join the insurgency in Iraq, a charge that President Bashir Assad has denied: "Syria has adopted measures to control its borders with Iraq, but if you look at the other side of [the border with Iraq], you will notice that there is no US or Iraqi action to do so."[43] Intelligence reveals that there is, in fact, no evidence that the Syrian government has an official policy of aiding the insurgency in Iraq. Any direct or indirect aid comes from the border tribes or as a result of direct personal or business contacts.

The cross-border areas where there is a heavy tribal presence is especially difficult to monitor. This is mainly due to the fact that the tribes themselves – most of which are providing militants to the insurgency – are much more familiar with the terrain than government forces. Many militants have secure bases on the Syrian side in the tribal areas, and they can easily avoid detection by simply merging into the local community.

One of the unintended consequences of the Iraqi embargo was the development of a thriving commercial industry in Syria designed to cater to the needs of Iraq. This industry remains one of the main financiers of the insurgency. The situation is further complicated by the deep and long-standing connections between certain senior Syrian Ba'athist officials

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[42] "Inside Iran's Secret War for Iraq." *Time*, August 22, 2005.
[43] "Syria's President Reiterates his Country's Support for Iraq." *Daily Star,* December 29, 2005.

and those of former Iraqi Ba'athists.[44] These groups enjoyed mutually lucrative business contracts for years, especially during the Iraqi embargo. Moreover, prior to the US invasion, Syria was a main destination for Iraqi Ba'athist money, where much of it still remains. These long-standing relationships and deposits of cash are being utilized to aid the Iraqi insurgency, and it is unlikley these can realistically be severed in the short term.

Thus, from a practical standpoint, it would be extremely difficult for the Syrian government to fully secure its border, which is both long and mountainous. Doing so would require a massive investment of resources and manpower which the Syrians simply do not have (Saudi Arabia has spent $1.8 billion dollars to secure its border, for instance). Thus, while there is a concerted effort by the government to arrest foreign insurgents attempting to cross into Iraq, if they make their way back to the Sunni tribal areas, there is very little the Syrian government can do.

It must be emphasized that insurgent activities within Syria are not officially sanctioned by the government. Rather, they are the result of circumstances that existed long before President Bashar assumed office. Hence, while steps can be taken to improve the situation, solving the problem in the short term is unrealistic.

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[44] These names cannot be released because doing so would compromise sources and methodologies.

Recommendations

As the situation in Iraq continues to deteriorate and the possibility of civil war grows, it is in the best interest of Saudi Arabia to adopt policies that reflect this shifting dynamic. Conditions in Iraq are deeply troubling and there may be little that can be done at this late stage. Nevertheless, the following recommendations may mitigate the situation.

1. Develop a Comprehensive Strategy for a Worst-Case Scenario

Although Iraq is not yet embroiled in a full-blown civil war, the situation is tending in that direction. Such a development would have catastrophic consequences for the region, and present grave challenges to Saudi national security. Thus, it is vital for the Saudi leadership to prepare a comprehensive and cohesive national strategy to confront all the potential ramifications of civil war in Iraq. This strategy must embrace economic, political, and religious factors, and present concrete plans for a response to each of the challenges a disintegrated Iraq would pose to the Kingdom's security. In order to maximimize its effectiveness, this strategy should embrace both overt and covert components.

2. Better Communicate Situation to the US

While not privy to the US government's true intelligence estimates of the state of affairs in Iraq, statements by US officials indicate that the Bush administration does not have a firm grasp of the dynamics or complexities of the situation. This is primarily evident in the fact that while the possibility of civil war is increasing, administration officials continually claim that the situation is "improving." To remedy this, the Saudi leadership should devise a more effective method by which to communicate its assessments of the situation in Iraq to the US leadership.

