Iraq (26)

(218)

IRAQ BACKGROUNDER:

WHAT LIES BENEATH

1 October 2002

international
crisis group

ICG Middle East Report N°6
Amman/Brussels

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. OVERVIEW 3

II. THE REGIME 4

A. THE ORIGINS OF THE REGIME 4

B. IRAQ UNDER THE BAATH 5

C. IRAQ UNDER SADDAM HUSSEIN 6

D. THE WAR WITH IRAN AND THE GULF WAR 6

E. THE CURRENT STRUCTURE AND DYNAMICS OF POWER 9

F. ASSESSING THE REGIME'S STABILITY 10

III. DOMESTIC FAULT LINES AND TENSIONS 13

A. CONFESSIONALISM: SUNNIS AND SHIITES 14

B. ETHNICITY: ARABS, KURDS, AND OTHERS 17

C. TRIBES 20

IV. THE ORGANISED OPPOSITION 21

A. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW 22

B. WHO'S WHO 24

1. The Iraqi National Congress (INC) 24

2. Kurdish Organisations 25

a) The KDP and the PUK 25

b) Islamist and Other Movements 28

3. Religious Forces 29

a) The Da'wa Party 29

b) The Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq 31

c) The Organisation of Islamic Action 33

d) The Iman al-Khoei-Foundation 33

4. Military and Nationalists 34

a) The Iraqi National Accord and the Iraqi Free Officers 34

b) Pan-Arab and Baathist Parties 35

5. Communists 36

6. Democrats 36

APPENDICES

A. MAP OF IRAQ 38

B. MAP OF NO-FLY ZONES AND MAIN KURDISH AREAS IN IRAQ 39

C. ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP 40

D. ICG REPORTS AND BRIEFING PAPERS 41

E. ICG BOARD MEMBERS 46

ICG Middle East Report N°6

1 October 2002

IRAQ BACKGROUNDER: WHAT LIES BENEATH

I. OVERVIEW

This background report reviews the mechanics of Saddam Hussein's rule, looks at the political dynamics that govern relations between religious and ethnic entities, and describes the various opposition groups and their potential role. It does not seek to predict the course of events in Iraq or to argue for any particular course of action. This is the first in a series of reports and briefing papers that ICG intends to issue on the challenges posed by Iraq,[1] including the state of the country more than a decade after the Gulf War; regional attitudes toward a possible U.S. military offensive; the status of Iraqi Kurdistan; and Iran's posture toward a U.S.-led war and Iraq after Saddam Hussein.

While much public attention has been focused on the prospects of a war and how it might unfold, far less has been devoted to the question of Iraq's future – with or without a military confrontation. Yet the challenges of building a new political order may be no less than those of tearing an old one down – particularly in the case of a country emerging from a long period of authoritarian rule. Understanding the nature of the challenges that might emerge in the future requires understanding the nature of the current regime and of the underlying tensions and fault-lines within Iraqi society at large. From commentators and policy-watchers several very different scenarios emerge:

- One tends to see in the efforts by the Iraqi opposition to unify around a common pluralistic and federalist platform and in the Iraqi people's aspiration for a different kind of regime the possibility of building a stable and democratic Iraq.
- Another focuses more on the tensions between Kurds and Arabs, between Shiites and Sunnis and between tribes; on the prospects for bloodletting and score-settling by Iraqis who have suffered long years of dictatorship; and on the risks of meddling by Iran, Turkey or Syria, and paints a far more worrisome picture of civil war and chaos.[2]
- A third imagines a continuation of authoritarian rule under a new guise, the result of a coup by Saddam Hussein's inner circle – or what generally is referred to as Saddamism without Saddam.

In many respects, the 1991 Gulf War was far from a finishing chapter in the Iraqi saga. While Iraq's armed forces were forced to leave neighbouring Kuwait, the Iraqi regime has continued to thwart the will of the international community and to perpetuate its hold on power. Evidence suggests that the regime is deeply unpopular at home, but it has continued to rule through a combination of fear, a sophisticated security network and various measures of political and economic cooptation. It also has either debilitated potential alternative centres of power or ensured that they are constituted along narrow lines to make any alliance among them unlikely. While the internationally imposed sanctions[3] undeniably have limited the resources available to it, the regime has been able to establish increasingly sophisticated mechanisms

[1] This report is based on extensive fieldwork in central Iraq in 2001 and on more recent interviews in Iraqi Kurdistan (August 2002), as well as among the Iraqi opposition in exile in Iran (August 2002), London (January and June 2002) and Damascus (February 2002).

[2] Major-General Saad Obeidi, who prior to defecting was in charge of psychological warfare, predicted that "Given Iraq's 40-year history of repression, it is highly likely that blood will fill the streets". Quoted in David Isenberg, "The Aftermath", *Asia Times*, 3 August 2002.

[3] UN Security Council Resolution 687 of 3 April 1991 formally ended the Gulf War and imposed a multi-faceted sanctions regime.

of contraband trade to circumvent them. Paradoxically, the sanctions also have deepened the population's dependence on the regime that they were designed to weaken.

The regime's ability to survive derives as well from structural tensions within Iraqi society, some of which pre-date Saddam Hussein's rule, most of which he has endeavoured to deepen since the 1991 Gulf War, and many of which are likely to outlive his tenure. These include important ethnic and religious fault-lines. Iraqi Kurds have a long history of repression at the hands of the central government and have suffered enormously under the current regime, which has successfully manipulated Arab-Kurdish as well as recurring intra-Kurdish tensions. Any attempt to build a stable Iraq and preserve its territorial integrity will need to address the Kurds' legitimate grievances. Much of the Kurdish population has come to enjoy considerable political autonomy from Baghdad as a result of the direct flow of revenue from the UN Oil-for-Food Program, and they are not about to accept a rollback of their new status. Fear of losing this status coupled with Washington's historically inconsistent record of support for the Kurds explains why many of them, though deeply hostile to the regime, also are wary of the impact of a U.S.-led regime change. An internationally-backed formula for power-sharing, for example under some kind of federal structure, may go some way to ensuring internal Iraqi stability and minimising third party intervention (e.g., from Turkey or Iran) prompted by the Kurdish question.

Shiites, who constitute a majority of the Iraqi population, are increasingly assertive in rejecting their traditional marginal status within society. Rifts between Shiites and Sunnis, therefore, will need to be mended as part of an effort at national reconciliation that must include an end to any form of discrimination and intensified endeavours to rebuild the predominantly Shiite south. At the same time, there is far less to this division than generally assumed. Shiites are present at all levels of the Iraqi government, including Saddam Hussein's inner circle and the ruling Baath Party. While they undeniably suffer from social and political discrimination, it is difficult to speak of a strict Sunni or Shiite identity in Iraq. Among Shiites in particular a wide variety of views about politics and religion, contradicts the stereotypical image of a monolithic, radical and pro-Iranian community. Playing up Shiite discontent with the regime and encouraging a separate Shiite identity in the hope of undermining Saddam Hussein runs the risk of exacerbating religious tensions that, so far, have been kept relatively in check.

Other, less visible divisions are of equal importance. Tribalism in particular is a significant but often neglected feature of the political landscape. Even while Saddam Hussein has denounced it, his power structure relies heavily on affiliations to his own clan and on a network of Sunni tribes that constitute the core of the Republican and Special Republican Guards.

Religious, ethnic, tribal but also class-based and ideological splits will complicate attempts to rebuild Iraq. Already, they have seriously complicated attempts to build the Iraqi opposition. Having fled as a result of regime repression, and therefore unable to function inside the country, most opposition groups have had a hard time maintaining close links with the Iraqi people. Moreover, the opposition has been hobbled by divisions along the fault-lines mentioned above. In some instances, opposition groups have served as little more than vehicles for personal ambition. This situation, in turn, has made it easier for the regime to keep dissent at bay.

The debilitated state of Iraq's political and civil society combined with the ineffectiveness and divisiveness of the opposition have led some to bank on a military coup to oust the regime. Iraq's military, to be sure, has a history of intrusive intervention in politics and is viewed by many Sunnis as a potential bulwark against future Shiite predominance. But a successful coup remains highly improbable in Saddam Hussein's tightly controlled regime, particularly absent the impetus of external military action. A concerted U.S. attack aimed at unseating the regime, or a credible threat thereto, may make it more likely that officers in Saddam Hussein's inner circle will cross the barrier of fear that his police state has carefully constructed over the years and seek to overthrow the regime. Yet even a successful military coup may well lead to a narrowly-based regime governing along tribal lines, with resultant political instability.

The task of building a stable and pluralistic Iraq is enormous. The country does not divide up as neatly as people often assume, with a Shiite south, a Sunni centre and a Kurdish north, and the Iraqi

people do not necessarily feel represented by the ethnically or religiously-based organisations that seek to speak on their behalf. Instead, there are tribal, ideological, and class rivalries that – given Iraq's lack of familiarity with genuine democracy and its surplus of experience with force as a means of effectuating political change – could produce violent confrontations and a continued militarisation of politics. Finding acceptable and representative leaders will in all likelihood be complicated, not a matter simply of importing the exiled opposition. As a result, the distribution of power and resources will be difficult and the risks of chaos, instability, and extra-judicial score-settling high.

The international community is only beginning to come to terms with this task. A future government eventually will have to address critical challenges – attending to the structural problems that have plagued Iraq for decades, establishing a functioning democratic system, redressing and restructuring the economy, addressing the Kurdish question, dealing with the difficult matter of Iraq's borders,[4] and promoting national reconciliation. Even in the event of an outside intervention, and whatever regime succeeds Saddam Hussein's in the short run, ultimately Iraqi political forces, both inside and outside the country, will help answer those questions and shape the character of the regime. It would be far better to think about these issues carefully now than to react hurriedly later, forced by swiftly moving events.

To a degree that knows few precedents in modern history, the future of Iraq is likely to be an interactive process between, on the one hand, Iraq and its citizens and, on the other hand, many outside actors, including its immediate neighbours, the Arab world, Western powers and the United Nations. Giving the great numbers within Iraq who have been effectively disenfranchised by the current regime a say in their own economic and political future will be one of the most fundamental and difficult challenges of all.

