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Nationalism, Sectarianism, and the Future of the U.S. Presence in Post-Saddam Iraq

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FOREWORD

The ouster of the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq has led to a variety of new and important questions about the evolution of Iraqi society and national identity. These questions concerning how Iraqis view themselves have serious implications for the U.S. military presence in Iraq which remains in the aftermath of Saddam's removal. A new Iraqi nationalism or sectarian chauvinism may feed anti-U.S. efforts and actions, endangering U.S. troops and disrupting Iraqi reconstruction. It is correspondingly vital that Iraqi nationalism does not begin to define itself with anti-Americanism as a major component.

This monograph, by Dr. W. Andrew Terrill, addresses the critical questions involved in understanding the background of Iraqi national identity and the ways in which it may evolve in the future to either the favor or detriment of the United States. The monograph also provides particular attention to the issue of Iraqi sectarianism and the emerging role of the Shi'ite Muslims, noting the power of an emerging but fractionalized clergy. The result is a thoughtful and probing report including policy recommendations for U.S. military and civilian decisionmakers that helps to illuminate the complex subjects of Iraqi nationalism and sectarianism and their relevance to the U.S. presence in Iraq.

The Strategic Studies Institute is pleased to offer this monograph as a contribution to the national security debate on this important subject at this juncture of our nation's history as it grapples with a variety of problems associated with rebuilding Iraq. This analysis should be particularly valuable to U.S. military strategic leaders as they seek to better understand Iraq political culture. Additionally, the background information provided should be of great value to those involved in duties associated with the U.S. presence in Iraq.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

W. ANDREW TERRILL is the Strategic Studies Institute's (SSI) Middle East specialist. Prior to his appointment, he served as a senior international security analyst for the International Assessments Division of the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL). In 1998-99, Dr. Terrill also served as a Visiting Professor at the U.S. Air War College on assignment from LLNL. Dr. Terrill is a former faculty member at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia, and has taught adjunct at a variety of other colleges and universities. Dr. Terrill has published in numerous academic journals on topics including nuclear proliferation, the Iran-Iraq War, Operation DESERT STORM, Middle Eastern chemical weapons and ballistic missile proliferation, terrorism, and commando operations. At U.S. State Department invitation, since 1994 Dr. Terrill has participated in the Middle Eastern Arms Control and Regional Security "Track 2" talks, which are part of the Middle East Peace Process. He holds a B.A. from California State Polytechnic University and an M.A. from the University of California, Riverside, both in political science. Dr Terrill also holds a Ph.D. in international relations from Claremont Graduate University, Claremont, California. He is a U.S. Army Reserve Lieutenant Colonel in Military Intelligence and a Foreign Area Officer (Middle East).

SUMMARY

The destruction of the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq has opened the path to a new future for Iraqis, although it is not yet certain what direction that future will take. Iraq is a fragile political entity created in the aftermath of World War I through the involuntary union of ethnically and religiously diverse portions of the former Ottoman Empire. In the years following Iraq's creation, a nascent nationalism emerged, which successive leaders sought to nurture and encourage. This effort culminated in Saddam Hussein's efforts to generate a radical Iraq-centered form of Arab nationalism, which served to promote loyalty to the state and more importantly to Saddam.

The U.S.-Iraqi War of 2003 did not emerge as a strong test of Iraqi nationalism. While Saddam did have some committed defenders, large segments of the population remained neutral in the confrontation between the U.S.-led coalition and Saddam's defenders. After the war, the United States emerged as a power on probation with the Iraqi population, many of whom were uncertain that their well-being was a major factor in the U.S. decision to intervene and remain in Iraq. Anti-American conspiracy theories became widespread in Iraq, while conservative Muslims worried about the corrupting influence of perceived Western vices.

The removal of Saddam's regime created problems and opportunities for Iraqi ethnic and religious communities. Arab Shi'ites, who comprise the majority of the population, saw new opportunities for political leadership, perhaps with a powerful but fragmented clergy leading the way. Sunni Arabs correspondingly worried about a new distribution of power, and many began to view de-Baathification as a process that further threatens their community. Kurds remain interested in de facto, but not formal, independence from Iraq, and the danger of an Arab backlash to Kurdish aspirations is correspondingly serious. Tribal identities further complicate the situation.

Some attacks against U.S. forces have occurred following the war with most of the violence associated with residual Saddam loyalists

from among the Sunni Arab community. Many Shi'ites are more reluctant to engage in such activity so long as it appears that they can take power by political means. Nevertheless, strong anti-U.S. views are present in the pro-Iranian Shi'ite organizations, and these views may spread among other Shi'ites over time. The possibility of confrontations between U.S. troops and hostile crowds is particularly worrisome as is the availability of massive quantities of weapons to the Iraqi population.

In light of this situation, the United States needs to search continually for areas of agreement with the nonextremist clergy while also recognizing issues on which collaboration is not possible. U.S. leaders must also support a continued strong information campaign, expand efforts to challenge Iranian activities in Iraq, and provide troops with extensive training in stabilization and occupation duties. The participation of troops from moderate Arab and Muslim states in stabilization and reconstruction activities is important and should be encouraged. U.S. administrators must also be careful how they use the word de-Baathification since some Baath ideals are not inherently anti-democratic, although the party itself was deeply corrupted by Saddam. Finally, any U.S. efforts to achieve long-term dominance of Iraqi politics can be expected to produce a serious backlash.

NATIONALISM, SECTARIANISM, AND THE FUTURE OF THE U.S. PRESENCE IN POST-SADDAM IRAQ

> I am going to teach the South American Republics to elect good men.
>
> Woodrow Wilson[1]

> A man may build for himself a throne of bayonets, but he cannot sit on it.
>
> William Ralph Inge[2]

> My brother and myself against my cousin. My cousin and myself against the foreigner.
>
> Arab Proverb popular in Iraq[3]

Introduction.

The destruction of the Saddam Hussein regime by a U.S.-led military force has opened the path to a variety of alternative futures for Iraq. The preferred option for the West is the creation of a secular, constitutional democracy, although it is deeply unclear that such an entity can be established and then survive in the turbulent milieu of Iraqi politics. A less desirable possibility that may still serve U.S. interests would be the rise of a pro-Western military authority figure who nevertheless displays some respect for human rights. An alternative that the United States considers unacceptable is the establishment of an Iranian-style Islamic republic supported predominantly by the Iraqi Shi'ites.

The preferred option of most Iraqis is not yet fully clear. Moreover, the type of regime change that they support will have a great deal to do with how they define their own identities in a postwar environment. In the aftermath of Saddam's ouster, Iraqis must determine how to order and emphasize their national and subnational identities now that unconditional loyalty to an entity

called "Iraq" is no longer proscribed by a totalitarian government. They must further decide if their ethnic and religious identities are complementary or antithetical to their identities as Iraqis. Moreover, they must consider to what extent pan-Arab values exist and if these values should be important to their lives.

Iraqis also must decide if their national, subnational, or pan-Arab identity will allow them to accept the concept of a friendly relationship with the United States as well as a U.S. presence in Iraq and throughout the Middle East. Does friendship with the United States require them to be "bad" Arabs (for those Iraqis who are Arabs), bad Muslims, or bad Iraqis? Conversely, is cooperation with the West acceptable to help build a new and more prosperous Iraq? Moreover, can a pious Islamic government or an Arab nationalist leadership coexist with a U.S. presence in Iraq or support the development of Western style institutions?

The Emergence of Iraqi Nationalism.

Considerations of the Iraqi national identity and its implications for the future must begin with an understanding of the background of the Iraqi state and the competing national, subnational, and transnational sources of individual identity. Iraqis may choose to define themselves ethnically (Arabs, Kurds, Turkomen, etc.), religiously (Sunnis, Shi'ites, etc.), nationally as Iraqis, or locally as members of a tribe or tribal confederation. The decision on which identity to emphasize may often depend on current conditions and will be based to some extent on Iraqi history, which therefore needs to be examined as it relates to these identities.

While Mesopotamia has been home for a variety of proud and ancient civilizations, Iraq itself is a relatively new nation-state. It was formed by the British out of the former Ottoman Turkish vilayets of Baghdad, Basra, and Mosul following World War I.[4] Previously, these provinces were ruled directly by the Ottoman Turks, and had few political or economic interactions with each other.[5] One scholar, in describing this arrangement, has called Iraq a British "administrative convenience" lumped together without serious thought given to its eventual viability as an independent nation.[6]

Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that many of the inhabitants of each vilayet were angry about being incorporated into the new state. The population of the Kurdish-dominated vilayet of Mosul considered its inclusion in the new state as a betrayal of great power promises of Kurdish independence in the Treaty of Sevres.[7] Leaders of the Shi'ite province of Basra rightly suspected that their own interests would be subordinated to the less numerous but more politically powerful Sunni Muslims in Baghdad. This situation was particularly galling since the Sunnis did not have a higher standard of education or any other significant qualifications entitling them to a leadership role in the new political entity. Instead, the Sunni Arabs were simply more interested in cooperation with the British as a way of insuring the well-being of their own community.