US missteps began in Iraq with disbanding of the Iraqi army, continued with its failure to establish lines of communication with tribal leaders, and ended with its gross miscalculations regarding the nature and resilency of the insurgency. Unfortunately, these failures – along with mounting casualties – have led to increased domestic pressure for the US to end its mission. Such a move would precipitate a civil war and an immediate disintegration of the state. In light of this, the Saudi leadership should use its substantial influence in Washington to insure that the American military does not prematurely withdraw from Iraq. Although the Kingdom objected vigorously to the invasion of Iraq, in the aftermath, the Saudi leadership has made it abundantly clear that it supports the US efforts to restore stability to the country. As Prince Saud al-Faisal stated, "we must also work for a stable and unified Iraq, at peace with itself and in harmony with its neighbors. We are heartened by the electoral process and results in that country. And we must work together to achieve what the Iraqi people deserve."[45]

3. Counter Meddling by Iran

To date, King Abdallah has kept his personal pledge to President Bush and has resisted direct involvement in Iraqi affairs. The time has now arrived, however, to open a dialogue with Tehran and to make it clear that the Kingdom is conscious of their covert activities in Iraq. The Saudi leadership should unequivocally state that if these activities are not checked, it will be forced to consider a similar overt and covert program of its own. A dialogue with most Iranian officials will not be enough, however, since those who generally speak on behalf of Iran do not have the influence to modify or change Iranian policies. There is no point engaging President Ahmadinejad or Foreign Minister Mottaki when it is Ayatollah Khamenei who holds the real power in Iran. Moreover, it is critical the Deputy Commander of the IRGC be present at any meetings with Ayatollah Khamenei. This is

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[45] Joseph McMillan. "Saudi Arabia and Iraq: Oil, Religion, and an Enduring Rivalry." *United States Institute of Peace,* January 31, 2006.

due to the power he weilds within the Al-Quds Forces, and his influence over their foreign operations, particularly in Iraq.

Saudi Arabia's historical ties to Iraq are strong, especially among the various Sunni tribes. However, the Kingdom's strategy should extend beyond the Sunni community to include the Shi'ites and all ethnic and sectarian groups with a common interest in limiting Iranian influence in Iraq. Given its formidable resources and historical ties, the Kingdom is well-positioned to produce concrete results from such a strategy in the near term.

4. Extend a State Invitation to Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani

It is also important for the Saudi leadership to open a meaningful discussion with Grand Ayotollah Ali al-Sistani by extending an invitation to him to visit the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. Such an overture would send a strong positive message – both within the Kingdom and in the region at large – regarding Saudi Arabia's position vis-à-vis the Shi'ite community. It would also demonstrate that the Kingdom recognizes Ayatollah al-Sistani's authority and respects those who regard him as the leading Shi'ite Arab cleric. Ayatollah Sistani is not only the foremost religious figure for Iraqi Shi'ites, but his influence in Iraq's political sphere is equally as important. An official state visit to Saudi Arabia would reassure the Iraqi Shi'ite community that the Saudi leadership fully acknowledges that they are critical to establishing stability in the country.

5. Forgive Most of Iraq's Debt

Once Iraq chooses a Prime Minister and a government, Saudi Arabia should begin negotiations to forgive most of the debt owed to the Kingdom. Since Saudi Arabia is Iraq's largest creditor (in excess of $32 billion dollars), such a gesture will go far in alleviating Iraq's financial burden. More importantly, it will send a strong message that the Kingdom is not acting out of sectarian interests, but in the interests of Iraq and the region at large.

6. Appoint an Ambassador to Iraq and Arrange State Visit

It is critical for Saudi Arabia to strengthen diplomatic ties with Iraq. Therefore, when the security situation permits (if ever), Saudi Arabia should appoint an ambassador to Baghdad. Similarly, if the security situation stabilizes, arrangements should be made for King Abdallah to visit the Iraqi capital. Since he is the only Arab leader capable of bringing the Iraqi government into the Arab fold, an official visit by the Saudi monarch would have enormous symbolic significance throughout the region.