[4] Successive Iraqi regimes, not just Saddam's, have attempted to alter the country's borders through negotiations or by force. In the South, Baghdad has sought wider and more secure access to the Persian or Arab Gulf for commercial and political reasons. This desire underlies the repeated claims that royal, republican and Baath regimes have made on Kuwait, as well as the intermittent crises with Iran over the boundary of the Shatt al-Arab. Governments in Baghdad have focused on one or the other of these issues for practically the entire history of the modern state. To date, none of the problems that drove successive Iraqi governments to state their claims or take action has been solved. Indeed, they arguably have worsened since Saddam Hussein has come to power.

II. THE REGIME

A. THE ORIGINS OF THE REGIME[5]

Since Iraq's emergence as a modern state after the installation of a British-backed Hashemite Kingdom in 1921, Iraqi politics have often been subject to extremes: from authoritarian monarchism to oppressive totalitarian rule, from severe civil-ethnic strife to external adventurism. The creation of Iraq out of three distinct and separate provinces (two Arab and one Kurdish) of the Ottoman Empire has left behind a legacy of internal and external dispute over the nature and legitimacy of the Iraqi polity and introduced an element of arbitrariness to its borders that is still a powerful influence today. Iraq is, in this respect, little different from the rest of the Arab world, sharing as it does many of the problems of internal legitimacy and national cohesion that sprung from post-Ottoman Western attempts at geopolitical engineering. But even a cursory review of Iraq's contemporary history suggests a particular intensity and turbulence that sets it apart from most of its neighbours.

With the fall of the Hashemite monarchy in 1958, the new regime led by General Abdul-Karim Qassim sought to infuse Iraq with a sense of identity and to define its role in the Arab world based on a combination of strident nationalism and domestic social reform. But Qassim's experiment was short-lived, and its aftermath was a legacy of internal strife and political tensions. The anti-monarchical forces soon fractured into competing factions reflecting the country's political and ethnic splits and the influence of external forces. The army's involvement in politics was matched by the growth of populist movements driven by growing Arab nationalism (embodied in the Nasserite/Arab nationalist organisations and the Baath Party) and demands for social change (embodied in the then-powerful Iraqi Communist Party, ICP).[6]

The period between 1958 and 1968 was marked by a struggle between these ideological and political forces and their respective power bases within the armed forces and society at large. Qassim used the ICP to counter and contain the Baath, the Arab Nationalist Movement and the independent nationalists alike but gave the party little access to the real centres of power in government or the armed forces. In February 1963, he was toppled by a military coup and executed. Although the Baathists were central in organising the coup, the new regime headed by Abdel-Salam Arif – a non-Baathist officer – represented a broader coalition with other Arab nationalist elements. The Arif coup also saw the rise to prominence for the first time of a number of senior Baath figures from the small town of Tikrit on the Tigris River in northern Iraq.[7] But despite a ruthless campaign led by its militia against the ICP, the Baath Party was outmanoeuvred by Arif and unable to consolidate its grip on power. By November 1963, the Baath was riven by internal schisms, and Arif's pre-emptive coup ousted it.

The Iraqi Baathists acquired a new base, however, as a result of a military coup that brought the Baath to power in Syria. In early 1964, Michel Aflaq, then Secretary General of the National Command (ostensibly overseeing Baath activities across the Arab world) designated Saddam Hussein as Secretary of a newly constituted Iraqi Regional Command and his relative Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr as head of its military wing.[8] As part of the

[5] This chapter draws upon unpublished work by Hussein Agha and Ahmad Khalidid. Principal sources on the history of Iraq include Marion Farouk-Sluglett and Peter Sluglett: *Iraq Since 1958. From Revolution to Dictatorship* (London, revised edition 2001); Phebe Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq* (Boulder, 1985); Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq* (Cambridge, 2001); and Kanan Makiya, *Republic of Fear: The Inside Story of Saddam's Iraq* (New York, 1990).

[6] The Baath Party, which was equally active in Syria, sought to revive the glory of the Arab past and called for Arab unity on the basis not of Islam but of the twin secular principles of socialism and nationalism. It appealed to the largely lower-middle class intellectuals and ethnic-religious minorities marginalised by the Sunni-dominated establishment across most of the Arab world. The Arab Nationalist Movement (ANM), which was closely aligned with Egypt's President Nasser, competed with the Baath Party in Iraq and other Arab countries for what was substantially the same constituency but was more diffuse and less well organised. The Communist Party was strongly motivated and well organised, and benefited from the Soviet Union's positive image in the Arab world.

[7] These included Tahir Yahya, Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr and Hardan al-Tikriti.

[8] Baathist factional differences and competing bids for power in Syria and Iraq eventually led to a deep political split within the party and the emergence of rival regimes in

reorganisation of the Iraqi Baath Party, the Tikriti Baathists captured a dominant role. Bakr, the son of a small landowner, was a former professional army officer with some government experience. Saddam Hussein was younger and from a more modest peasant background. He joined the party in 1957 and was a quintessential activist and party man, whose chief claim to fame was participation in an abortive assassination attempt against Qassim in 1959. Saddam and Bakr participated, with other Baathists, in a ceaseless confrontation with the Arif regime (first with Abdel-Salam Arif, then with Abdel-Rahman Arif, who briefly succeeded his brother after his death in a helicopter crash in 1966). Finally, in 1968, dissident army officers deposed Abdel-Rahman Arif, with support from the Baath and its then powerful militia.

B. IRAQ UNDER THE BAATH

The first decade of republican rule in Iraq up to 1968 established the basic pattern for the full-scale Baathist regime that followed. Qassim had set the precedent for strong personal rule and creation of formal but essentially powerless political institutions. His reliance on the army and a loose but inconsistent relationship with the Communist Party stymied the emergence of any strong civilian presence in the government and prevented the growth of a separate civil institutional structure. Similarly, the Arifs ruled in a direct coalition with the army, the bureaucracy and a loose circle of changing "nationalist" personalities. After dropping the initial alliance with the Baath, their power increasingly was based on their home district of ar-Ramadi, and members of the Arif family/clan were brought into key government offices as a guarantee against internal challenges. The security services were strengthened, and Iraqis were subject to widespread surveillance. Both Qassim and the Arifs sought to contain and control the various political parties, curtailing their activities while relying on their presence to counter other potentially hostile elements.

Baathist Iraq also developed its own very particular characteristics. Baath members rapidly dominated the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) that engineered the anti-Arif coup and, indeed, the army officers who had led the coup were exiled. A principal lesson learned by the party from the previous decade was that the military constituted the main threat, particularly if it forged a coalition with sufficient local and/or tribal support.[9] The new regime consequently began a systematic campaign to root out potential opposition in the army. It gradually initiated purges and supplanted the professional officer corps with loyal Baathist officers.

The Baath leadership also drew from the past the lesson that it should bypass official state structures in order to maintain control over other potential centres of opposition. It had no faith in the existing police and intelligence forces, and Saddam Hussein was authorised by the Baath Regional Command to set up an independent security apparatus. Its task was to weed out and eliminate rival intelligence organisations, dissident Baathists, Communists, and others who could form the nucleus of opposition. This set the pattern for future Baathist mechanisms of control and repression and the emergence of numerous new intelligence and surveillance organisations as part of a comprehensive system of penetration and monitoring of society.

Between 1968 and 1979, the Baath Party set about to transform all national institutions, with the primary purpose of achieving undisputed power. Chief among its methods, besides outright repression, was the deliberate and careful establishment of parallel structures that served both to absorb and control the state and other non-governmental bodies and infuse society with Baathist doctrine and belief.

By the mid-1970s, the Baath felt confident enough to declare its party program that of the Iraqi "state and society". For each major state institution, a parallel party organisation was set up that held the real key to power. Control over the army was reinforced through a party bureau that paralleled the Ministry of Defence. The police force was shadowed by a separate party security directorate, just as other directorates shadowed ministries, and an internal watchdog was set up to monitor the party itself. Party control over the state was completed in 1977, when the Baath Regional Command was merged with the RCC and all Regional Command members became state ministers.

Baghdad and Damascus, each claiming the mantle of Baathist legitimacy.

[9] The Arif regime eventually was undermined by discontented army officers from the Arifs' own base in ar-Ramadi, who joined the Baath in toppling the regime.

C. IRAQ UNDER SADDAM HUSSEIN

Saddam Hussein's role in this process was pivotal. His absolute control over the security apparatus provided him with the real reins of power in the parallel organisations that lay behind the state and party facades. Staffed with members of his own extended clan and benefiting from influence and access to power, Saddam Hussein's political base was held together by his strong personality, drive, ruthlessness, and ability to play one centre of power against another.

While the Tikriti connection was the foundation of his power, Saddam Hussein's rise was accompanied by various moves aimed at destroying competing claims to leadership from within the tribe. Other Baathist leaders and internal critics – including Hardan al-Tikriti – were dealt with brutally, regardless of tribal affiliation or party membership. By the late 1970s, and while still nominally led by Al-Bakr, Iraq was effectively under the control of Saddam Hussein, who enjoyed the backing of the Tikritis and allied tribes.

In April 1979, Saddam Hussein succeeded the ailing Bakr as head of state. He put down a perceived challenge ruthlessly, reportedly executing a third of his comrades on the RCC. But Saddam Hussein's success was not built on terror alone. Nor was it sufficient for him to count on tribal allegiances that often have proved unreliable. Access to Iraq's growing resources was another key to power. Under his rule, the economy grew significantly, based on wealth generated by the rise in oil prices after 1973. Iraq's oil income grew from U.S.$1 billion in 1972 to some U.S.$8 billion in 1975. By 1979, Iraq was the Gulf's largest oil producer after Saudi Arabia. Saddam Hussein wielded enormous power in allocating and distributing the dividends from this wealth. The development of a state-controlled economy helped him to create a broad base of support for the regime. By the early 1980s, the state bureaucracy was about 25 per cent of the total workforce, and a new class of entrepreneurs, contractors and managers of state-owned enterprises reaped much of the benefits from Iraq's wealth. Other major efforts went into housing, education, literacy and health, primarily for the urban population in central Iraq and around Baghdad. Both the Kurdish north and the South suffered in comparison, despite a general increase in the standard of living across the country.