Tribal uprisings and isolated acts of terrorism against British troops were problems from early in the occupation. Perhaps not surprisingly, the greatest resistance to the new government came from Shi'ite clerics hostile to rule by Sunni Muslims supported by a foreign power. These clerics proclaimed a jihad against British forces from the Shi'ite holy city of Karbala in southern Iraq. This call to arms led to a major uprising among the Shi'ite tribes. The situation stabilized in February 1921 only after the British had suffered around 2,000 casualties.[8]

Tensions among the Iraqi communities were therefore severe but were also viewed as controllable by a strong central government supported by the British.[9] The first Iraqi government was led by the Hashemite King Feisal who was installed by the British from the Hejaz (western section of Saudi Arabia) based on his wartime alliance with them. As an important Arab nationalist leader, Feisal had some popularity across the Middle East, although it is uncertain how much of this extended to Iraq. His position in Iraq was later confirmed by a questionable Iraqi referendum welcoming him as king.[10]

Feisal, at times, appeared less than enamored of the Iraqi people. Before assuming authority in Iraq, Feisal told his friend, Colonel T.E. Lawrence of the British Army, that Iraqis were "unimaginable masses of human beings, devoid of any national consciousness or sense of unity, imbued with religious traditions and absurdities,

receptive to evil, prone to anarchy, and always willing to rise against the government."[11] Clearly, Feisal considered ruling such a country to be an extremely difficult task. He also began his reign as an unmistakable client of the United Kingdom, which maintained a mandate over Iraq until 1932.

Feisal's style of rule has at times been described as "paternalistic." During the mandate years he reached out to ethnic and tribal leaders with various forms of patronage. The patronage helped to establish links between himself and local interests, co-opting the latter into some degree of subordination to the state. The principal gift associated with this patronage system was land. Thus, in this early time frame the state "gained definition" and a rudimentary form of Iraqi nationalism that was compatible with tribal loyalties appears to have begun moving forward.[12]

The state further strengthened itself through the assumption of a host of administrative functions, especially following the termination of the British mandate and the beginning of Iraq's formal independence in 1932. Correspondingly, a variety of teachers, engineers, health workers, and other civil servants worked directly for the national government with some bonds of loyalty developing as a result. Moreover, the establishment and expansion of an Iraqi national army led to a security force with formal loyalty to the state above tribe, sect, or ethnicity. Many members of the urban elite also found a road to social advancement in civilian government service or membership in the armed forces, especially in the officer corps.[13]

Iraq's Hashemite dynasty remained in power until 1958 when it was ousted by military coup. In the end the regime was widely regarded as failing to meet the domestic needs of its citizens. Furthermore, the monarchy was deeply compromised by its continued ties with the United Kingdom and its opposition to a new version of pan-Arab nationalism represented by Egyptian President Gamal Abdul Nasser. Brigadier Abdul Karim Qassim, the new leader of Iraq, was warmly welcomed to power by Egypt, one of the first countries to offer diplomatic recognition to revolutionary Iraq.[14]

Qassim agreed with Nasser on a variety of important regional issues and rapidly withdrew Iraq from the Western-oriented defense treaty known as the Baghdad Pact. He also required the British to

withdraw their military forces from all Iraqi facilities including their departure from the large and important Habbaniya Air Base in 1959. Qassim was friendly to the Soviet Union as was Nasser. He also gave firebrand speeches against Western imperialism, showing signs of mass appeal in doing so. Nevertheless, the new leadership in Baghdad chose not to be led by Egypt or to merge with the recently formed union of Syria and Egypt designated as the United Arab Republic (1958-61). Soon the cold war between revolutionary Iraq and revolutionary Egypt was more bitter than Egyptian-Iraqi conflict in the era of the Hashemites. Stunningly, President Nasser was vilified in the Iraqi press to an even greater degree than the Israelis.[15]

Egyptian-Iraqi animosity was based on more than simply personality differences. Iraq, as a large Arab nation, with a sizable population, oil wealth, and a proud heritage of ancient civilizations was not prepared to accept subordinate status as an apprentice of the Cairo leadership. Iraqi leaders saw their own country as worthy of respect. In a harbinger of future problems, Brigadier Qassim also threatened to seize Kuwait through military action in 1961, maintaining that it was a province of Iraq that had been severed from the homeland by imperialism. Qassim's efforts were thwarted by Egypt and the Arab League which provided troops for Kuwait's defense as part of the ongoing struggle between Cairo and Baghdad.[16]

In another increasingly familiar pattern Brigadier Qassim was assassinated in 1963. While his grandiose visions for Iraq could clearly be called nationalist, his strongest base of power was the Iraqi Communist party. Post-Qassim Iraqi governments generally described themselves as based more firmly on Arab nationalism. Qassim's government was initially replaced by the Iraqi Baath party, but this group remained in office for less then a year before being displaced by a military coup. The Baath party came to power for the second time in July 1968, serving as the vehicle for Saddam Hussein's rise to power.

The Baath party conspirators who took power in Iraq in July came as the leaders of a secular, pan-Arab party that had been active throughout the Arab World since the 1940s and had already played

a major role in Syrian politics (where it would establish firm power by 1970). Baath itself means "renaissance" or "resurrection." The Baath program called for a reestablishment of Arab glory on largely secular grounds guided by the principles of secular nationalism, anti-imperialism, and socialism. Secularism was particularly important as the Baath was influenced by European ideas on the separation of religion and politics. Moreover, one of the two co-founders of the Baath, Michel Aflaq, was a Sorbonne-educated Greek Orthodox Christian seeking to emphasize Arab culture, language, and history rather than Islam as the core of a new Arab identity.

While Saddam was to corrupt the Iraqi Baath party into a subservient instrument of his personal dictatorship, the promise of a progressive, nationalist, and anti-imperialist future was something that many Iraqis viewed with hope in 1968. Likewise, the principle of Sunni, Shi'ite, and Christian Arab equality spoke to the needs of many members of the population. This principle was also quickly betrayed by Saddam and his small clique of Sunni Muslim lieutenants. Many Iraqi Arabs who detest Saddam and his supporters nevertheless view Baath party principles as at least theoretically correct, and Baathism as a legitimate ideology that was hijacked by a ruthless dictator and his criminal supporters. However, as his instrument, the Baath party was deeply useful to Saddam, and Iraqi ideologues were able to weave elaborate praise for the system that Saddam ruled as a neo-Stalinist.

Saddam Hussein and Baathist Versions of Iraqi Nationalism.

Saddam Hussein emerged as a product of Iraqi politics and not an aberration from that system. By 1968 Saddam had totally internalized the idea of disciplined violence to control Iraq. Methodically building the machinery of repression, Saddam formally remained Iraq's secondary leader until 1979 when he took full power as president and absolute dictator.[17]

Throughout his period in power, Saddam also built one of the most impressive propaganda machines in the Arab World. While the chief purpose of this machine was to promote and venerate his own leadership, it nevertheless had other functions including the

inculcation of a strong Baathist brand of Iraqi nationalism. Saddam wanted an Iraqi populace that was deeply loyal to both himself and the regime version of the nation. The twin goals of the propaganda machine therefore became the glorification of Saddam's leadership and the inculcation of a pride in being Iraqi. "Saddam is Iraq: Iraq is Saddam" according to a popular regime slogan.[18]

The regime version of Iraqi history was also used to bolster Iraqi nationalism throughout Saddam's dictatorship. This new history involved an Iraqi-centered form of Arab nationalism which appropriated and embellished the earlier concepts of Iraq as a natural leader of the Arab World. In justifying this leading role, Saddam and his ideologues would argue that modern Iraq was a continuation of some of the greatest civilizations in ancient history beginning with Sumer and Akkad, then Babylon, Assyria, Chaldea, and the Abbasid caliphate.[19] Nevertheless, Saddam's decision to promote Iraq as the leader of the Arab World was not a totally new policy. Rather, it was a continuation of the policies of previous Iraqi leaders, albeit in a more developed and assertive ideological context.

Regime analogies between modern Iraq and ancient Mesopotamia were also not confined to speeches and rhetoric. A kitsch Babylon was restored and rebuilt by the regime while a variety of public buildings were decorated with Babylonian art sometimes including full-scale replicas of the Ishtar gate. Politically-based museums were built to honor Nebuchadnezzar and Hammurabi, while a theater was dedicated to Alexander the Great in commemoration of his time in Mesopotamia.[20]

Likewise, Saddam erected modern sculptures throughout Baghdad representing figures from the Arabian Nights, the Abbasid caliphate, and the Epic of Gilgamesh. These monuments complemented an endless supply of Saddam portraits and statues as well as martial memorials such as a gigantic Unknown Soldier's Monument, the Martyrs Monument, the Saddam Victory Arch, and 80 statues of dead Iraqi officers pointing accusingly at Iran to commemorate the sacrifices of the Iran-Iraq War. Sometimes the two motifs were joined with images such as Saddam standing above the Ishtar Gate or Saddam standing in the company of the great figures in Mesopotamian history.