7. Create Permanent Border Security Committee

A permanent Border Security Committee should be established to tackle cross border issues between the Kingdom and Iraq. One of the most critical tasks facing such a committee includes finding ways to strengthen security on the Iraqi side of the border. It is in the interest of both Saudi Arabia and Iraq to confront challenges such as smuggling and terrorist infiltration that an insecure border presents. Although Saudi Arabia has spent in excess of $1.8 billion since 2004 to secure its side of the border, more cooperation and coordination with Iraq is needed to ensure that these investments are effective.

8. Provide Guidance for the Elimination of Militants

The current Iraqi leadership could learn much from Saudi Arabia's successful experience in identifying and eliminating militant cells, particularly those of al-Qaeda, from within its borders. Early on, the Saudi leadership went to great lengths to discourage the recruitment of new members into the ranks of the extremists. Moreover, it conducted a vigorous campaign against those who engaged in or supported terrorist activity or incited violence, resulting in a drastic decrease in the number of terrorist attacks within the Kingdom. Sharing this expertise and experience with the relevant Iraqi authorities could be of great value in the fight for a stable and secure Iraq.

Appendix I: Certified Election Results from Iraqi Election Commission

Political Entity Name - اسم الكيان السياسي	Ballot Number رقم الكيان السياسي	Total Votes العدد الكلي للاصوات	Governorate Seats مقاعد المحافظات	Compensatory Seats المقاعد التعويضيه	National Seats المقاعد الوطنيه	Total Seats العدد الكلي للمقاعد
Unified Iraqi Coalition الائتلاف العراقي الموحد	555	5021137	109	0	19	128
Kurdistani Gathering التحالف الكردستاني / هاوبه يماني كوردستان	730	2642172	43	0	10	53
Tawafoq Iraqi Front جبهة التوافق العراقية	618	1840216	37	0	7	44
National Iraqi List القائمة العراقية الوطنية	731	977325	21	0	4	25
Hewar National Iraqi Front الجبهة العراقية للحوار الوطني	667	499963	9	0	2	11
Islamic Union of Kurdistan الاتحاد الإسلامي الكوردستاني - به ككرتوى ئيسلامى كوردستان	561	157688	4	0	1	5
Liberation and Reconciliation Gathering كتلة المصالحة والتحرير	516	129847	3	0	0	3
Mithal Al Aloosi List For Iraqi Nation قائمة مثال الالوسي للامة العراقية	620	32245	1	0	0	1
Iraqi Turkuman Front الجبهة التركمانية العراقية	630	87993	1	0	0	1
Progressives الرساليون	631	145028	1	0	1	2
Al Ezediah Movement for Progressing and Reform الحركة الايزيدية من اجل الاصلاح والتقدم	668	21908	1	0	0	1
Al Rafedain List قائمة الرافدين	740	47263	0	1	0	1
			230	1	44	275

Special Voting + Total Votes (Governorate) - العدد الكلي للاصوات (المحافظات + التصويت الخاص):		**11895756**
Out of Country Votes - التصويت في الخارج:		**295377**
Total Votes - العدد الكلي للاصوات:		**12191133**

Appendix II: Iraqi Attitudes

A recent survey conducted by the Program on International Policy Attitudes yielded some surprising results regarding the Iraqis' views toward the US presence in the country. Among other things, the survey indicated that a substantial majority of Iraqis believe that the US has plans to retain bases in Iraq permanently, even if government requests a withdrawal of forces. Overall, 80 percent of those polled assumed that the US plans to remain in the country—this includes 79 percent of Shi'ites, 92 percent of Sunnis, and 67 percent of Kurds. Only a minority believes that the US plans "to remove all its military forces once Iraq is stabilized"

Iraqis of all ethnic groups also agree that it doubtful that the US will take direction from the new Iraqi government. When asked how the US would respond to a request by the government to withdraw troops within six months, 76 percent overall believed that the US would refuse to do so. One of the most interesting aspects of this survey was the common conviction held by the respondents that the performance of the Iraqi state would improve if the US were to withdraw. Overall, 73 percent believe that there would be a greater resolve among the factions to cooperate in the Parliament. The breakdown for this question was, Kurds 62 percent, Sunnis 87 percent, and Shi'ites, 68 percent.