D. THE WAR WITH IRAN AND THE GULF WAR

The war with Iran (1980 to 1988) marked a decisive turning point in the nature of the Iraqi regime.[10] Its prime effect was to accelerate the accumulation of Saddam Hussein's personal power and establish the state as a fiefdom of the Tikritis and their allies. The Baath Party gradually was eclipsed as a centre of power. The war also led to the severe economic crisis that was a critical backdrop to the invasion of Kuwait and the ensuing Gulf War.

As the war with Iran unfolded, Saddam Hussein's rhetoric began to shift. Iraqi Baathism changed its focus from pan-Arabism to nationalism. The Islamic challenge posed by the Iranian revolution and the perceived need to assuage Iraq's majority Shiite population also helped inject a new element of religion into the regime's and the party's discourse. The strictly secular dogma of early Baathism was contradicted by Saddam Hussein's regular and conspicuous attendance at mosques and by the regime's appeal to Islamic values. Iraq's flag was changed to include the Islamic slogan, *Bismillah ar-Rahman ar-Rahim* (In the Name of God the Merciful; the Compassionate). Iraq's Arab identity was stressed as a means to mobilise the nation against "Persian" Iran rather than as a vehicle for pan-Arabism.

During the war, Saddam Hussein's personality cult reached new heights. He intermittently claimed direct descent from or spiritual kinship with the prophet Mohammed, the Kurdish warrior Salahaddin (who liberated Jerusalem from the Crusaders), the mythological Babylonian god-warrior Gilgamesh and the great Chaldean monument-builder Nebuchadnazer. At the same time, the regime reinforced the elaborate and interwoven network of tribal connections at its top. To ward off discontent, Saddam Hussein consolidated his alliance with a number of powerful

[10] The 1975 Algiers Accord, a compromise agreement signed by Saddam Hussein and the Shah of Iran, brought an end – temporary, as it turned out – to a longstanding dispute over the right of access to the Shatt al-Arab, a waterway that provides vital access for Iraq to the Gulf. With the Shah gone, the Iraqi regime felt it was no longer bound by the agreement, and on 22 September 1980, Iraqi forces crossed into Iran in an apparent attempt to take advantage of the revolutionary chaos in Tehran to take full control over the waterway.

Sunni tribes. Tribe notables, half-brothers, cousins, and brothers-in-law were appointed to key defence, security and presidential palace positions. All were balanced against one another and subjected to intrusive surveillance by the security apparatus.

By 1982, Saddam Hussein had accumulated the titles of Chairman of the RCC, Secretary of the Baath Regional Command, President of the Republic, Prime Minister, and Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces. Within a few years, Iraq's transformation into a Tikriti fiefdom also was virtually complete. By 1987, one-third of the members of the RCC and the Baath Regional Command were of Tikriti provenance.

From the mid-1980s onward, and through gradual erosion, the Baath Party lost power, independent function, and purpose. The party, once used to infiltrate and subvert state organs, slowly became a state-financed militia whose main function was to secure the regime against domestic threats. Ultimately, it was controlled and directed by the very security services it had spawned. During the course of the war, membership provided scant protection from the power of the state and its security agencies. Along with many others, tens of thousands of party members were mobilised and sent to the front.

Iraq's society and economy suffered severe strains in eight years of ruinous war. Material and human costs, though difficult to quantify, were colossal. Military casualties alone reportedly totalled over 400,000 dead and wounded with an additional 70,000 held by Iran.[11]

These costs and strains formed the backdrop to the decision to invade Kuwait in 1990, though other factors also were important – Saddam Hussein's inflated vision of his (and Iraq's) power and the acceleration of programs to acquire conventional and unconventional military capabilities.[12] Kuwait's "return" to Iraq would not only satisfy an old national grievance, but also constitute a first step toward an Iraqi-dominated Arab order.

The humiliating defeat was a clear demonstration of the imprudence and miscalculations of the leadership, and the shock-waves initially seemed to portend changes in Iraq on a scale unseen since the overthrow of the monarchy in 1958. For the first time since the Baath assumed power, the regime faced a serious domestic challenge. Yet, the system built by Saddam Hussein over two decades showed remarkable resilience and durability in the face of internal and external challenges alike.

During the war with Iran, the regime had neutralised much potential opposition by appealing to patriotism. While some Shiite opposition crystallised around the Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution of Iraq (SCIRI) and the Da'wa Party,[13] most Iraqi Shiites rallied to the war effort – even as the regime ruthlessly displaced roughly a quarter million Iraqi Shiites of Iranian origin. Many Kurds also were sent to the front, but because of a high desertion rate, the regime organised Kurdish recruits into irregular forces and gave huge financial rewards to their commanders, invariably senior tribal leaders. This did not prevent significant desertion, and growing numbers of Kurds swelled insurgent ranks as the war progressed and the main Kurdish parties staked out anti-regime positions. By the war's end, these parties' tactical alliance with Iran allowed the regime to turn Kurdish opposition into an issue of national loyalty. Other opposition forces were marginalised and easily contained by the security forces. In contrast, events after the Gulf War unfolded in a very different way.

Iraq's defeat in Kuwait and the perception of international political, moral and possibly even military support on the one hand, and Iraqi military weakness on the other, helped spur large-scale uprisings in both the South and the North in 1991. The South had borne the brunt of two devastating wars and suffered from increasing neglect by the central authorities as the economic crisis deepened in the 1980s. Having paid a disproportionate price

---

[11] According to official U.S estimates, 120,000 Iraqi soldiers were killed and another 300,000 wounded. See Laurie Mylroie: "Iraq's Changing Role in the Persian Gulf", *Current History*, Vol. 88 (February 1989), p. 91.

[12] A specific and immediate issue that also appears to have played a part in the decision to invade was Iraq's unhappiness that Kuwait not only had rejected its request for a complete moratorium on its wartime loans (Iraq had accumulated a U.S.$80 billion debt during the war, Kuwait being one of its main creditors) but also was far exceeding its OPEC production quota through increased extraction from the disputed wells of Rumaileh, thereby forcing down world oil prices. See Efraim Karsh, *The Iran-Iraq War 1980-1988*, Essential Histories N°20 (Oxford, 2002), pp. 89-91.

[13] The SCIRI and the Da'wa are further discussed below.

for defending Iraq against Iran,[14] the Shiite population mobilised around a longstanding sense of grievance regarding political marginalisation and relative socio-economic deprivation.

The return of defeated and demoralised soldiers from the front appears to have been the immediate trigger for a popular rebellion that soon spread to all the major cities in the South, including Basra and the Shiite holy cities of Najaf and Karbala. The rebels executed Baath Party and security officials and party offices were torched and sacked. Loose coalitions of angry youngsters, demobilised soldiers, Iraqis belonging to the exiled opposition who were infiltrated through Iran, and tribal figures sought to exact revenge on those associated with the regime.[15] However, lack of coordination and of help from the West, particularly the U.S., and the perception of Iranian manipulation undermined the uprising and gave the central authorities time to regroup. Eventually, the revolt was crushed by the Republican Guards, backed by helicopter airpower. The regime coupled reestablishment of control with mass executions and the desecration of Shiite holy sites in Najaf and Karbala. In subsequent phases, it swept the marshy areas of southern Iraq in pursuit of the Shiite opposition, army deserters and other dissidents. This led to the forcible relocation of the local population (the Marsh Arabs) and the draining of the marshes through an extensive network of canals.

Events followed a similar pattern in the North. A popular Kurdish uprising emerged at roughly the same time as the Shiite revolt. Replicating the attacks on Baath offices and officials, it spread to major Kurdish cities. But again, the insurgents had no means of sustaining their positions against Republican Guards firepower. A combination of factors account for the revolt's swift collapse: lack of coordination between the Kurdish parties, the absence of any established military structure, a concerted and determined ground assault by Republican Guards supported by helicopters, pervasive Kurdish fear of a new chemical attack, and the failure of the Gulf War allies to intervene. By the end of March 1991, all Kurdish cities had fallen to government troops and an estimated 1.5 million Kurdish refugees had fled to Turkey and Iran.

The Shiite and Kurdish revolts were physically disconnected and tactically and politically uncoordinated. With no real active base in the Iraqi "centre" around Baghdad, the opposition was unable to bring sufficient pressure to bear on the regime from the northern and southern "peripheries" alone. Mass evacuation of Baghdad during the Gulf War and the enforcement of strict security in and around the capital further reduced the chances of any real threat to the regime. Most important, however, was the Republican Guards' superior firepower and organisation. The regular army had been shattered by allied attacks during the Gulf War but the six Republican Guard divisions emerged with little damage.

Alarmed by the humanitarian disaster, a UN-sponsored "protected zone" was subsequently set up in northern Iraq. It soon was perceived as a potential base for covert action against the regime, most notably by the U.S. But a U.S.-backed effort to foster a coup against Saddam Hussein in 1996 was uncovered, a victim, inter alia, of the work of Iraqi intelligence, the weaknesses of U.S.-backed exiled opposition, and internal divisions between opposition groups.

The Gulf War also produced the international sanctions regime, and in particular the requirement that Iraq open all sites suspected to be relevant for chemical, biological and nuclear capabilities to a United Nations inspection team. The next years were marked by a constant tug of war between the regime and the UN inspectors, known as UNSCOM (United Nations Special Commission on Iraq). In 1997-1998, the regime repeatedly interfered with UNSCOM's work and, in December 1998, the U.S. and UK launched "Desert Fox", an air operation targeting primarily suspected biological warfare facilities and (largely empty) Republican Guard barracks. The inspectors have not been able to return to Iraq since that time, and UNSCOM was disbanded. A new team, the UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission, has since been set up, but it has yet to operate in Iraq.

---

[14] Iraqi sources suggest that Shiite soldiers constituted up to 85 per cent of the rank and file but only 20 per cent of the officer corps.