Saddam also rebuilt the statue of King Feisal I destroyed by angry crowds on July 14, 1958 to suggest a continuity and forward movement in Iraqi history and, according to one scholar, to indicate that the regime was "not afraid of Iraqi history."[21] The decision also had a practical side as Iraq was improving its relations with the Hashemite government of Jordan at the time. Saddam's decision to use the legacy of the essentially decent king for his own reasons is viewed as an obscenity by key Iraqi intellectuals.[22]

The cultivation of Iraqi nationalism was especially important during the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq War. Throughout this conflict, the Iranian government under Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini attempted to convince Shi'ite Iraqis to join with the Iranians in opposing Saddam.[23] In doing this, the Iranians attempted to play on their sense of grievance against the Sunni government in Baghdad which they characterized as "atheist" and even "a puppet of Satan."[24] Since Iran is over 90 percent Shi'ite Muslim, questions of Arabism and Iraqi nationalism verses Shi'ite solidarity became matters of regime survival.

Although Iraq initiated the war with Iran, Iraqi forces performed badly at the conflict's beginning. Iraq's military effectiveness on Iranian soil was marginal, and the Iraqis were eventually driven out of Iran. When the Iranians shifted to the offensive and attempted to invade Iraqi territory, the situation changed, and the Iraqi army began to improve dramatically. Eventually, Iraqi forces defeated the Iranians and drove them from Iraqi soil. Shi'ite conscripts did the brunt of this fighting which ended in 1988.[25] In doing so, they had at some level proven their loyalty to Iraq, although they might also have seen themselves as fighting for Arabism and perhaps to defend their own homes and communities. Events 3 years later suggested that, whatever they were fighting for, it was not Saddam Hussein.

Shi'ites in southern Iraq rose against Saddam in 1991 in the aftermath of Operation DESERT STORM. They did so in the expectation of U.S. support which never came. The uprising prompted incredibly brutal retaliation by the regime in which Republican Guard units painted "*La Shi'ite Ba'd al Yom*" (No more Shi'ites after today) on their tanks as they destroyed Shi'ite centers of resistance. Total casualties are difficult to establish but are usually

described as between 30,000 to 60,000 people.[26] These figures may be revised upward as more mass graves of Saddam's political opponents are uncovered.[27]

Unlike an unsuccessful 1991 Kurdish uprising, there is no indication that the Shi'ites rose up as a separatist movement. Rather, they saw an opportunity to rid themselves of Saddam Hussein and the Baath party within the context of a U.S. call to rise against the tyranny. This behavior indicated that Shi'ite Arabs consider themselves Iraqis, albeit Iraqis with grievances against both Saddam and the earlier governments of Iraq which excluded them from an equitable share of political power.

The U.S.-Iraqi War of 2003.

In March 2003 a U.S.-led coalition initiated military operations against Iraq with the purpose of eliminating the Saddam Hussein regime and disarming Iraq of all weapons of mass destruction. The major battles of the war were over within a month, and President Bush declared the major combat stage of the war over within 6 weeks of initiating the conflict. Saddam Hussein, whose concern with his own survival is legendary, apparently implemented one of many potential escape plans and has yet to surface at the time of this writing. It is also possible that Saddam is dead, although there is no evidence that he was killed or even effectively targeted during the war.

Iraqi pre-war and wartime propaganda sought to feed into nationalistic sentiment in an effort to motivate Iraqis to resist. The population was told that the United States was planning to intervene to safeguard Israel and plunder Iraqi energy resources.[28] This explanation may have seemed more plausible to the Iraqi population than the U.S. explanation that it is waging a war for Middle East democracy and because it feared Saddam's unconventional weapons. Most Iraqis probably did not believe that such weapons represented a serious threat to the United States, if they believed that Iraq possessed such weapons at all. Iraqi propaganda maintained that they did not.

On the other side of this equation was the strong U.S. assertion

that it sought only to remove the regime and not to rule the country. It was hardly a secret that the United States and Iraq had maintained bitterly poisoned relations under Saddam Hussein, and that the United States viewed him as the leader of a criminal regime. U.S. declarations about "regime change" seemed set to undermine a key reason for an assertive Iraqi defense against a U.S. invasion. If the United States only sought to rid the country of Saddam and not to rule Iraq, it was not clear how nationalism would come into play.

One early surprise in the war was the willingness of some Iraqi military and paramilitary forces to oppose U.S. forces in a spirited manner in the southern part of the country. This unexpected resistance caused a brief spike in U.S. concern over the ability of Iraqi forces to harass U.S. supply lines and hold out in urban fighting in some of the Shi'ite cities of the south. Some Iraqi conventional units also surrendered to coalition forces in 2003 but nothing on the scale of 1991 when 70,000-80,000 troops capitulated almost instantly.[29] Some U.S. observers now began to fear that Iraqi nationalism had been underestimated.

Another cause for U.S. concern materialized early in the war when the Arab and Western media began reporting stories about expatriate Iraqis returning to their country to fight against coalition forces. Iraqis interviewed by the media included anti-Saddam exiles who were willing to put aside their differences with the dictator in order to resist a foreign invasion. Many of these people were part of the Iraqi exile community in Jordan and returned to their homeland in buses.[30] Jordanians who wished to fight were not allowed to exit directly into Iraq, although some would get there by transiting through a third country or by leaving Jordan illegally. Thus, the passengers in these particular buses did seem to be Iraqi and not other Arabs.

Nevertheless, the idea that Iraq was being defended by a committed and nationalist military started to fray within a few weeks of the fighting, and some of the message about the United States seeking only to oust Saddam may have been getting through to the Iraqis. Moreover, some early indications of Iraqi commitment now appeared exaggerated. The drama of the returning expatriate Iraqis was soon overshadowed by modest numbers of returnees.

In total, press reports indicated that only about 4,000 Iraqis left for their homeland in the first 10 days of the war out of approximately 400,000 Iraqis in Jordan. Additionally, in Jordan, as elsewhere in the Arab World, extreme reports of U.S. brutality filled the airwaves. The population was deluged by graphic images of war dead, and was perhaps especially susceptible to calls to return home. Furthermore, initial Arab reports suggested that the Iraqis were holding their own against coalition forces, allowing some Iraqi exiles to see this as a moment of glory where they could play a part.

During the fighting in southern Iraq, it also became increasingly clear that only a narrow base of society was assertively resisting the invasion. Much of the Iraqi resistance that occurred was conducted by the Fedayeen Saddam and the Baath Party militias or other individuals coerced by these groups. This membership complicates any effort to make wider generalizations about Iraqi nationalism since such organizations were among the most likely places to find fanatical regime supporters. Even among these paramilitaries, some members may have been coerced into fighting by threats to their lives and families. Furthermore, the Iraqis who fought most fiercely for the regime are widely believed to have been Arab Sunni, young, poorly educated, and especially susceptible to regime propaganda.[31] Some of these fighters may also have believed that the fall of the Saddam regime would have extremely grave personal consequences for them.

As the war progressed, the unexpectedly high level of resistance in Najaf and Basra led U.S. commanders to worry about the possibility of intensive fighting in Baghdad with its population of 5 million people. Initially, these concerns appeared justified. U.S. Army and Marine Corps maneuver combat units entering Baghdad encountered intense but ineffective resistance from Iraqi forces using poor tactics and mostly ineffective light weapons. Suicide car bombers also repeatedly attempted to drive their explosives-laden vehicles into U.S. tactical vehicles, including tanks.[32] Nevertheless, such tactics were ineffective against heavy U.S. ground forces.

Sometime after the U.S. ground force raids into Baghdad, Iraqi morale seemed to break. Vastly disproportionate casualties were certainly a factor. Moreover, the discrepancy in weapons and training

between U.S. and Iraqi forces had become extremely apparent by this time. Additionally, the devastation of large conventional units from the air and the inability of lightly-armed guerrillas to inflict serious damage on U.S. armored and mechanized forces helped to undermine any hope of victory.

Iraqi nationalism as exemplified by will-to-fight was questioned. Fighting now appeared both suicidal and doomed to failure. Moreover, fighting against a foreign invader, in addition to appearing futile, was perhaps increasingly linked to fighting for Saddam.[33] By early April, Grand Ayatollah Ali al Sistani, Iraq's leading Shi'ite cleric, had issued a *fatwa* (religious declaration), calling upon his followers not to resist the invasion. It is thus possible that Iraqi nationalism became increasingly delinked to fighting for the regime as the war continued. The call for neutrality by Iraq's leading Shi'ite cleric would also have undermined the Shi'ite will to fight among those who felt they were fighting for their clan or community as much as they were fighting for Iraq.

The role of foreign fighters was another factor that cast doubt on the psychological link between Iraqi nationalism and the defense of Saddam's regime. Nationalism, as indicated by resistance to a foreign invader, was hardly relevant to a situation where sacrifices were made by individuals from other Arab nations who rallied to the Iraqi cause out of religious zeal, anti-Americanism, or Arab solidarity. Thus questions arise as to how many of these fighters there were and to what extent they contributed to Iraq's defense.

According to Saddam Hussein's government, around 5,000 foreign Arab volunteers joined with the Iraqis to fight against the U.S invasion.[34] This number may have been inflated for propaganda purposes in an effort to present Iraqi defense as a sacred pan-Arab cause in the same way many Arabs look at the issue of Palestinian rights. Nevertheless, many independent sources suggest that there were a large number of foreign fighters. Most sources indicate that these fighters (with the exception of some of the Palestinians) had little to no military training. Many apparently fought bravely but without much professionalism or discipline, leading to large numbers of casualties. Some of them later said that they were betrayed by Saddam and the Iraqis who made an insufficient effort

to defend the regime themselves.[35]

The Iraqi response to the invasion thus does not seem to have emerged as a strong test of Iraqi nationalism. Many Iraqis appeared willing to tolerate the U.S. invasion if it rid them of Saddam. The coalition victory over the regime, nevertheless, left the United States as an occupying power on probation with the Iraqi masses. The lack of enthusiasm for Saddam's regime clearly led to a half-hearted defense at best, but Iraqi emotions about the continuing U.S. military presence could become quite intense should the Iraqis become offended through either U.S. conduct or the duration of the U.S. presence. Iraqi response to the U.S. troop presence or a U.S. attempt to install a pro-American government could, therefore, become a more serious flashpoint for an anti-American form of Iraqi nationalism to emerge.