When asked what they would like the newly elected Iraqi government to ask the US-led forces to do, a majority, 70 percent, favored setting a timeline for the withdrawal of US forces. This number is divided squarely between 35 percent who favor a six-month time frame for withdrawal and 35 percent who prefer a gradual reduction over two years. Only 29 percent say it should "only reduce US-led forces as the security situation improves in Iraq."

Moreover, most Iraqis expect that the quality of their lives will improve when the US-led forces withdraw, with 67 percent assuming that there will be an increase accessibility in public services such as electricity, schools, and sanitation. They did not, however, express much confidence in the ability of the Iraqi forces to provide security on their own.

Most surprising was the fact that 47 percent, nearly half of the Iraqis polled, support the attacks against US-led forces. This includes nine out of 10 Sunnis. There, was, however, a vast disparity among ethnic groups regarding this question. While a staggering 88 percent of Sunnis approve (77 percent strongly), this percentage fell to 41 percent for the Shi'ites. The approval rating for this question was lowest among the Kurds, at only 16 percent.

The survey is based upon interviews conducted among a random sample of 1000 adults 18 years and older, combined with a sample of 150 Sunnis. Although it should be emphasized that this assessment offers little supporting data to validate the methodology and sampling, it is interesting to note that many of the results contrast sharply with the more favorable views advanced by the US.

Appendix III: Economic Impact of the Insurgency

According to the US Agency for international Development, the prospect for security in Iraq is pessimistic. The USAID analysis describes Iraq as being besieged by insurgents whose campaign includes, "creating chaos in Iraq society as a whole and fomenting civil war." The attacks are succeeding in inflicting significant damage on the country's "infrastructure" and creating a "tide of adverse economic and social effects that ripple across Iraq."[46]

Between March 2003 and January 2006, insurgents carried out more than 300 attacks on Iraqi oil installations that resulted in an 8 percent decrease in production during 2005. Furthermore, shipments through the Iraqi northern pipeline to Ceyan in Turkey fell from the pre-war output of 800,000 b/pd to an average of 40,000 b/pd in 2005.
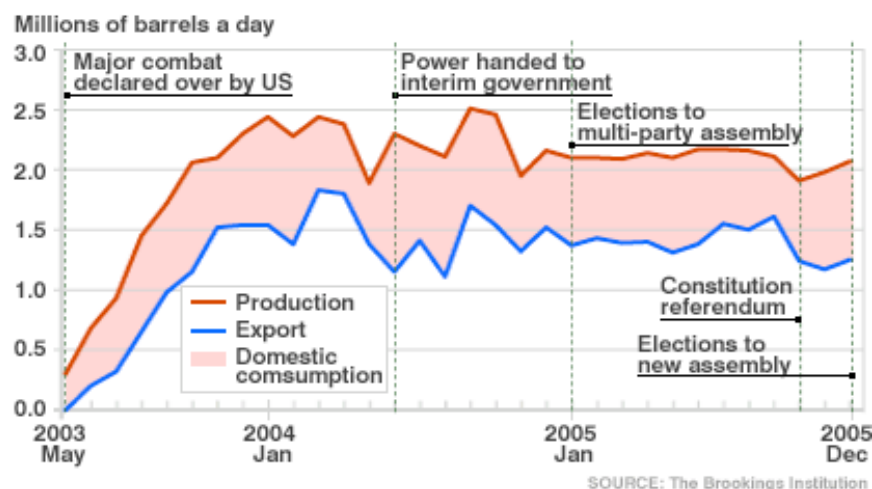
Iraqi officials have already estimated that insurgent attacks have cost the country an estimated $11 billion. Attacks have also kept oil production from reaching its 3 million-b/pd target in 2005 set by the Coalition. Production has fallen from its pre-war levels of roughly 2.5 million b/pd to an average of 1.83 million b/pd in 2005. In all, insurgency attacks upon petroleum facilities have had a dire impact upon a country where 94 percent of the government's direct revenue depends upon oil exports.