[15] See Francoise Rigaud, "Irak: L'impossible mouvement de l'interieur?", forthcoming in Mounia Bennani-Chraibi and Olivier Filleule, *Appels d'Aire: Résistances et Protestations au Maghreb et au Moyen-Orient.*

E. THE CURRENT STRUCTURE AND DYNAMICS OF POWER

Despite the sanctions, international isolation and routine, limited U.S./UK bombing raids, the political situation within Iraq appears frozen in time. Saddam Hussein maintains a regime that, although under siege, has learned how to adapt to international constraints and develop new instruments of survival.

The Iraqi regime retains power via a sophisticated security apparatus and a vast network of informers,[16] violence and extreme brutality to crush any signs of dissent, and skilful balancing of competing forces, cooptation and economic inducement. Saddam Hussein has concentrated decision-making within a small inner circle of immediate family, members of his Tikriti tribe, and trusted individuals with a history of personal association.[17] Beyond that lies a broader system of support based on socio-economic enticements, patronage and cliental relations that relies heavily on tribal allegiances, chiefly though not exclusively from tribes originating in the Sunni Arab triangle northwest of Baghdad.[18]

At the core of the system is the all-encompassing security apparatus, whose principal focus is Saddam Hussein's personal safety and the perpetuation of his regime, but that also includes protection of sensitive military infrastructure and foreign threats.[19] Activities of the major security units are supervised by Saddam Hussein's youngest son, Qusay, through the National Security Council, which is headed by the President himself. That said, the units have overlapping functions and are not centrally coordinated, precisely "in order to encourage competition and to ensure that no one service will become strong enough to threaten Saddam".[20] This is part of a broader strategy of privileging several power centres (tribes, family members, etc.) and then playing one against the other while not hesitating to act mercilessly against anyone in the event of betrayal.[21] In addition, a myriad of civil police forces and paramilitary militias regiment the nation and shield the regime.

At the same time, Saddam Hussein has transformed most state institutions, including the cabinet, parliament, judiciary and military, into mere support structures for his rule. The Baath Party continues to some extent to help ensure ideological cohesiveness, covering the regime in the mantle of Arab nationalism and playing an administrative and monitoring role as well as a recruitment mechanism to broaden the base of the regime. But it is only a shadow of its former self. Its former functions of government, surveillance and coercion have mainly been assumed by a narrow group of loyalists surrounding the presidency and the cabinet. The party inspires neither fear nor respect, and membership no longer implies privileged access to

---

[16] For an analysis on the recruitment and use of informers, see Isam al-Khafaji, "State Terror and the Degradation of Politics in Iraq", *Middle East Report*, May-June 1992.

[17] As David Isenberg writes, Saddam Hussein "has placed loyal family members and followers from his native Tikrit region in every key position of the Iraqi infrastructure – particularly in the officer corps of the military and intelligence and security services. To forestall plots against him, Saddam has such groups spying on each other. By coming to power through violence, Saddam follows the principle of 'kill or be killed'. He has even murdered long-time friends and associates – such as in 1996 when he had two sons-in-law executed". "Inside Saddam's Security Network", *Asia Times*, 6 September 2002. Reliance on family and tribe, in other words, works both ways. "Just as positions of power are reserved for loyal families, the regime holds families of dissidents responsible for their 'crimes'". Isam al-Khafaji, op. cit., p. 18.

[18] The Sunni Arab triangle extends from Baghdad north to Mosul and west to the Syrian border. Charles Tripp has estimated that these "networks of patronage and association" number roughly 500,000 Iraqis, if one includes dependents. "These are the people whom Saddam Hussein needed to convince both that his leadership was better for their interests than any imaginable alternative and that they would lose everything if he were overthrown and a new dispensation of power established in Baghdad". Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, op. cit., p. 264. This broader network of support that taps into Iraq's tribal structure is further discussed in III C below.

[19] For a thorough examination of Iraq's security network, see Ibrahim al-Marashi, "Iraq's Security and Intelligence Network: A Guide and Analysis", *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 6, N°3 (September 2002). Key security forces include the Presidential Special Security Service, tasked among other things with the President's personal security; General Security Service, charged with internal policing of dissidents in particular; General Intelligence Service, the Baath Party security agency involved in monitoring and suppression of "foreign enemies" and the opposition; Military Intelligence, dealing with external threats and state security; and Military Security, which deals with dissent in the military.

[20] See ibid, p.1: "some agencies were created specifically to monitor the activities of the others."

[21] This was most clearly illustrated in the treatment meted out to Saddam Hussein's sons-in-law, Husain and Saddam Kamil. Both were executed after having fled to Jordan and then returned to Iraq with promises of amnesty.

material or symbolic goods. Aware that it needs to expand its support given its international isolation, the regime has recently undertaken a rehabilitation of sorts of the party, but for now it does not represent an alternative source of power. The regular military also has been undercut. Officers are routinely rotated and their activities closely monitored by security agencies, making their successful defiance of the regime unlikely.

In the economic arena, the regime pursues two goals simultaneously: first, to ensure that the population is fed through rationing that covers basic foodstuffs; secondly, to ensure its own domination through preferential allocation of goods. While the sanctions regime clearly has increased the regime's international isolation, domestically it has deepened the population's dependence on it for basic goods and services. Emergency measures such as rationing and import-substitution have increased the central authorities' ability to reward loyalty and punish dissent.[22] Manipulation of rationing and subsidies, hoarding and the establishment of monopolies run by Saddam's inner circle help sustain the regime by making it no longer merely a dictatorship of force but also a "dictatorship of need".[23]

Likewise, sanctions busting has provided alternative sources of income to the leadership and a narrow circle of entrepreneurs and businessmen tied to various centres of power. Indeed, the regime has adopted a two-track approach toward corruption. On the one hand, it has clamped down on such practices, particularly in trade, out of fear that economic agents would develop substitute sources of income and therefore enhanced independence. This is manifested in increased arrests and actions against persons accused of illegal economic activity.[24] On the other hand, and paradoxically, the regime has encouraged the Baath Party's nomenklatura to take part in illicit smuggling and other forms of contraband. The spread of corruption to every possible type of government activity is *de facto* tolerated by the regime, which has benefited enormously from the parallel, informal economic system.[25]

Finally, the hyper-inflation of the 1990s has fundamentally altered the traditional social hierarchy. Members of the large educated and salaried middle class that once formed the regime's social base have been hardest hit by sanctions. University diplomas have been largely devalued given the dilapidated state of the education system and the withering of public sector employment opportunities. A class of *nouveaux riches* seems to thrive on a black market that is the flip side of scarcity and of the economic embargo. For it, maintaining the status quo may be seen as a way to preserve newfound status.

F. ASSESSING THE REGIME'S STABILITY

The combination of ruthlessness, an all-intrusive security and intelligence apparatus, close kinship and tribal connections, and an elaborate system of cooptation based on reward and punishment has allowed the regime to withstand a variety of internal and external challenges. Yet evidence suggests that beneath seeming political and social paralysis, the regime has lost much of its legitimacy. The relationship between state and society as well as popular attitudes toward a regime once deemed to be all-powerful have changed since the 1990s. Fear remains but appears to have receded. Evidence includes increased vandalism aimed at state-owned property, refusal to serve in the army and desertions, falsification of official documents, contraband, physical attacks against suspected informants and agents, and greater willingness to criticise the regime.[26]

Conversations with Iraqis reveal widespread aspiration for change, feelings of national indignity

---

[22] See Tripp, op. cit. p. 270; Sarah Graham-Brown, *Sanctioning Saddam: The Politics of Intervention in Iraq* (London/New York, 1999). pp 267-291. A recent report by the Coalition for International Justice concluded that, as a result of the regime's control over the Oil-for-Food program, "ordinary Iraqis must now depend on the regime even for basic goods formerly available in the market place". "Sources of Revenue for Saddam & Sons", September 2002, pp. 5-6.

[23] Françoise Rigaud, "Irak: Le Temps Suspendu de L'Embargo", *Critique Internationale*, April 2001, p. 15.

[24] In July 1992, for example, roughly 40 well-known merchants from Baghdad were accused of taking advantage of the economic embargo for private gain and put to death. This almost certainly was an effort by the regime to warn the private sector against becoming an autonomous and rival power centre.

[25] The amount of money earned by the regime through smuggling is difficult to quantify. For the most recent assessment, see the report issued by the Coalition for International Justice, "Sources of Revenue for Saddam & Sons", op. cit., p. 4.

[26] Interviews conducted in 2001. See also Rigaud, "Irak: L'impossible mouvement de l'interieur"?, op. cit..

and of nostalgia for the welfare state and the era of abundant oil wealth, and a powerful desire to emigrate. Signs of opposition to Saddam Hussein are legion and are expressed in a variety of ways. These include local disturbances, defections, car bombs in Baghdad, coup attempts, and assassination attempts against key regime figures.[27] Dissatisfaction within the regime also has been reported, focusing on the younger, ambitious second tier of officials. Similar reports of anti-regime sentiment within the armed forces, including the key Republican and Special Republican Guard, also have surfaced, though they are more difficult to confirm. Overall, the regime appears to be far less visible and omnipresent today than a decade ago, in terms both of its repressive functions and socio-economic roles.[28]

The likelihood of a purely internal uprising remains very low, however. The regime has been able to quell any disturbances or signs of organised resistance through a mix of naked repression, manipulation of confessional, ethnic and tribal divisions, and economic inducements. It has used oil smuggling and other sources of revenue to shore itself up, employing its limited largesse as an insurance policy by concentrating it on groups that contribute to its hold on power. Saddam Hussein further centralised and consolidated power around Baghdad, ensuring that his regime maintains absolute control over the capital while tolerating a measure of defiance in North and South.[29] He also has sought to mend disputes within his family and to reinforce relations between the inner family circle and the wider clan-based network.

Overall, there is little to suggest that the Iraqi regime might fall in the absence of outside intervention. The failure of the 1991 *intifadat azar* (March intifada) is an important reminder. That popular uprising was crushed at considerable human cost, leaving the Iraqi people feeling both impotent against a ruthless regime and betrayed by the international community. The United States – which first encouraged the rebellion and then stood idly by – came in for particular criticism. At the same time, Iraqis were chastened by the clear excesses of the uprising, the violent retribution and score-settling that accompanied it, along with its overtones of ethnic and religious divisions. The internal opposition, systematically weakened by the regime for three decades, displayed its divisions. With that precedent etched in their in mind, the Iraqi people – despite their strong desire for a new political system – appear to fear the political vacuum and attendant civil war that a rebellion might provoke as well as the regime's forceful response. Many seem convinced that absent a military or palace coup or foreign intervention, there will be no regime change in Iraq.