Iraqi Nationalism and Anti-Americanism.

The U.S.-Iraqi postwar relationship got off to a rocky start when U.S. forces failed to control massive outbreaks of looting throughout the country. Of particular importance were the looting of the Baghdad Antiquities Museum, the Mosul Museum of Antiquities, and the Baghdad library and religious endowments housing ancient Islamic manuscripts. While these disasters occurred as a result of unforeseen problems, many Iraqis immediately saw this action as a U.S. government conspiracy. The museum and other sites were viewed as repositories of Iraqi history and heritage dating back to the pre-Arab empires of Babylon, Samaria, and Assyria. To allow their destruction and looting was seen as a blow against the Iraqi sense of national pride and identity: a humiliation necessary to begin the process of remolding Iraqis in a Western image.[36] Additionally, many Iraqis are furious that the United States was able to protect the Oil Ministry but not cultural sites. Later, it became apparent that the Baghdad Museum was not looted as badly as first ascertained.[37]

Another Iraqi conspiracy theory that emerged early in the postwar era was that rampant looting was being allowed to occur with tacit U.S. support so that U.S. companies would have more and better reconstruction contracts.[38] It is not known how widely this

theory is believed. Also of interest was the tendency among Shi'ites, and especially clerics, to blame U.S. forces for the disappearance of Baghdad's leading Shi'ite cleric, Mohammed al Fartousi. He was both radical and anti-American, but also had a variety of enemies, and the reflexive decision to blame U.S. forces was disturbing.[39]

Perhaps the most malignant conspiracy theory circulating widely in Iraq is that Saddam and the U.S. leadership made a secret deal in which he would leave the country with his riches in exchange for arranging only a minimal defense of the country from invasion. Some versions of this delusion even have Saddam living in secret exile under U.S. protection, making a mockery of U.S. calls for justice.[40] Unfortunately, it is virtually inevitable that many new and potentially popular conspiracy theories will be generated as the result of a continuing U.S. presence in Iraq, no matter how ridiculous these tales seem to Western observers.

This ongoing Iraqi willingness to accept many unusual and bizarre conspiracy theories is an important characteristic of Arab culture. Reasons for this phenomenon, which also exists in Iran, are the subject of considerable speculation. Generally, the citizens of weak states at the mercy of stronger states are believed to be particularly vulnerable to conspiracy theories. Additionally, citizens of countries without a free press often embrace conspiracy theories, since they are accustomed to false information from official sources and look to the street as an alternate source of news. No country has maintained a more controlled press than Iraq. Moreover, the Baath government has used the constant charge of foreign conspiracies and foreign espionage as one of the justifications for the maintenance of a police state.[41] Such an approach pre-dates the U.S.-Iraqi confrontation of 1990 and often focused on Israel's real, alleged, and fabricated activities. By now, thinking in conspiracy theories may have become an Iraqi habit.

Iraqis may also blame the United States as well as Saddam, or instead of Saddam, for the economic sanctions that have impoverished them in the years following the 1991 Gulf War. Certainly, most of the Arab World has blamed the United States for these sanctions. As the situation in Iraq stabilizes, it is possible that Iraqis will be more critical of their own government's role in provoking the sanctions, but

this is not clear. One of the most pervasive and enduring conspiracy theories popular throughout the Arab World suggests that Saddam was lured into invading Kuwait in 1990 by a United States anxious for an excuse to attack him and shatter his military power before it grew unmanageable. This theory may have appeal for the Iraqis as it permeates the larger Arab World.

Additionally, many Iraqis may have agreed with Saddam's decision to invade Kuwait which provoked the first war with the United States and the postwar sanctions. They see these punishments as unreasonable. Two earlier Iraqi leaders (King Ghazi and Brigadier Qassim) also spoke about the need to incorporate Kuwait into Iraq, and Qassim produced a credible threat to invade Kuwait in 1961.[42] The idea of a powerful Iraq, strengthened by Kuwaiti oil and possessing the Kuwaiti coastline, appears to have great appeal to many Iraqis as well as other Arabs. Moreover, many Iraqis came to dislike the Kuwaitis in the course of the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq War when they often viewed them as ungrateful for Iraqi protection against Iran and arrogant because of their wealth.

Prior to the 2003 war, the Iraqi government made the argument that the United States was planning an attack in order to dominate the Iraqi economy and protect Israel from Iraqi attack. It is uncertain to what extent this propaganda has been either accepted or dismissed by the Iraqi population, but there may be a certain wariness on both issues. Some individuals involved with U.S. Iraq policy have been described by the Arab press as excessively close to Israel.[43] Additionally, many Iraqis may have internalized years of propaganda on this issue and believe the intervention was a way of reducing the dangers to Israel of a large, populous, and oil rich Arab state that was wriggling free of crippling sanctions.

The postwar U.S. presence in Iraq also comes at a time when the United States is viewed across the Arab World as being especially supportive of Israeli leader Ariel Sharon and his assertive efforts to control Palestinian terrorism and resistance in the Palestinian territories. Previously Saddam made a strong effort to suggest that the Palestinian and Iraqi causes are the same. It is not known the extent to which this case has impressed Iraqis, but anti-Israeli attitudes pre-dated the Baath rise to power in 1968. Iraq participated

in both the 1948-49 and 1967 Arab-Israeli wars under non-Baath governments. It also participated in the 1973 War as a result of the efforts of Saddam Hussein.[44]

Some Iraqis also appear concerned that the U.S. military presence in their country will continue in some form for the indefinite future. The argument that Westerners can manage an Arab state better than the native inhabitants is an old colonialist one, and can be taken as such now no matter how true or how well-intentioned statements made by U.S. leaders are.[45] The UK may also be distrusted in Iraq due to the colonial legacy. The analogy of the Palestinians keeps surfacing among Iraqis seeking to underscore their worries about a long-term U.S. occupation.

The presence of foreign bases in Iraq previously has been a particularly sensitive matter and the prospects of new basing agreements can be expected to cause resentment among Iraqi nationalists. In the 1950s until the 1980s, Western bases in the Middle East were often described as being placed there to defend the region against Soviet aggression such as occurred with the invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. Despite this impressive external threat, many Arabs assumed that the primary function of such military outposts was to dominate the Middle East and suppress indigenous threats to Western interests. The end of the Cold War and the disintegration of the Soviet Union removed an important justification for a Western presence in the area. The defeat of Saddam Hussein, a proven aggressor against Kuwait, removes a further justification. Iraqis correspondingly will be a difficult audience to convince that long-term postwar U.S. bases in Iraq will be necessary, especially since the majority of the Arab World will inevitably oppose such an option.

Conservative Muslims have additional reasons for opposing a continued Western presence in Iraq. Many believe that the West is the source of cultural pollution that can undermine the fabric of a moral society. In other contexts this has been called "cultural imperialism" or "West-toxification." In particular, some Muslims worry about what they view as Western permissiveness, the use of alcohol, the widespread availability of narcotics, atheism, pornography, nightclubs, youth rebellion, sexual promiscuity, and other perceived Western vices. The longer the United States stays in Iraq, the more

likely these vices are to take hold according to this type of thinking. Another persistent Iraqi rumor is that the U.S. troops have brought AIDS to their country, and that an epidemic is likely.[46]

The Emerging Role of the Shi'ites in Defining Postwar Iraq.

As the future of post-Saddam Iraq unfolds, the position of the Shi'ite Arabs is emerging as a critical factor. Shi'ites represent 60-65 percent of the total Iraqi population and around 80 percent of Iraq's Arab population. (Most Iraqi Kurds are Sunni and therefore alter the ratio for the Sunnis, although these Kurds feel little solidarity with Iraq's Sunni Arabs). Thus over 15 million people of Iraq's total population of 24 million are Shi'ites. The Shi'ites of Iraq are a diverse group, comprising both secular and religious elements. They are numerically dominant in the southern part of the country, and the cities of Karbala and Najaf are important centers of Shi'ite religious learning.[47] In addition to the Shi'ites of the south, at least two million Shi'ites also live in Sadr City (formerly Saddam City and before that Revolution [*Thawra]* City), a large slum in the eastern part of Baghdad. Other Shi'ites live in more prosperous areas of Baghdad and have thus altered the demographic balance of this traditional seat of Sunni dominance.

Despite decades of discrimination, Iraq's Shi'ite Arabs, as noted, have shown little interest in secessionism in recent years. Rather, most Shi'ites have viewed themselves as Iraqis with grievances to be addressed through either political reform or revolution. The destruction of Saddam's regime is widely viewed as offering them the opportunity to emerge as dominant in Iraqi politics.