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[46] "Iraq Aid Report Warns of Civil War, Chaos." *Washington Post*, January 17, 2005.

Appendix IV: Foreign Insurgency Recruitment Case Studies

The following are derived from interrogations with suspected Saudi militants conducted by intelligence agencies and provided to the Saudi National Security Assessment Project.

Case Study #1

The first case involves a 24-year-old Saudi male (name withheld due to security consideration for him and his family) from a prominent Saudi tribe. He was a student and had no association whatsoever with al-Qaeda or other militants prior to the US invasion of Iraq. After that, the Saudi press began publishing a great deal of rhetoric regarding the legitimacy of the US action. The young man attended Friday prayers in his neighborhood mosque where the local preacher condemned the US and cited examples of innocent Iraqis dying. This occurred in April 2003. The oratory at the mosque became more forceful and more critical as the images of the war began to flow in the press.

He and three friends started attending private gatherings with a mid-level cleric from the mosque, and the topic of jihad was soon introduced. Religious justification for protecting Arab lands from occupiers was discussed. A short time later, the suggestion was made that the young man and his friends should offer to assist in Iraq by contributing either money or going there themselves. Suicide attacks were never mentioned.

As it happened, the cleric, who has since been arrested, had a close relationship with a Yemeni who was an al-Qaeda operative wanted by the Saudi authorities. He introduced the young men to this operative, but his affiliation with al-Qaeda was never disclosed.

The young men started visiting the Yemeni at a safe house in Riyadh where he began to indoctrinate them about jihad. This instruction continued for five weeks. At this point, a member of the Religious Committee of al-Qaeda provided the young men with theological justification for suicide attacks. At the end of the 5-week period, they were told they were ready to leave for Iraq.

Using their own resources, they bought one-way tickets to Damascus in July 2003. Once there, they were told where to stay and given a telephone number of a Syrian who would meet them. They contacted this man upon arrival, and he took them to the border with Iraq (specifically, to al-Waleed point, a place where Saudis frequently enter the country). Once at the border, they were received by three Iraqi handlers who asked them to turn over all of their money. They were then brought to Tikrit. It took three weeks from the time they arrived in Damascus to their arrival in Tikrit.

In Tikrit, they were assigned to a battalion that was comprised mostly of other Saudis (six were from the Kingdom, a few from other Gulf countries, and many from Yemen). The operational people who were planning the attacks were only Iraqis—not foreigners. None of the young men were provided with any further training. Soon after arriving in Tikrit, an Iraqi appeared and assigned them each to a job. All were suicide attacks. Three of the four accepted and were taken away. The fourth realized he did not want to participate because, although he had wanted to fight, he had only been assigned the task of driving a truck full of explosives into a designated target. He never saw his friends again.

Another assignment was offered and he accepted, but only as a means of escape. He was provided with a truck, which he drove some distance from the safe house and then abandoned. He did not tell anyone of his intentions to leave Iraq because he knew that they would kill him. The truck was subsequently found and blown up by the US military.

He claimed he kept some hard currency with him and he made his way from Tikrit (this portion of his testimony is unconfirmed). There he found a driver who took him to the Syrian border. At the border, he paid $1,500 and was able cross back illegally (his passport had been confiscated upon entry). He then presented himself at the Saudi Embassy, claiming to have lost his passport. The Saudis provided him a "liase de passé" believing him to be a tourist.