Should the regime be threatened from the inside, in other words, the most likely source of change would be other members of the inner circle or the military. Saddam Hussein's ouster could take the form of an internal Tikriti coup organised and supported by his family and/or extended tribe, possibly initiated by individuals who have suffered at his hands in the past. It also could take the form of a Tikriti alliance with dissident army elements and/or other tribes once associated with the regime. Indeed, the most serious past challenges appear to have followed this pattern.[30] Assassination remains a constant threat to Saddam Hussein and his immediate family, as demonstrated most vividly by the attempt on his elder son's life in December 1996. The attempts to kill the President's two sons (Uday in December 1996 and Qusay in early 1997), which some in the regime indirectly blamed on Iran, more likely came from disaffected tribes.[31] Opposition sources also have suggested that the traditional Tikriti alliances with the major tribes have steadily been unravelling over the years.[32]

---

[27] Some predominantly Shiite areas of Baghdad (*al-Thawra, al-Sho'la, al-Hurriyya, Kazimayn*) have witnessed such acts, and the regime tends to shut them down at the first indication of trouble. An explosion rocked Baghdad in July 1999 and others have occurred since that time. Among the most notorious assassination attempts were those perpetrated against Saddam Hussein's two sons.

[28] Rigaud, "Irak: L'impossible mouvement de l'interieur ?", op. cit.

[29] Ibid, p. 18.

[30] The defection in August 1995 of Saddam Hussein's two son-in-laws, Hussein and Saddam Kamil, seemed to portend a serious rift within the family/tribal structure. However, politically marginalised and distrusted, the Kamils could not rally any significant support from either Iraqi opposition groups or any outside party and returned under an "amnesty" decreed by Saddam Hussein and the RCC in early 1996. Within three days, they and other members of their extended family were executed.

[31] See Tripp, op. cit. p. 269. For a different view, see A. Cockburn and P. Cockburn, *Out of the Ashes. The Resurrection of Saddam Hussein* (New York, 1999).

[32] According to unverifiable reports, of the four major tribal partners of the regime (the Jabburi, Dhulaimi, Samara'i and Ar-Rawi), only the latter remains in full alliance with the

Alternatively, an army takeover could occur, either with the goal of ending Tikriti power or in conjunction with a Tikriti coup. The military has played an ubiquitous role in political life since the establishment of the state in the 1920s.[33] Though it fears losing its prerogatives (and suffering retribution) in a post-Saddam regime, and its relationship with that regime would undermine its credibility as opposition, members of the military occupy a noteworthy political space insofar as they are among the few Iraqi actors who can claim to represent Sunni interests. Indeed, with the decline of the old Arab nationalist parties, many Sunnis consider the military as their only potential protector in a post-Saddam Hussein environment.

Various coup attempts are said to have taken place, a number of which apparently were backed by important elements belonging to major clans previously allied with Saddam Hussein. Reportedly, conspiracies were fomented by formerly allied officers from "al-Ramadi, al-Dur, Samarra and even Tikrit itself – the clan territories from which the regime has always drawn most of the senior officers of the key security forces".[34] An attempted military uprising by members of the Sunni Jabburi tribe was reported in early 1993, and one by the powerful Dhulaimi tribe in 1995 allegedly led to mass executions and imprisonments within the armed forces. Another major coup attempt is said to have occurred in coordination with the failed effort to depose Saddam Hussein in mid-1996.[35] Ultimately, the notion that members of the inner core of Saddam Hussein's regime or of the military will step in during the run-up to a U.S. attack in order to pre-empt it or will seek to take his place in the anarchical situation that may follow such an attack remains a serious possibility.

Under the Tikriti coup scenario, the successor regime is likely to retain the existing security apparatus and Sunni domination. A military regime may seek to suppress or curb competing sources of power such as the various security services, but it, too, is most likely to seek to maintain Sunni domination in some form. Still, the potential for broader change in the medium term under either of these scenarios would be significant. Indeed, the entire regime and its system of carefully counterpoised familial and tribal networks and institutional structures currently is held together by Saddam Hussein personally. This constitutes both its strength and potential weakness. Should he be assassinated or otherwise deposed, the whole edifice is likely to collapse.

That said, the obstacles facing a palace or military coup, particularly in the absence of an outside attack, are significant. Saddam Hussein has established an environment of perpetual intimidation and surveillance that makes it difficult to forge trustworthy alliances and in which officers suspected of harbouring dissident thoughts are pre-emptively executed. Armed forces units are closely monitored, have been penetrated by the intelligence services and are staffed with loyal family and tribe members at the highest levels. Paradoxically, while the stream of military defections in recent years bears witness to discontent, it also points to the difficulty in organising an effective opposition from within.[36]

Iraq's military is structured as the regime's bulwark against domestic enemies as much as – if not more than – the nation's safeguard against foreign aggression. This certainly is the case for Saddam Hussein's most important forces – the Republican Guard, Special Republican Guard, Special Security and the Presidential Guard. After the Gulf War, the Iraqi regime interposed the Republican Guard between regular army units and Baghdad to ensure that regular army officers did not roll their tanks into the capital. Today, the Special Republican Guard is stationed inside Baghdad, between the Republican Guard and the inner rings guarding the president. As long as the regime looks reasonably stable, these groups are likely to remain loyal. They still stand to lose power, prestige and income were Saddam Hussein to fall. The fear of rampant score-settling against those closely identified with the regime also weighs heavily. At the same time, there

---

Tikriti. This should be taken with some caution, however, as tribal alliances are notoriously volatile, and political allegiances may differ even between groups within a particular tribe.

[33] See A. Parasiliti, "The Military in Iraqi Politics", in J.A. Kechichian (ed.), *Iran, Iraq, and the Arab Gulf States* (New York, 2002), pp. 83-94.

[34] Tripp, op. cit., p. 265.

[35] In each case, the reported coups were followed by claims of executions within the officer corps and repeated purges and changes in the command structure, although many of these measures may have had as much to do with pre-emption as with punishment.

[36] For one account of a former general's decision to leave Iraq because of the impossibility of engaging in dissenting action from within, see Najib al-Salhi in *Insight*, 9 September 2002, pp. 41-43.

are unconfirmed rumours that Saddam Hussein executed a number of his personal bodyguards as talk of war began to mount in Washington, potential testimony to both the fragility of the regime and the methods used to perpetuate it.

Assuming a scenario in which the military seizes power, serious questions surround its capacity to rule. Given the tribal structure within the military/security apparatus, a coup is likely to be led by officers linked by tribal allegiances. This would probably produce a relatively stable, cohesive political leadership in the short term. However, the cohesive tribal identity that could strengthen such a regime in its early stages might well undo it after that. Military leaders who failed to succeed Saddam Hussein would call on their own tribes in attempts to seize power. As one close observer writes, "Each clan . . . has access to some segment of the command structure and weapons of the military-security establishment. Thus, the logic of seizing power through force would prevail under a new military regime, and the temptation for disappointed military leaders to use their power base to challenge this regime would be irresistible".[37]

Moreover, the army has been badly weakened by two devastating wars, its perpetual use as a tool to repress the Iraqi people, and, perhaps most importantly, 30 years of submission to the Baath Party and Saddam Hussein. The militarisation of society over the last two decades also has led to a powerful popular aspiration for a fundamental change in power relations. Aversion toward military uniforms is widespread and affects all social strata; the army no longer inspires respect, and a military career no longer is seen as a means of social advancement and prestige. Salaries are paltry – with the exception of those paid to high-ranking officers and those who work for the inner security apparatus. In addition, Iraq's confessional divides are exacerbated in the army, given its almost exclusively Sunni officer corps and predominantly Shiite rank and file. Finally, the military will almost certainly face harsh disarmament and a reduced budget as a result of sizable reconstruction requirements. In short, while members of the military may perhaps seize power in the immediate post-Saddam period, they are unlikely to provide a stable, long-term alternative to the current regime.

[37] Rend Rahim Francke, "The shape of a new government in Iraq", in Fran Hazleton (ed.), *Iraq since the Gulf War: Prospects for Democracy* (London, 1994), p. 24.

III. DOMESTIC FAULT LINES AND TENSIONS

Efforts to organise an effective and united domestic opposition have been hampered by long-term structural divisions. Indeed, many tensions between opposition groups derive from deeper fault-lines that pre-date Saddam Hussein and are likely to survive him. These divides are principally along religious, ethnic and tribal lines, though class and ideology should not be neglected. Out of approximately 23 million Iraqis, roughly 75 to 80 per cent are ethnic Arabs, some 15 to 20 per cent Kurds, and around 5 per cent ethnic Turkomans, Assyrians and others. Approximately 97 per cent of Iraqis are Moslem, with the balance Christians and others. Among Moslems, 60 to 65 per cent are Shia, 32 to 37 per cent Sunni.[38] Many opposition parties reflect and reinforce – even in exile – these ethnic and religious splits. The fault-lines also are likely to help shape a new regime, no matter how it comes about.

At the same time, it is important to put in proper perspective the depth of these cleavages. The Iraqi state, despite its terribly skewed concentrations of power, has created over time a number of institutions that have effectively mixed the communities and perhaps even diluted their sense of separateness. This trend has been further strengthened by the fact that the state is by far Iraq's largest employer and has not been too particular about filling local jobs with local people. The net result has been an ethnic and sectarian mixing, which has created a sense of "Iraqiness", particularly among a segment of the middle and upper classes.[39]

The geographic shorthand commonly used to describe Iraq – Sunni centre, Shiite south and Kurdish north – masks more complex patterns of social identity. Since the late 1960s, migration,

[38] The sensitivity of demographic issues in Iraq means that figures are not particularly reliable. The ones mentioned in this report come from the CIA World Fact Book, but estimates vary. The Encyclopaedia Britannica, for example, estimates that Shia are approximately 53 per cent of the population and Sunni approximately 42 per cent. "Iraq", *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, accessed at www.search.eb.com/eb/article?eu=117816.