Shi'ites are often particularly difficult for Westerners to understand. They are Muslims with the same faith in the Koran and the same obligations to follow the "pillars" (fundamental obligations) of Islam as the Sunnis. Nevertheless, and despite the claims of many of the Shi'ites themselves, important differences exist. Shi'ites look to the life and example of the fourth Caliph, Ali and his family, as a source of inspiration, especially for dealing with pain and suffering. Ali was murdered with a poisoned dagger and his son, Hussein ibn Ali, killed in a hopelessly unequal battle on the plains of Karbala

after refusing to pay tribute to a powerful enemy in Damascus who had claimed the leadership of the Muslim community.

The Shi'ite focus on martyrdom is often described as the "Karbala complex," referring to the death of Hussein ibn Ali. This complex remains striking in a contemporary context, and one scholar of Shi'ism refers to Karbala as the core of Shi'ite history.[48] Zealots among the Iraqi Shi'ites sometimes engage in self-flagellation during the Ashura ceremony in order to feel closer to the suffering of Hussein ibn Ali. The Shi'ite passion about martyrdom is also sometimes believed to make their zealots especially willing to engage in suicide operations. This clearly was the case in Lebanon beginning in the 1980s. While Sunni Palestinian terrorists and other non-Shi'ites have also engaged in suicide bombings, they have adapted these tactics to their situation largely because of the example set by Shi'ite groups such as the Lebanese Hizballah.[49]

Shi'ite religious leadership is also quite different from that found in Sunni Islam. The Shi'ite hierarchy is organized in a complex pyramid structure unheard of in Sunni Islam. Consequently, the guidance offered by senior clerics is extremely important. According to Shi'ite doctrine, believers are bound by the *fatwas* (or religious declarations) of the clerics they choose to follow so long as those clerics are alive. The hierarchy of the Shi'ite clergy is complex, but it is worth noting for the purpose of understanding the current religious establishment in Iraq. Accordingly, six grades are open to those trained at Mosque schools. The initial grade is *talib ilm*, a student. Upon graduation, one becomes a *mujtahid*, which is translated as one who has exerted himself to be able to frame an opinion. The third grade is *mubellegh al risala*, or carrier of the message; the fourth is *hojat al Islam*, or authority on Islam. The fifth is that of *ayatollah*, or sign of God. The sixth grade is *grand ayatollah*, or great sign of God.[50] Promotions to the highest grades are usually based on factors such as the authorship of important Islamic tracts and the establishment of a following of promising students. Promotions traditionally have been decided upon by the religious establishment, but in Saddam's Iraq, the last few appointments to *grand ayatollah* were made by the government, which was nevertheless forced to choose among the most highly qualified candidates (of which there were very few).[51]

The Shi'ites are also known to have a history of involvement with the doctrine of *tuq'a* or dissimulation.[52] This doctrine suggests that, in the face of an oppressor and especially an occupation force, one must deceive the enemy with lies and falsehoods to survive. In some cases, it is even permissible to hide one's religion or religious practices.[53] While a variety of occupied peoples may lie to their occupiers, *tuq'a* makes collaboration acceptable so long as it is a direct response to coercion and does not last longer than the coercion itself. Implicit in *tuq'a* is the right to turn against the occupier as soon as it is possible to do so. Friends become enemies in the blink of an eye. In the past, *tuq'a* has been more clearly linked to Iranian Shi'ites than Iraqis, and the first leader of revolutionary Iran, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, denounced it as cowardly early in his career. It is uncertain what currency it holds in contemporary Iraq.

Leadership in the Shi'ite community was severely regulated and stunted during Saddam Hussein's years in power. Saddam carefully watched the Shi'ites, taking great care to eliminate or co-opt any figures that appeared to have a potential to challenge the regime. The 1979 experience of neighboring Iran was perhaps especially troubling to Saddam when the secular shah was overthrown by militant Shi'ites who then established an Islamic government. When war broke out between theocratic Iran and secular Iraq in 1980, Iraqi clerics became even more suspect in the eyes of the regime. Additionally, some Iraqi clerics were openly sympathetic to Iran, leading to their imprisonment, torture, and assassination.[54] This persecution of the clerical establishment continued long after the war with Iran had ended. Moreover, as noted, Saddam savagely attacked the Shi'ites and killed many of their leaders in the aftermath of the 1991 rebellion.

In 2003, the U.S. Administration was especially hopeful that the Shi'ites of Iraq would rally to support the U.S. invasion due to the oppression that they had suffered under Saddam's regime. Instead, the Shi'ites displayed caution. In early April, Iraq's leading Shi'ite cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al Sistani of Najaf, issued a *fatwa* instructing fellow Shi'ites not to oppose the U.S.-led invasion.[55] Sistani is the only Grand Ayatollah in Iraq and, as such, is the highest ranking Shi'ite religious authority. While U.S. policymakers were

pleased with Sistani's declaration, it clearly fell short of their hopes for a call to rebellion. The Shi'ites practiced neutrality in the fighting rather than support of the invasion. In an interesting postscript to this event, an angry mob encircled Sistani's house shortly after the fall of Baghdad and demanded that he leave the country.[56] This action is sometimes seen as anger over his defeatism, but is alternatively explained as part of the rivalries within the Shi'ite community or even anger at his previous unwillingness to confront Saddam. Such a confrontation would of course have been fatal to Sistani.

Additionally, while the Shi'ite clergy were content to stand aside and watch the United States oust Saddam, they have displayed no interest in allowing the United States to shape future Iraqi institutions. Rather, a variety of Shi'ite religious leaders have sought to assume power themselves and limit the U.S. role in governance as much as possible. Following the defeat of Saddam loyalists in the south, Shi'ite clerics rapidly moved to establish themselves as the center of local government for the holy cities of Najaf and Karbala.[57] Religious passions, long suppressed under the Baathists, almost immediately reasserted themselves.

Shi'ite clerical efforts to dominate local government in the southern cities of Kut, Najaf, and Karbala, along with surrounding villages and towns, were carried out with remarkable speed and effectiveness. They did this in many cases by assuming control of essential services, including neighborhood security, garbage collection, firefighting, education, and hospital administration. They also appointed administrators and imposed curfews, while offering civic protection, jobs, health care, and financial assistance to the needy.[58] Clerical ability to assume these tasks was a direct result of organizational, communications, and fund-raising skills honed through years of religious activity and charity work, as well as limited efforts at dissent.[59]

In moving to take control of key aspects of local government, the clerics had a major advantage of being one of the groups least compromised by previous cooperative relations with Saddam. Saddam, as a secular leader, did make an effort to include Shi'ite technocrats in his leadership, but had little interest in working with Shi'ite clerics, beyond bribing or cajoling them into supporting

the regime. Conversely, a number of Shi'ite leaders were openly murdered by the Baath regime or disappeared under suspicious circumstances when they appeared too independent, or perhaps too capable of establishing a mass following. A few were publicly executed for openly supporting the Khomeini regime in Iran.[60]

Competition for power among clerics also rapidly materialized as the postwar situation unfolded. Occasionally, the followers of leading clerics sought to suggest that they were more anti-American than their rivals, apparently viewing this as a key asset in appealing to the Shi'ite masses.[61] Anti-Americanism was sometimes apparent at some of the Shi'ite rituals where politics and religion can easily become intertwined. Some marchers to Karbala, for example, were seen to be chanting or carrying signs calling for "Death to America."[62] The number of such signs was limited in the immediate postwar era and some were even written in Farsi, in a less than subtle indication of Iranian influence.[63]

The Najaf-based *Hawza al Ilmiya* (circle of scholars), which is formally headed by Grand Ayatollah al Sistani, emerged as a key voice of the Shi'ite clerical establishment in the postwar era. This organization is led by senior and hence older clerics such as the 73-year-old Sistani. Almost immediately after the war, mosques throughout the mostly Shi'ite south and the Shi'ite areas of Baghdad declared their allegiance to the Hawza.[64] However, it is not clear if they were declaring their allegiance to Sistani and his senior colleagues, clerical rule, or simply acknowledging their willingness to receive guidance from the Shi'ite leadership in Najaf without getting involved in the power struggles there.

Opposing Sistani for control of the religious establishment is the Sadr movement (sometimes called the Sadr-2 movement), led by Sayyid Muatada al Sadr, the son of Grand Ayatollah Muhammad Sadiq al Sadr. Grand Ayatollah al Sadr was murdered by Saddam's agents in February 1999 after his speeches became increasingly popular and showed some independence from government censorship.[65] Several of his older sons were murdered as well in the incident. The courage of Grand Ayatollah al Sadr, along with his martyrdom and that of his sons, has conferred considerable legitimacy on Muatada al Sadr, his surviving son. While Muatada

is too young to be a senior cleric, he has managed to have himself designated as the representative of Ayatollah Kazim al Husseini al Haeri, an Iraqi exile in Qom, Iran. This appointment has allowed Sadr to speak with considerable religious authority despite still being in his 20s.[66] Interestingly, Ayatollah al Haeri is one of the few Iraqi scholars to accept the Iranian concept of clerical rule.[67]

Al Sadr is widely viewed as both more ruthless and more anti-American than most Shi'ite clergy, and he sometimes maintains that the United States liberated Iraq only as a helpless tool of God.[68] Iraqis correspondingly owe the United States nothing. He is also believed to have been involved in the murder of Shi'ite cleric Abdul Majid al Khoei,[69] who had lived in exile in London and was widely described as "America's favorite cleric." Khoei nevertheless was probably murdered as part of a power struggle with Sadr and others and not for ideological reasons. Sadr, like his Iranian-based mentor Haeri, favors cleric rule.