He returned to Saudi Arabia in November 2003 and was arrested in January 2004. It is standard procedure in the Kingdom that when one loses a passport, for whatever reason, a criminal investigation is initiated. Thus, when he returned, the Ministry of Interior conducted a routine investigation and uncovered the fact that he was involved in illicit activities. He was taken into custody and is facing trial (and several years in prison). The cleric who originally enlisted him has been brought up on terrorism charges and can be expected to face a lengthy prison sentence. The Yemeni member was killed in December 2004 following a failed attack on the Ministry of Interior.

Case Study #2

The second case involves a 22-year-old man from Buraida in Qassim, originally from a large tribe in the South. The timeframe for his story is March 2004-July 2004.
This situation is very similar to first and also involves a rogue preacher in a small mosque. The cleric in this case hosted a guest lecturer and members of his congregation gathered at his private residence to hear him speak about the situation in Iraq. The guest lecturer was a self-proclaimed sheikh who was offering theological justifications for Saudis to join the insurgency in Iraq. The sheikh had made the case that members of certain tribes in Saudi Arabia had already gone and died, and this appeared to strengthen his argument.

After the lecture, he asked for volunteers. His assistant took the numbers of roughly eight people from the audience. They later called him and discussed the situation one-on-one. Within eight weeks, they had all been convinced to go to Iraq. These eight men had studied lists of tribal names (later found to have been unreliable) and took inspiration from joining their kin.

The sheikh advised them not to go directly to Iraq, but first to Syria. He gave them the telephone number of a sheikh in Damascus. Interrogators have determined that since there was no al-Qaeda connection in this case, it was less organized.

The group of three arrived at the airport, and were collected. After a few days of indoctrination, they were taken to the border. They waited at a small village next to the Iraqi border for seven days, but no Iraqi handler materialized. They were then taken to another point, where they met their Iraqi contacts. They were told to surrender their money and passports. One refused to go at the border, and flew back to Riyadh. His two friends who went to Iraq told the handlers that if anything happened to them to inform their absent friend. Both carried out suicide bombings in Baghdad. The two left behind a last will and testament. The friend was directed by the sheikh in Syria to visit a website where he could read about their deaths.

The cleric who had initially inspired the three to go to Iraq has since been arrested and provided names of those he sent to the insurgency. One of the names was the individual that this case study concerns. He was subsequently arrested and gave the above account.

Appendix V: Main Iraqi Religious Insurgent Groups

The religious elements of the insurgency consists of four major groups that regularly take responsibility for militant operations and several other lesser-known groups. The main groups include the al-Qaeda of Jihad Organization in the Land of Two Rivers, formerly *al-Tawhid wal-Jihad* (Unity and Jihad) whose founder is Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

Main Insurgent Groups
Tandhim al-Qa'ida fi Bilad al-Rafidayn (al-Qaeda's Organization in Mesopotamia)
Jaysh Ansar al-Sunna (Partisans of the Sunna Army)
Al-Jaysh al-Islami fil-'Iraq (the Islamic Army in Iraq)
Al-Jabha al-Islamiya lil-Muqawama al-'Iraqiya (the Islamic Front of the Iraqi Resistance)
Ansar-al Islam (Partisans of Islam, Kurdish)
Other Groups
Jaysh al-Rashidin (the First Four Caliphs Army)
Jaysh al-Ta'ifa al-Mansoura (the Victorious Group's Army)
Jaysh al-Mujahidin (the Mujahidin's Army)
Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya fil-'Iraq (the Islamic Resistance's Movement in Iraq)
Jaysh Muhammad (Muhammad's Army)
'Asa'ib Ahl al-'Iraq (the Clans of the People of Iraq)
Saraya Al-Ghadhab Al-Islami (the Islamic Anger Brigades)
Saraya Usud Al-Tawhid (the Lions of Unification Brigades)
Saraya Suyuf al-Haqq (the Swords of Justice Brigades)