[39] Ali Allawi, "Federalism", in Halliday (ed.), *Iraq since the Gulf War*, op. cit., p. 219.

voluntary and forced, has altered the demographic balance. After the Gulf War, further changes have occurred as a result of displacement, economic pressures and migration. In urban areas, many people live in mixed communities in which class and social status can have as much significance as ethnic origin or religious affiliation. Baghdad has a very sizeable Shiite as well as Kurdish population.

This is not to say that confessional or ethnic issues can be ignored. After decades of power imbalance and discrimination, Shiites may seek to settle scores with Sunnis. Ethnic inequities and unresolved political and economic issues could ignite tensions and provoke violence between Kurds, Arabs, and Turkomans. Indeed, as observers have noted, the regime's tendency to rule along regional, tribal or sectarian lines inevitably has politicised these differences to the point that Iraqis have tended to "adopt the regime's perspective while trying to overthrow it".[40] During the March 1991 intifada, many southern rebels identified their "cause as that of the oppressed Shi'i majority".[41] Some slogans during the uprising were "No to Saddam, no to Iraq, yes to the Islamic Republic!" and "There is no master other than Ali; we want a Jaafarite chief!"[42]

All this has clear implications for the international community's thinking about regime change and the nature of the regime that will emerge. In particular, it should be mindful not to exacerbate these divisions through its own actions. This is particularly the case regarding the Shiite/Sunni division where the temptation to play the sectarian card to foment anti-regime feelings could easily backfire. Over-emphasis of that split and attempts to portray (and to deal with) the Shiites as a cohesive and distinct unit represented by the religious Shiite political groups could force Sunnis to rally around religious figures of their own, thereby deepening the sectarian schism. That would vastly complicate the task of preserving Iraq's territorial and political integrity.

[40] Al-Khafaji, op. cit, p. 19.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Rigaud, "Irak: L'impossible mouvement de l'interieur"?, op. cit. A Jaafarite is a Twelver Shiite, the second largest branch of Islam.

A. CONFESSIONALISM: SUNNIS AND SHIITES

Particularly since the popular uprisings that followed the Gulf War, many observers have tended to view Iraq through a confessional lens, focusing on the tensions between its Sunni minority and Shiite majority. Historically, present day Iraq is the heartland of the Shiite community. In Iraqi soil are buried eight of the twelve revered holy Imams of the Twelver Shia, the second largest branch of Islam, whose followers form a majority in Iran, Iraq and Bahrain and significant minorities in Lebanon, Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Shrines of the Imams, destinations of millions of Shiite pilgrims from all over the world, are in the Iraqi cities of Najaf, Karbala, Samara and Kazimayn. Theological schools and centres of Shiite learning have been established around the shrines. For most of 1,000 years, until the 1920s when the Iranian city of Qom rose to pre-eminence, Najaf was the most important Shiite centre of learning and theology, attracting students and scholars from all over the Shiite world, in particular from Iran.[43]

There is little doubt that a religious schism exists and dates back to the earliest days of Islam when what is now Iraq served as a battle ground for many of the seminal events that have defined the Sunni-Shiite division. The ascendancy of Sunnis during the Ottoman period was perpetuated in modern Iraq, and Sunni political figures and officers have held a disproportionate share of power since independence.[44] As a result, and despite significant Shiite power in the trade sector, many in their community have felt aggrieved and disenfranchised. In short, the rift is principally rooted in a struggle for political and economic power and representation.

Religiously-motivated Shiite political opposition – a social and political current based on religious teachings – is a different matter. Even before

[43] Since 1501, when Shiism became Iran's state religion, all incidents in Iraq that affect the Shiite holy sites or the status of its religious authorities are matters of utmost political concern in Iran. Also since that time, Shiite clerics of Iran and Iraq who run afoul of their respective central authorities have sought political shelter in the neighbouring country. See Yitzhak Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq* (Princeton, 1994), pp. 13-25.
[44] For example, according to Kamran Karadaghi, "fewer than 5 per cent of the country's approximately 500 military generals are Shi'is". "Minimising Ethnic Tensions in a Post-Saddam Iraq", in *How to Build a New Iraq After Saddam*, op. cit., p. 35.

independence, such a current has been a consistent feature of Iraq's landscape. Religiously-inspired Shiite activism took root in intellectual centres led by religious clerics and theology students in the holy cities of Najaf, Karbala and, to a lesser degree, Kazimayn, though it had to contend with a strong apolitical tradition among the traditional clergy. Initially these intellectual centres aimed chiefly to counter the rising influence of Communist ideology and to express the Islamic identity and culture of Iraqi society. They were roughly patterned after the Egyptian-inspired Moslem Brotherhood that existed in predominantly Sunni quarters of Baghdad and cities like Mosul. Later, as the Baath regime attempted to interfere with Shiite practices and targeted religious Shiite figures in the 1970s, the Shiite Islamist current became a more potent and politicised force, both inside Iraq and in exile. A series of factors accelerated this trend and further gave the Iraqi religious Shiite movement an identity and aspirations all of its own. These included heavy repression by the regime in the late 1970s, the Iranian revolution and the influence of Ayatollah Khomeini, the Iran-Iraq war and the Iraqi Shiites' forced exile to Iran, which assumed the role of guardian and leader of world Shiism.

During the 1990s, the rift between Sunnis and Shiites deepened, and overall religious tensions intensified. The Shiites' sense of a common identity strengthened. Rejection of their politically marginal status grew as Shiites suffered disproportionately from the Iran-Iraq war, and the regime did little to repair infrastructure damages both then and after the Gulf War. The phenomenon represented by Ayatollah Muhammad Sadiq Al-Sadr, who was assassinated by the regime in 1999, is particularly relevant. Based in Najaf, he was the highest-ranking Arab (as opposed to Persian) Shiite Ayatollah. Initially suspected by his Shiite brethren of excessive docility toward the regime, he came to embody the Shiites' frustration and to express their demands as he increasingly adopted courageous publicly critical positions. His assassination triggered significant demonstrations, chiefly in the Najaf and Karbala, some of which turned into armed confrontations with the security forces. As this incident demonstrates, there exists among Shiites a significant potential for mobilisation around central clerical figures – as was the case in the past with Grand Ayatollah Muhsen al-Hakim (1968-1969) and Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr (1979-1980).[45] The adoption in June 2002 by more than a hundred Shiites living in exile of a "Declaration of Iraqi Shiites" further illustrates increased political assertiveness. The manifesto demands that a post-Saddam Iraq guarantee their political and religious rights (in particular through a new constitution clearly stating that the Shiites are a majority), end all religious discrimination and ensure the independence of the Shiite clergy, especially on educational matters.[46]

For their part, many Sunnis fear the loss of power and influence that would accompany a more representative regime. In a careful strategy aimed at consolidating his power, Saddam Hussein has nurtured the Sunni Arab tribes of central and northwest Iraq. The key security agencies (the Republican and Special Republican Guards) are overwhelmingly composed of Sunnis from these tribes. Tensions between the two communities have been manipulated and amplified by certain opposition groups, but mainly by the regime itself. One regime response to the 1991 uprising in the South was to appeal to Sunni loyalty and solidarity, playing on the elite's feelings of vulnerability and prejudice. In particular, the regime inflated Sunni fears of the *intifada* in the South as a Shiite revenge, prelude to civil strife and mass killings.[47]

---

[45] See P.J. Luizard, "The Nature of Confrontation Between the State and *Marja'ism*: Grand Ayatollah Muhsin al-Hakim and the Ba'th", and T. Aziz, "The Political Theory of Muhammad Baqir Sadr", in Faleh Abdul-Jabar (ed.), *Ayatollahs, Sufis, and Ideologues: State, Religion and Social Movements in Iraq* (London, 2002).

[46] The manifesto, which is extremely vague on political modalities, calls for a representative parliamentary system, affirms Iraq's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and ethnic and religious pluralism, and accepts the principle of the country's administrative decentralisation, albeit on geographic, demographic and economic as opposed to ethnic or religious lines. It also affirms Iraq's Islamic cultural identity and calls for a reform of Iraq's nationality code in order to suppress any mention of an individual's ethnic or religious identity. See "The Declaration of the Shi'is of Iraq", www.iraqishia.com; see also *An-Nahar* (Beirut), 22 June 2002, p.14.

[47] As early as the 1980s, Saddam Hussein fuelled these fears by talking of an "evil triangle" encompassing Basra, Amara and Nassiriyya, in an implicit comparison with the Sunni triangle between Baghdad and Mosul to the North and Ramadi to the West. Rigaud, "L'impossible mouvement de l'interieur" ?, op. cit.

This is not to say that the regime has written off the Shiite community. While it has been ruthless in combating any expression of religiously-inspired Shiite political activism, it also has been aware of the dangers inherent in alienating the majority of the population. As a result, it has sought as far back as the 1980s to co-opt Shiites – though largely unsuccessfully – in hopes of broadening its support. Since 1998, Shiites have been allowed to perform their religious ceremonies in most major Iraqi cities, including Baghdad; the regime has sought to build ties with a number of Shiite tribes; and Shiites have been named to ministerial positions and are represented at high levels throughout the power structure. Saddam Hussein has claimed that his lineage goes back to Imam Ali, the Prophet Mohammed's son-in-law whom Shiites recognise as his legitimate successor and, in July 2001, rumours (rapidly denied) spread that Hussein's son Uday had converted to Shiism.

All in all, tensions between Shiites and Sunnis arguably are one of the more overstated of Iraq's fault-lines. Shiites have become considerably more politicised, are increasingly assertive in formulating their demands, are ever more aware of their numeric weight, and have come to reject their traditional marginal status. There is little doubt, in short, that the rifts between the two communities will have to be mended as part of national reconciliation. But there is less to this division than generally assumed. Shiites are present at all levels of government, including Saddam's inner circle and the regional command of the ruling Baath Party. It is difficult to speak of a strict Sunni or Shiite identity. Members of both groups subscribe to a broad spectrum of political ideologies and affiliations, many of which have little if anything to do with religion. Key areas of Iraq, particularly Baghdad, have always been largely cosmopolitan, and class has been as important a distinction as religion.