Another organization that seeks to dominate the Iraqi religious establishment is the Iranian funded and supported Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI). SCIRI is led by Ayatollah Mohammad Bakir al Hakim, who has lived in exile in Iran for over 20 years. Many members of Hakim's family were killed by Saddam, and Hakim's record of opposition to the Baathists is sterling. SCIRI, according to some sources, is at least loosely affiliated with the reform movement in Iran rather than the hardliners, although it is difficult to predict how this linkage will influence their operations within Iraq.[70] Nevertheless, al Hakim did collaborate with the enemy during the Iran-Iraq War, and it is unclear if this can be forgiven due to his hostility to Saddam. It is also uncertain if Tehran will continue to dominate SCIRI now that al Hakim is seeking a power base outside Iran.

The military arm of SCIRI is the Badr Corps which has been infiltrating back into the Iraq since the war broke out. This group is comprised of 5,000-10,000 militiamen trained by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). Several thousand Badr Corps members are believed to be in Iraq now, giving Hakim an important advantage in providing trained militia for the preservation of security in Iraqi cities, towns, and villages. Other members have

been prevented from crossing the border by U.S. troops.[71]

One especially worrisome organization is the *al Dawa Islamiyah* (the Islamic Call) group. Al Dawa was founded in 1957 and has a long history as a terrorist organization, waging war against both Saddam Hussein's government and also occasionally Americans and U.S. supporters within the Arab World. In recent years, it has, however, focused more exclusively on fighting the Saddam regime. Currently, al Dawa claims to have several thousand fighters under arms, although the organization is also reported to be deeply fragmented. They also claim responsibility for a December 12, 1996, attack on Saddam Hussein's oldest son, Uday, in which he was severely wounded and two of his companions were killed.[72] This claim remains unproven, but is not unlikely given al Dawa's extensive use of assassination tactics.

While the Shi'ites of Iraq are a diverse group, it is a mistake to assume that they are too diverse to be brought under the control of clerical leaders in the near future. The clerics, as noted, are clearly the most organized indigenous source of leadership in Iraq and, as noted, many have been expanding their civil authority since early in the war, building on earlier communications and charity networks. An especially interesting question is whether a single leader will emerge to dominate the Shi'ite Iraqi clergy. If such a person does emerge and is highly politicized, he could be in a position to dominate Iraqi politics.

Many ordinary Shi'ites often tend to place more trust in their religious leaders rather than the secular elites for both religious reasons and because of the reluctance of many clerics to collaborate with Saddam beyond the limits required to survive. The example of the Iranian revolution also suggests that the mosque is one of the few places that citizens can go to feel some distance from a dictatorial government (in this case the government of Iran's last shah).[73] If this kind of citizen-mosque connection exists to the same extent in Iraq, it could further strengthen the clerics in any struggle with secular elites.

Some Shi'ite clerics have also begun stating that it is unacceptable to take humanitarian aid from any source except the mosque.[74] Ideally, from their point of view, they should become the intermediary for

all aid going to the population, thus establishing an ironclad grip on power. Such an approach, while intolerable from a U.S. standpoint, may appear more reasonable to the Iraqi population because of the activities of Christian missionaries in that country, some of whom are believed to seek to convert Muslims to Christianity.[75] These organizations have been in Iraq since the end of the war, giving out food and medicine.[76] In Islam apostasy is an unpardonable sin punishable by death. While it is extremely doubtful that converted Muslims would be executed, they nevertheless would become pariahs within their own society.

It is also possible that the radical Shi'ite clergy would seek power by constitutional means and then dismantle the democratic process to set themselves up in power permanently. This type of approach has been dramatically referred to as "one person, one vote, one time."[77] Currently, the press is reporting that many Iraqi clerics oppose clerical rule, but these statements need to be placed in context. The Iranian concept of *Velayat-e Faqih* (Guardianship of the Jurist) has been denounced by the Iraqi religious establishment during Saddam's reign because failure to do so would have placed them in danger of severe regime punishment, including execution. Clerical rule may gain a new appeal in the post-Saddam era, although the Iranian model is also filled with failures and problems that could cause Iraqi religious leaders to reconsider any effort to seize formal power.

The Sunnis and the Kurds in Post-Saddam Iraq.

Shi'ite power appears to be on the rise in Iraq, increasing the possibility of a new Iraqi nationalism with a Shi'ite face. Sunni Arabs and Kurds correspondingly are watching these developments with great interest. Thus far, most Sunnis seem to be adopting a wait-and-see attitude. Despite possible changes in the distribution of power, Iraqi Sunnis have little choice but to accept social change and perhaps search out new ways to dominate the emerging political entity. Additionally, Sunni groups are establishing neighborhood militias as rapidly as possible as a hedge against future problems.[78] They can also be expected to pay considerable attention to the

sectarian composition of emerging national military and police institutions since these are the traditional instruments of Sunni Arab domination.[79]

Sunni Arabs have special reasons to view the U.S. presence in Iraq with suspicion. The foremost partisans of the old regime were Sunni, and many Sunnis may feel that they have the most to lose in a process of de-Baathification. Thus, some Sunnis may believe that the longer the United States remains in Iraq, the more danger that they will be pushed farther from the levers of power by a comprehensive de-Baathification program. The loss of power is especially frightening to those Sunnis who believe that their entire community at some point may be held responsible for Saddam's crimes and those of his Sunni predecessors. Naturally, any U.S. slackening on de-Baathification to appease Sunni Muslims threatens to alienate victims of the Baath and particularly Shi'ite Arabs and Kurds.[80]

The majority Sunni view about the creation of an Islamic republic is as yet uncertain. Sunni Arabs are usually considered the most secularized Arabs of Iraq, although it is unclear if they will choose to remain as such. Some Sunnis seem to view the possibility of an Islamic republic positively, and Sunni religious parties have been formed including the Iraqi Islamic Party. This party seems to be relatively moderate at this time and claims to favor coexistence with Christians and Jews and has also renounced violence.[81] Moreover, even the most devout Sunnis can be expected to oppose any efforts by the Iranians to expand their influence in Iraq as such influence would almost certainly be placed at the disposal of the Iraqi Shi'ites.

Kurdish groups have had few good experiences at the hands of central governments in Baghdad and numerous bad ones. Yet, of all their bad experiences, their interaction with Saddam has been especially traumatic. Following the end of the Iran-Iraq War in 1988, Saddam ordered the Republican Guard to move against the Kurds to punish them for collaboration with the Iranians. The resulting campaign, known as the Anfal, destroyed large tracts of Kurdistan and provoked Human Rights groups to charge that acts of genocide were taking place. Chemical weapons and possibly fuel air explosives were used against Kurdish civilians in this campaign.[82]

The aftermath of Saddam's defeat may be the best chance that the Kurds see for gaining de facto independence or a strong measure of autonomy that includes control of extensive oil resources. It can be expected that all major Kurdish groups will explore the potential to separate informally from Baghdad, watching the responses from Baghdad, Washington, Ankara, Tehran, and Damascus. They will probably resist the temptation to declare formal independence immediately since this would provoke unfriendly reactions from a number of neighboring states, most notably Turkey.

Iraqi Kurds have long experience with Sunni Arab governments that make concessions to them while those governments are weak and then attempt to reclaim those concessions once they become stronger. For that reason, the Kurds can be expected to do everything that they can to institutionalize central government concessions. At a minimum, they will seek a separate military capability, even if these troops are part of a national Iraqi military on paper.

It might also be noted that Iraqi Kurds, protected by the United States, have been governing themselves from an autonomous enclave since 1991. Self-government has become increasingly important to their needs since that time. Nevertheless, the Kurds currently occupy only about half of the territory that both of their major parties claim should be the total area of autonomous Kurdistan.[83] Differences over the future of this disputed territory could become especially serious in the post-Saddam era. Some problems have already emerged as Kurds attempt to reclaim homes taken from them as a result of Saddam's efforts to "Arabize" strategic and economically valuable areas of northern Iraq.[84] Coalition authorities are currently working closely with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on this issue, which could present an ongoing challenge to U.S. goals in the region.[85]

Moreover, the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) have a mixed record of being able to cooperate with each other. In 1996 they fought a brief war while seeking support from outside powers.[86] The PUK obtained Iranian support, and the KDP then accepted aid from Saddam. The propensity of these two groups to disagree and then to seek foreign help does not bode well for the future of northern Iraq.

Kurdish assertiveness can also be expected to produce an Arab backlash. A variety of emerging Iraqi leaders may feel compelled to emphasize Iraqi nationalism as a way of unifying the country as it comes under more centrifugal pressures especially those from secessionist Kurds. The result could be a renewal of guerrilla war between the Baghdad center and the Kurdish areas as soon as the international environment permits such events to occur.

Tribal Identity and Iraqi Nationalism.

The Sunni, Shi'ite, and Kurdish populations of Iraq are further subdivided by tribal affiliation with hundreds of tribes scattered throughout the country. While previous Iraqi governments have viewed tribes as suspicious alternative sources of authority, Saddam viewed them as forming important fault lines upon which to splinter and further fractionalize potential sources of opposition within larger ethnic and religious communities.[87] Additionally, as noted, Sunni tribes have been key recruiting grounds for the officer corps of the Iraqi military. Thus, Saddam ignored Baathist ideology which proclaims tribes backward and an obstacle to modernization, in order to use the tribal system as a bulwark of his own power. Saddam has even called the Baath party "the tribe encompassing all tribes."[88]

Saddam's retribalization of Iraq began in the 1980s and appears to have some links to Arab nationalism. In the war with Iran, Saddam was concerned about the prospects for betrayal by the Shi'ite population of his country and therefore made strong efforts to emphasize the Arab identity of Iraqis. Part of this effort seems to have been a renewed emphasis on the importance of the tribal identity as part of the wider Iraqi identity. In a deeply ambitious ploy of totalitarian manipulation, Saddam hoped to strengthen tribalism to support the Iraqi identity while also using it to fragment political opponents.

The progress of retribalization over the last several decades is also impressive. In that timeframe, townsmen, several generations removed from the countryside started to "rediscover" their tribal identities and affiliations. Some of these same people have sought

out a tribal sheikh to ask permission to affiliate with his tribe in cases where their own lineage has become unclear. This is done to seek the protection and support of the tribe and improve chances for individual advancement.[89]

Tribalism also seems to have strengthened in the Kurdish areas during Saddam's presidency as a result of central government policies. During the Iran-Iraq War, Kurdish conscripts were exceptionally prone to desertion at the earliest opportunity, leading Baghdad to switch to a tribal strategy to manage the Kurds and address the manpower drain. In a move away from the conscription of individual Kurds, the Iraqi government paid the leaders of Kurdish tribal militias to perform various security duties useful to the war effort. Tribalism was strengthened accordingly.

U.S. forces in Iraq are thus faced with the requirement to operate within a highly tribalized society. This situation can create a number of problems. Recently, tribal feuds have been reported as becoming more evident, and, in at least one case, the identification of regime collaborators was complicated by denunciations based on tribal disputes.[90] Additionally, tribalism may strengthen anti-Americanism by reinforcing a chauvinistic form of Iraqi nationalism, while simultaneously making Iraq more difficult to govern due to tribal fragmentation. Also, where possible, tribal leaders may attempt to lure the United States into supporting them in their various disputes. On the positive side, tribal leaders may be useful contacts with whom to deal. Some important tribal leaders, especially in the Kurdish areas, have already indicated a strong interest in establishing good relations with U.S. authorities, whom they view as a source of patronage.[91] They might also serve as something of a counterweight to radical members of the clergy.

Iraqi Nationalism and Iranian Involvement in Postwar Iraq.

The Iranians watched the 2003 war with tremendous apprehension, but also with a strong interest in the opportunities that might be available to influence the post-Saddam era. In the aftermath of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars, Iran has found itself increasingly encircled by U.S. allies or potential client states. A friendly government in

Iraq would help Tehran break out of its encirclement and extend its influence throughout the region. An unfriendly government would leave Iran vulnerable to increasing U.S. pressure.

The Iranians are also aware that an Islamic government in Iraq may be organized along different lines than their own system and correspondingly might be viewed as an alternative model for pious Muslims. Another concern for Tehran is that dissident Iranian clerics may seek exile in Najaf just as Ayatollah Khomeini did in his conflict with Iran's last shah. The existence of a powerful foreign center of Shi'ite learning willing to shelter Iranian dissidents must be among Tehran's worst nightmares.

An Iraqi government that was both Islamic and democratic would be of particular concern to Tehran. Thus Iran can reasonably be assumed to have an interest in a government that is both friendly to Tehran and supportive of the Iranian principle of clerical rule. It is also possible that the Iranians would find an Iraqi civil war followed by the disintegration of the Iraqi state as an acceptable alternative, although they would never publicly admit to such a hope. A rump Shi'ite state in southern Iraq would be easier for Tehran to dominate, especially if it were under pressure from the Iraqi center. Moreover, in this case, an Iraqi invasion of Iran such as occurred in 1980 would no longer be possible since the state would have been dismembered and its sources of strength dissipated among competing factions and breakaway states. The chief drawback of this scenario for Iran would be the potential for huge numbers of Iraqi refugees to flee across the Iranian border.

Iran is using a variety of tactics to gain influence in Iraq including the media. Arabic language broadcasts of Iranian television can be received with an ordinary antenna in Baghdad, and the Iranians have taken considerable advantage of their access. In the immediate aftermath of the war this became the primary television news source for Iraqis as their own government's broadcasts had been knocked off the air as a result of bombing. Iranian television is virulently anti-American and repeats all of the worst charges against the U.S. presence in Iraq.[92] Al Alam television, a 24-hour news channel operated by Iran's state television and radio network, is a particularly convenient source of news and Iranian propaganda.[93] The Iranians

also attempt to reach Iraqi citizens using radio broadcasts. The United States has countered this effort through increased activity by the Voice of America in Iraq and the reestablishment of Iraqi state television. The use of Iraqi state television to reach Iraqi citizens was delayed in the immediate aftermath of the war as result of the looting of massive amounts of equipment.[94]

One of the most important ways Iran hopes to influence the future of Iraq is through SCIRI and its armed wing the Badr Corps. Agents of the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS) and members of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) are widely believed to be accompanying Badr Corps fighters infiltrating into Iraq from Iran.[95] These actions place an extremely strong Iranian subversive element in Iraq for the clear purpose of advancing Iranian interests.

A key question therefore becomes whether Iraqi nationalism will permit pro-Iranian leaders to assume and retain a position of leadership in post-Saddam Iraq. Additionally, is it likely that nationalist Shi'ite Iraqis will support Iranian-backed Iraqi leaders if they believe these leaders will be able to deliver a new Iraq in which Shi'ites dominate the political system?

While the answers to the above questions are uncertain, there are reasons why collaboration with the Iranians may lack the salience that it held during the Iran-Iraq War. Most importantly, with U.S. forces now in Iraq, many Iraqi Shi'ites may assume that the United States is a more serious threat than Iran in any competition to dominate their country. Additionally, the internal Iraqi power sharing arrangement has yet to be worked out among Iraqi Sunnis, Kurds, and Shi'ites. Many Shi'ites may view Iranian backing as a powerful hedge against Sunni efforts to deprive them of majority rule or Kurdish efforts to achieve de facto independence from the country. Additionally, some clerics are perhaps willing to play off the United States and Iran without committing themselves to support either side.

Finally, the most important reason for Iraqis to consider accepting an Iranian presence may be that various Iraqi clerics remain in conflict with secular elites and each other for leadership of their community. Aid from Iran may be useful to some leaders in pursuing this competition. They may therefore put aside any

feelings of resentment toward Iran as they focus on outmaneuvering their rivals. Alternatively, those not favored with Iranian largess could choose to criticize rivals for receiving it.

The Powder Keg: Hostile Incidents between U.S. Forces and the Iraqi Population.

Foreign invasions can often feed and nourish national emotions and extremism. A prolonged postwar U.S. military presence can also nourish the same feelings. Additionally, the more disruptive an occupation is to daily life, the more likely it will be to generate resentment. Yet, an occupation that does not produce personal security for the population will also engender feelings of anger as has already been seen in Iraq. U.S. troops in the field are thus given the choice of a light footprint that limits direct friction with the population or a heavier footprint that provides more security. Whatever they are assigned to do, their actions will be criticized by multiple voices both inside and outside Iraq. There is no option which will fail to produce substantial criticism.

The occupation will feel heavy-handed to Iraqis if their basic religious institutions are challenged and if low level fighting between civilian Iraqi guerrillas and U.S. forces begins to develop and escalate. The longer the United States stays in Iraq, the more potential will exist for the radical expansion of confrontations between U.S. forces and increasingly hostile Shi'ites. Yet an early departure risks the country collapsing in anarchy and civil war. Meeting the goal of a stable government will require a continuing presence in Iraq that could well become increasingly unwelcome over time. Indeed, after the first year of a U.S. presence, Iraqis could become particularly impatient.

Some attacks against U.S. forces have occurred following the war, but most of this violence appears to have been conducted by residual Saddam loyalists or anti-American individuals acting as individuals or small groups rather than as part of a larger campaign. To date, the most problematic of these incidents have occurred at Fallujah, a Sunni city of 200,000, 35 miles west of Baghdad, known for its strong Baathist presence.[96] The Shi'ites, in contrast, are still holding back,

although some state that military operations against U.S. forces may become necessary if the United States seeks to act in an imperial manner. Fatih Kashif al Ghita, a Hawza representative, summarized the situation by stating, "I hope that the occupation troops will not compel Iraqis who welcomed them to resort to violence. The Americans can avoid such an eventuality if they demonstrate an understanding of the political, social, economic, and even religious realities in Iraq."[97]

It should also be noted that there have been some serious incidents with the Shi'ites that could have escalated but fortunately did not. In An Numaniyah, U.S. Marines briefly arrested Shi'ite cleric Said Habib at his house and were almost immediately surrounded by a hostile crowd just beyond Habib's courtyard. As the crowd grew and some among them appeared to be armed, the Marines aimed their weapons at the Iraqis. At this point, the potential for a tragic incident seemed high, but tensions quickly defused when a Marine intelligence team, and its Iraqi-American civilian translator arrived and convinced the Marines to remove tape from the cleric's wrists and mouth. It was then established that Sheikh Habib has been falsely accused by a tainted source. Later, when the cleric and his supporters were released, he accepted the explanation that the entire episode had been a mistake, and helped to calm the crowd.[98] At the point where weapons were trained on the crowd, the panic or indiscipline of only one Marine could have caused the situation to degenerate into carnage.