In particular, and contrary to widespread belief, Iraqi Shiism is not monolithic, under the control of a centralised leadership, prone to adhere to more rigid, radical notions of Islamic thought and governance or subservient to a foreign power – namely, Iran. The spontaneous uprising in southern Iraq in March 1991 illustrated the essentially decentralised and diffuse character of Shiite identity and that the religious leadership is unable either to control or channel it. It also was evidence of the diversity of the Shiite population's aspirations and political loyalties. There are religious Shiites, but also secular Shiites and Shiites whose allegiance is to tribe or, in some instances, the central government. The uprising was essentially anti-regime, not Islamist, which largely explains why the religious leadership was unable to take it over. Today, countless urban centres, schools of thought, religious actors, political parties and social or humanitarian organizations vie for the allegiance of Iraqi Shiites. This political dispersion is further enhanced by the fact that – unlike Sunnism – Shiism allows believers to freely choose from among several candidates the religious figure, or *mujtahid*, they consider most competent and whose teachings they wish to follow.

Likewise, it would be misleading to assume long-term loyalty between Iraq's Shiite community and Iran. Shiite loyalty to Iraq during the eight years of war with Iran, despite Saddam Hussein's rule, provides strong evidence of independence from Tehran. Although there are strong cultural and familial links between Iraqi and Iranian Shiites, Iraqi patriotism and local Shiite sentiment remain the most powerful influences within the community. Also worth recalling as an indication of the Shiites' complex political leanings is their historically strong representation within the Iraqi Communist Party. Added to these factors is the traditional rivalry between Najaf and Qom as competing centres of Shiite religious learning and spiritual inspiration. This not only has had important consequences on the development of Shiite political activism and religious doctrine (such as the rivalry between the Iraq-based Ayatollah Abolqasem Khoei and Iran's Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini) but also has resulted in competing locally-based loyalties and personal allegiances.

It is true that Shiite Iraqi opposition groups such as the SCIRI receive much of their financial and material support from Tehran, and Iraq's ruthless repression of the Shiite community has led many to seek refuge in Iran and use it as a base for their own operations. But the refugees' status there remains precarious. Most of the 200,000 Iraqi Shiite refugees are prohibited from working and lack a clear legal status.[48] Indeed, some Islamist currents within the Iraqi Shiite community vehemently reject any Iranian influence and view signs of Iranian-Iraqi rapprochement with deep distrust. In 2000, some of

[48] See A. Babakhan, "Des Irakiens en Iran depuis la révolution islamique", *Cahiers d'études sur la Méditerrannée orientale et le monde turco-iranien*, n°22, July-December 1996.

these forces founded the Federation of Islamic and National Forces in Iraq. This alternative umbrella group to the SCIRI pointedly declined an invitation to take part in the conference of Iraqi Shiites in Tehran in January 2002.[49]

Ultimately, that the regime has a narrow Sunni base misses the point: both Sunnis and Shiites are disenfranchised by a far smaller group, whose core originates from the Tikrit area.[50] Playing up Shiite discontent with the regime and bolstering a separate Shiite identity would inevitably fuel Sunni fears and could trigger the kind of confessional antagonism that Iraq, so far, has been spared.

B. ETHNICITY: ARABS, KURDS, AND OTHERS

Violent conflict between Arabs and Kurds has been a feature of Iraqi politics since the country's formation as a British mandate in the early 1920s when hopes for an independent Kurdish state were dashed by post-Ottoman-era manoeuvring and double-crosses by the colonial powers. Over the decades, Iraq's Arab majority succeeded in asserting its dominance and limiting concessions (de-centralisation, cultural and linguistic rights) it made to the Kurdish community, which today, with roughly four to five million people, constitutes nearly 20 per cent of the population. Kurdish frustration has remained a source of resentment, instability and unrest.

For decades, the central government in Baghdad and Iraqi Kurds fluctuated between violent confrontation and negotiations, with outside powers intervening on behalf of one side or the other.[51] In the mid-1970s, negotiations over Kurdish autonomy broke down on the issue of Kirkuk, a multi-ethnic, oil-rich city in northern Iraq claimed by Arabs, Kurds and Turkomans alike, and the Kurds rose in revolt. With the withdrawal of financial and logistical support from the Shah of Iran to the insurgents, the Kurdish revolution collapsed, its leadership and cadres either killed or scattered into exile in Iran or relocation camps in southern Iraq. When war broke out between Iran and Iraq in 1980, the two main Iraqi Kurdish parties, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), took advantage of Baghdad's need to deploy additional troops to protect the southern border and pressed their own agenda.

Periodically allied with Iran in the latter years of the war and gaining effective control over large swaths of territory (basically all rural areas by day, and even the roads and some towns by night), the Kurds came to be seen as a fifth column threatening to break up the Iraqi state. Once Iraq's war fortunes began to turn in 1987, the regime launched a massive counter-insurgency to dislodge the rebels, culminating in the so-called Anfal operations of 1988 that led to the death of an estimated 100,000 rural Kurdish civilians.[52] The trauma of that defeat, which included the repeated use of poison gas against Kurdish towns and villages (over 5,000 civilians were killed in a chemical attack on the sizable town of Halabja in March 1988 alone), has defined Kurdish perceptions of the Baath regime and their putative accommodation with any central government that might replace it.

In the aftermath of the Gulf War, in October 1991, central control over the Kurds collapsed as the Iraqi army unilaterally withdrew from Kurdish territory roughly equivalent to the autonomous region agreed to in the 1974 autonomy accord that was never implemented (including the governorates of Erbil, Suleimaniyeh and Dohuk, but excluding Kirkuk). Under the watchful eye of U.S. and British fighter squadrons patrolling the no-fly zone north of the 36th parallel,[53] the KDP and the PUK assumed near full control over the autonomous region, with equal representation in the newly-established self-government that followed the unprecedented May 1992 elections. But bitter and often bloody internal divisions, exploited by both Baghdad and neighbouring states hostile to Kurdish aspirations,

---

[49] ICG interview with a spokesman of the Islamic Amal organisation , London, January 2002.

[50] Ironically, Saddam Hussein's own tribe, the Albu Nasser, which is overwhelmingly represented in the regime, has a Shiite branch.

[51] Large numbers of Kurds inhabit Iraq, Turkey, Iran and Syria, and each to some extent has had to deal with its own internal problems.

[52] See Human Rights Watch/ Middle East, *Iraq's Crime of Genocide: The "Anfa" Campaign Against the Kurds* (New Haven/London, 1995).

[53] Ironically, this rather arbitrarily chosen line has led to the inclusion of the Arab city of Mosul, Iraq's second-largest, and the exclusion of the major Kurdish town of Suleimaniyeh, as well as a large part of the rest of the Kurdish-populated areas, from the northern no-fly zone.

limited their ability to register more significant gains.

Political squabbles over leadership and the division of customs spoils from Iraq's illicit gasoline trade across the Turkish border led to open warfare between the KDP and PUK in 1994. Taking advantage of the infighting, the Iraqi regime responded to a call for help from the KDP in August 1996 to enter Erbil. Although it soon withdrew following strong international criticism and U.S threats, the regime wreaked major damage to U.S.-led opposition efforts based in the Kurdish areas while also exacerbating KDP-PUK animosities. U.S. mediation finally brought about a peace agreement in 1998 but many issues remain unresolved, and for all practical purposes the territory has been ruled by two parallel Kurdish governments (the KDP overseeing Erbil and Dohuk, the PUK confined to Suleimaniyeh) for several years. [54]

Over the past decade, the Kurds generally have escaped the economic distress suffered by many other Iraqis. So brutal was Iraq's repression of the 1991 uprising and so massive the ensuing exodus of the Kurdish population across international borders that the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 688 (5 April 1991) calling on Baghdad to end its campaign against civilians and to provide access to humanitarian teams. Under self-government and international protection, the Kurds have enjoyed a relative prosperity that contrasts to the situation in the rest of the country. Iraqi Kurdistan uses the old Iraqi dinar, the so-called "Swiss" dinar, which was discarded by the central government in the mid-1990s, and which is now significantly stronger than the new currency.[55] Since 1996 and the establishment of the oil-for-food program, the Kurdish regions receive 13 per cent of the revenue accrued from the authorised sale of Iraqi oil. The UN – not Baghdad – is responsible for the purchase and distribution of humanitarian goods. Thanks to this significant financial resource (some U.S.$3.5 billion since 1996), U.N. agencies and non-governmental organisations have successfully initiated a plan to rebuild the region. Substantial progress has been achieved, mainly in health, education, housing and transportation. But serious economic problems remain (the oil-for-food program discourages productive investment, and there is no industrial development of any significance), while the regime's steady expulsion of native Kurds from the contested city of Kirkuk compounds housing and employment constraints.

The most notable changes in Iraqi Kurdistan have been political. The region boasts a relatively free press and an independent judiciary. The numerous strands of the Iraqi opposition have opened offices there, and the region also serves as a refuge for Turkish Kurdish parties (such as the Kurdish Workers' Party or PKK) and Iranian Kurdish parties (such as the KDP-Iran and Komala). Various ethnic and religious minority groups (the Turkomans, Chaldeans, Assyrians, and Yazidis) enjoy greater rights than in the rest of Iraq, and there are no religious restrictions. The outlook and mindsets of Kurds appear to have changed as they have been freed from the Baath regime's repression and have grown accustomed to self-government, as evidenced by the proliferation of parties and news channels of various political hues since 1992.