Should the current situation in Iraq ever reach the point where hostile crowds and nervous troops meet on a regular basis, it is uncertain that events will go as well as they did in An Numaniyah. If such encounters do recur with less successful outcomes, it is likely that resistance to the U.S. presence could increase substantially. It is also likely that various clerics would issue *fatwas* calling for resistance to the U.S. presence, perhaps by force of arms.

Moreover, the nucleus for anti-Western organizations already exists. Shi'ite organizations such as al Dawa that waged an underground struggle against Saddam during the years of tyranny are both extreme and predisposed to violence. No other form of Shi'ite organization (say a collection of moderates or reformers)

would have challenged Saddam through terrorism by force of arms. Only hard core militants had the strength to endure Saddam's brutality and continue to fight.

The greatest danger of confrontation is that it might provoke an intensification of terrorism or even a full scale insurgency. Should a large element of Iraqi society become mobilized against the U.S. presence, this could become an exceptionally serious problem. Most Iraqi males have previously served in the military or militia, are familiar with small arms, and have some basic military skills. Moreover, Iraq, even under Saddam, has been an exceptionally well-armed society. In keeping with Arab concepts of manhood, many adult males had firearms of some sort, although these weapons had to be registered with the Iraqi government, and the misuse of them was severely punished. Also, in the aftermath of the 2003 war, many Republican Guard, Army, and militia arsenals were looted placing even larger numbers of weapons into Iraqi society. Looting and crime that followed the U.S. seizure of Baghdad naturally led a number of individuals to purchase weapons from the black market for self-defense.

Conclusion: Implications for U.S. Troops Remaining in Iraq.

Nationalist emotion seems to flourish when challenged or when an external power presents a threat of some kind. Palestinian nationalism developed rapidly and became angry in response to Zionism. Kurdish nationalism developed in response to Turkish, Iraqi, and other attempts to eradicate it. The danger of a new Iraqi Arab nationalism defining itself as an anti-U.S. force is real, but it may still be possible to minimize this phenomenon.

Iraqi nationalism is currently in the process of redefining itself for a post-Saddam world. The chances of this nationalism being anti-Western and anti-U.S. seem serious. With Saddam's defeat, the choice for Iraqis is no longer between his brutality and foreign rule. The choice may appear to them to be between direct or indirect foreign rule and rule by indigenous elites, most probably the clergy. While Shi'ite clerics were among the bitterest enemies of the Saddam regime, this bitterness has not translated into love of the United

States or a high level of toleration for U.S. influence in Iraq. With this in mind, the author provides the following policy guidelines and recommendations.

1. *The United States needs to be continually searching for areas of agreement with the nonextremist clergy while recognizing issues and activities upon which collaboration is not possible.* It is natural and useful for the United States to encourage secular and liberal trends in Iraq. Yet, if the United States attempts to circumvent the religious Shi'ites, there is a risk that we will appear to be denying the clerics their due. It is interesting that the Shi'ite clergy was able to maintain itself as a source of at least some authority throughout the Saddam Hussein years. If Saddam, with his unlimited capacity for brutality, had to coexist with it, then it is unrealistic to think that U.S. power can eliminate clerical influence in politics. Moreover, the United States, as a non-Muslim power, will be at a severe disadvantage in attempting to explain actions that the Shi'ite clergy label as hostile to Islam. Rather, the United States may have to show its concerns for Iraqi citizens with strong aid programs. These programs may be coordinated with the clergy but never ceded to their control.

2. *The United States should continue to support a strong information campaign directed at the Iraqi citizenry.* Views that the United States seeks to wipe out or Americanize Islam are widespread in the Arab World and need to be refuted by both an information campaign and the conduct of U.S. troops. It has already been noted that some Iraqis are concerned about U.S. forces bringing vice, bad morals, alcohol, and sexually transmitted diseases into the country. All possible effort should be made to refute the stereotype of U.S. troops as a threat to Muslim morals. It might even be useful for U.S. troops not to eat or drink water too publicly during Ramadan as a gesture of solidarity. Any U.S. military collaboration with Christian proselytizing risks a severe backlash.

3. *The United States should maintain and expand efforts to challenge Iranian activities in the area while continuing to point out the differences between Iraqi and Iranian interests.* Respecting Islam does not require

U.S. forces to tolerate Iranian infiltration across the border or let Iranian propaganda go unchallenged. U.S. efforts to interdict Badr Corps operatives are important and should be continued. Also, as noted earlier in this work, Iran would probably see a number of advantages in the dismemberment of Iraq and its corresponding collapse as a major Arab state. This prospect and other potential anti-Arab agendas may be worth pointing out publicly as a counterpoint to Iranian anti-U.S. charges. Furthermore, a continuing U.S. information campaign in general is vital to reaching the Iraqi population. Such a campaign will need to confront aggressively the many conspiracy theories that arise on their own as well as those which become prominent through Iranian encouragement.

4. *U.S. troops must never be allowed to treat the Iraqis as ungrateful wards.* A natural cultural conflict between U.S. troops and Iraqi civilians might also be expected over the issues of both gratitude and values. U.S. troops have been told that they have liberated a long-suffering people from the clutches of a bloodthirsty tyrant. This is true, but by internalizing this fact, U.S. troops may at some level expect a population that is passive, dependent, and grateful. This is an illusion. U.S. troops are dealing with a proud people who are still not certain that their liberation was the result of U.S. altruistic motives. The United States must avoid any acts that may symbolically imply U.S. sovereignty over Iraq. Moreover, Iraqis, like most other Arabs, are highly sensitive to status. They will notice and take offense should they be treated in an arrogant or condescending manner. Additionally, American and Arab ways of understanding a problem are often so different that little can be assumed when the two work together. It is correspondingly important to discuss any joint plans or projects in detail to insure that misunderstandings do not take place.

5. *Extensive detail work needs to be maintained and expanded to avoid conflict between U.S. soldiers and Iraqi civilians.* One of the most serious dangers facing U.S. soldiers is that patterns of confrontation may develop between U.S. troops and nationalist militants seeking to end the U.S. presence. U.S. troops must understand the need to opt

out of such confrontations with Iraqis when there is a way to do so. When possible, U.S. troops need to develop friendly relations with neighborhood leaders. Proper liaison with local leaders will help efforts to settle grievances before they reach the level of confrontation and are important. Additionally, military intelligence units will need to keep local commanders informed about groups that are seeking to confront the United States over legitimate grievances and those that are seeking excuses to confront the United States in an effort to incite opinion against the U.S. presence.

6. *Troops that remain in Iraq will need extensive training in the conduct of occupation duties.* U.S. Army combat troops and U.S. Marines are often trained in the aggressive use of force to deal with an enemy. Force as a last resort may not be a principle high in their concerns and priorities due to past training and background. Winning a war and maintaining peace in a post-conflict environment are different skills with different approaches about when to use force. Those without a background in occupation duty may need immediate support from mobile training teams. Deescalating confrontational situations rather than escalating them is of course essential.

7. *U.S. forces need to be careful and precise about what they mean by the term "de-Baathification."* "De-Baathification" is a concept borrowed from the post-World War II context of de-Nazification, where the United States sought to uproot an ideology based on race hatred and dictatorship. In the case of the Baath, as noted earlier, some aspects of ideology such as an equality of religions and secularization are not in conflict with basic human values. What is in conflict is the way in which Saddam Hussein used the Baath party as an instrument of social control and a justification for dictatorship. "De-Saddamization" and if possible "democratication" are probably more useful words to describe U.S. goals. U.S. leaders also need to make clear that de-Baathification does not mean that the United States opposes a strong and restored Arab World in favor of a divided and impoverished Arab society. The United States is not against an Arab renaissance.

8. *The United States needs to expand the numbers of foreign Arab*

and Muslim troops involved with the management of postwar Iraq. Their presence in Iraq for postwar security duties could also be very valuable in convincing Iraqis that the United States is not interested in severing them from the larger Arab World. Such a deployment would have to be coordinated with responsible Iraqi leaders. Moreover, many Arab and Muslim countries would probably be willing to contribute to a postwar stabilization force if it was authorized by the United Nations. While the United States may have to help finance such a force, it would be worth the expense to reduce the danger of U.S. confrontations with the population and assuage Iraqi fears of U.S. domination.

Finally, the United States has a reputation in the Arab World of favoring democracy so long as the democratic process produces leaders acceptable to Western interests. Advocating democracy and dictating who can be elected are two different concepts. One of the clearest ways the United States can avoid a nationalist backlash is to recognize that ousting Saddam Hussein has not earned for us the privilege of dominating Iraq for the indefinite future. If U.S. leaders believe that it does, then the United States has truly become a colonial power that will inevitably face colonial wars.

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