In many ways, the Kurds are now in an unprecedented position to enjoy de facto self-rule. For the first time since the Baath Party took power in 1968, they are relatively (and perhaps temporarily) protected from its brutal repression, and they are more economically viable than ever before due to the revenue from smuggling and the U.N. oil-for-food program. With sources of revenue and a modicum of self-government, some Kurds feel they now have something to lose if the status quo were altered. Moreover, based on past experiences, some fear the consequences of an ill-planned or partially-executed operation against the

---

[54] In early September 2002, the leaders of the KDP and PUK met in Kurdistan and agreed to work on "a joint project for federalism, normalisation of the situation in Iraqi Kurdistan, security matters and formulating a united political position on regional and international levels", a veiled reference to the possibility of a U.S. strike to oust the Iraqi regime. They also agreed to revive the Kurdish parliament. See "Statement on the KDP and PUK leaders meeting in Iraqi Kurdistan", 8 September 2002. Subsequently, on 26 September, a joint PUK/KDP committee reached agreement on a draft constitution that is scheduled to be submitted to the joint Kurdish parliament and to other opposition parties. The Constitution calls for a federal structure and contemplates the city of Kirkuk as regional capital. Reuters, 26 September 2002.

[55] The so-called Swiss dinar is the old Iraqi banknote that was printed in Switzerland. The new dinar is adorned with Saddam Hussein's picture. The Swiss dinar traded at 16 for the U.S. dollar; in the rest of the country the dinar trades at 1,600 for the U.S. dollar. See Maggy Zanger, "The U.S. and the Kurds of Iraq: A Bitter History", MERIP Press Information Note 104, 9 August 2002.

Iraqi regime. Many also are suspicious of U.S. motivations and chastened by earlier incidents when Washington encouraged them, only to then let them down. Today, some Kurds fear that the United States ultimately would prefer to see Saddam Hussein dislodged by military coup, leaving Iraq in "safe, autocratic, Sunni hands", and that a new, pro-U.S. autocrat in Baghdad would render the Kurds dispensable once again.[55]

Dealing with the status of the Kurdish areas undoubtedly will be a major challenge for any future regime. The history of brutal repression by the central government and, more recently, virtual independence means that a large degree of autonomy within a federal structure will be required. That need not mean Kurdish independence; while Iraqi Kurds are unlikely to lose their aspiration to statehood, most appear to have acquiesced long ago in the notion that this is unrealistic and that their interests would best be served in a federal, democratic and pluralistic Iraq. As Barham Salih, the prime minister of the PUK-controlled area of northern Iraq put it, "A new Iraqi government should be broad-based, representative and democratic, and take into account Kurdish aspirations and concerns. As an Iraqi citizen and a Kurdish citizen of Iraq, I will have the right to participate in such a government along with other Iraqi citizens to guarantee an equitable distribution of resources."[56] However, the idea of federalism as endorsed by almost all Iraqi opposition groups, including the Kurdish leadership, remains to be defined. The size of the territorial basis of a self-ruled Kurdish entity within a federal Iraqi state is highly disputed, particularly the status of the oil-rich districts of Kirkuk, Sinjar and Khanaqin currently under Baghdad's control and subject to an intensive Arabisation policy.

While many principally Kurdish areas of Iraq have been ethnically cleansed in these campaigns over the past decades, the area where the repercussions of this policy are likely to reverberate long after the demise of the current regime is Kirkuk.[57] Forced population movements in and around Kirkuk, especially over the last ten years, have strengthened Kurdish resolve to rectify the situation not only demographically, but also politically. Historically claimed by Kurds and Turkomans alike,[58] its inclusion in a potential Kurdish federal unit in a future Iraq is seen by Kurds as vital in order to give that unit economic viability. That prospect, in turn, frightens other Iraqis and both Turkey and Iran, who fear it might encourage Kurdish separatism at home.

In the event of a U.S. attack against the Iraqi regime, the Kurdish parties will want to protect the gains of the last decade while maximising their territorial and political claims within what they perceive as the restraints imposed by regional actors such as Turkey and Iran. That said, and depending on their military fortunes in the North as the U.S. war effort focuses on Baghdad, they may overreach and seek to take Kirkuk, as they tried during the failed uprising of 1991.[59] Their objective under this scenario would be either to have an important bargaining chip in future negotiations with a successor regime over Kurdish rights in a sovereign Iraq or, more recklessly, to stake a claim to the city and its surrounding areas as a step toward an independent Kurdish state. Such a move would almost certainly prompt a military intervention by Turkey, which already has significant forces on the ground in northern Iraq and controls the Bamarni airstrip near the Kurdish town of Dohuk. Indeed, Turkey's Prime Minister Ecevit reacted angrily to reports that the PUK and KDP had agreed on a draft constitution suggesting a federal solution to the Kurdish question in Iraq, since Ankara believes this might be employed as a stepping stone to independence.[60]

---

[55] Ghassan Atiyyah, "Das kurdische Volk als demokratischer Faktor bei möglichen politischen Veränderungen im Irak", *Irakisch-Kurdistan: Status und Perspektiven* (Berlin, 1999), p. 133. The ambivalence of Kurdish sentiment toward a U.S. military attack is reflected in the inconsistent statements of KDP and PUK leaders. See also section below on the Kurdish opposition.

[56] ICG interview, Suleimaniyeh, 28 May 2002.

[57] Disputes over Kirkuk and Iraqi attempts to Arabise it predate Saddam Hussein. According to the PUK, Kurds represented 48 per cent of Kirkuk's population in 1957 and 37.6 per cent in 1977; the Turkoman population reportedly went from 21.2 per cent in 1957 to 16.3 per cent in 1977; and the Arab population increased from 28.2 per cent to 44.4 per cent. Cited in Tim Judah, "In Iraqi Kurdistan", *The New York Review of Books*, 26 September 2002, p. 55.

[58] The official Kurdish map of Iraqi Kurdistan covers roughly twice the size of the territory that the KDP and PUK control today. Kirkuk, which is not part of the Kurdish-controlled region, lies in the middle of this map of Kurdistan.

[59] The designation in the KDP/PUK draft constitution of Kirkuk as the potential capital of the Kurdish region in a future federal state gives additional weight to this concern.

[60] Reacting to the approval by the two principal Kurdish parties of the draft constitution, Ecevit stated: "Even though

C. TRIBES

Tribal identities have largely survived modernisation and the growing role of the central state and remain important social and political units in Iraq. Tribes traditionally have offered an alternate focus for loyalty and patronage at times when the state's capabilities to provide resources and protection have ebbed, as currently.

The Baath Party initially exerted considerable efforts to subordinate communal, family and tribal ties to party and state power. It frequently extolled the virtues of modernity and depicted tribe and clan affiliations as "the epitome of backwardness and social reaction".[61] Much of this began to change after the popular uprisings of 1991, the regime's greater sense of vulnerability and the severe economic difficulties brought about by sanctions. With its power shaken and legitimacy undermined, the secular, centralised Iraqi regime increasingly appealed to alternative sources of loyalty – religion and tribe. In particular, it concluded that it could ill afford to disregard tribal structures that remained essential components of Iraqi life, chiefly in rural areas. The regime further understood that, if properly managed and co-opted, tribal leaders could serve as useful relays of its own repressive rule. At the same time, the state's gradual abandonment of important economic and social functions as a result of its lack of resources has led many Iraqis to seek refuge in tribal affiliations. As one observer wrote, "The tribal ethos . . . currently is the principal dispenser of people's identity, of regulation, and of authority".[62]

In recent years, the regime has propagated tribal values and customs. In the aftermath of the 1991 uprisings (during which a number of important tribes refused to back the regime), the tribes and their chiefs became heroes of the state-controlled media. Saddam Hussein depicted the Baath Party as "the tribe encompassing all tribes".[63] In some areas, especially in the South, the regime has gone so far as to divide power between the Baath Party and the tribal leaders and re-establish tribal councils (*majalis*) that deal with various security, economic, and social issues. At times, tribal rather than national law is applied, and local groups are charged with maintaining order, particularly in the South where the regime's reach is constrained by the absence of adequate infrastructure. In August 1992, for example, tribes from the Basra and Qurna regions helped government forces put down anti-regime disturbances. In turn, tribes have been rewarded with political and economic payoffs, establishing a pattern of cooptation. The regime has focused primarily on prominent Sunni tribes, such as the Shammar, Dhafir and al-Dhulaimi, but it also has worked with smaller Shiite tribes to bolster southern security. Its treatment of Iraqis according to tribal membership and distribution of favours and penalties along such lines inevitably reinforces the significance of tribal identification to Iraqis seeking security or social advancement.[64]

The role of tribes in modern-day Iraq, in short, is paradoxical and double-edged. Even while they were denounced by Saddam Hussein, his power structure remained narrowly based on tribal affiliations to his own clan and on a network of Sunni tribes that constitute the core of the Republican and Special Republican Guards. More recently, the regime has aggravated tribal cleavages in an attempt to shore up its support outside Baghdad. Yet at the same time, tribes are a potential challenge to the regime. Tribal allegiances to the central government are by nature brittle, relying not on longstanding loyalty but on an assessment of material and political opportunities. As noted above, conspiracies generally have originated with tribal groupings from which the regime has drawn important support. Moreover, as part of the regime's efforts to boost its security and subcontract control over the borders, it has given many tribal chiefs weapons and the ability to exercise greater authority over their members. Should they switch allegiances – particularly in the run-up to an external military operation considered likely to prevail – they could rapidly turn their guns and men against the regime.

---

they say 'We are against founding a Kurdish state', a de facto state is already on the way to being formed. . . If this becomes official there will be serious problems". "Turks Warn Kurds on a 'Federal State'", *International Herald Tribune*, 27 September 2002.

[61] Adel Dawisha, "Identity and Political Survival in Saddam's Iraq", *Middle East Journal*, 53 (1999), p. 563.

[62] Rigaud, op.cit., p. 18.

[63] Dawisha, op cit, p. 564.

[64] As Tripp notes, "townsmen, several generations removed from the countryside, are now rediscovering their 'tribal' affiliations and identities, or are consciously seeking out a tribal shaikh to ask permission to affiliate to his tribal following, where their own lineage has become obscure". Tripp, op. cit., p. 266.

Of course, while the universe of Iraqi tribes – replete with shifts in allegiances, betrayals, conditional alliances and, above all, men in arms – can present a credible domestic threat to the regime, its nature ought not to be misunderstood. The type of opposition it might mobilise would be based on the preservation of specific tribal interests, regardless of who controlled the state. Any regime takeover – whether military or civilian – that relies on tribal allegiances is likely to lead to further instability, as each tribe would seek to gain power by using its links to distinct military and security leaders.

IV. THE ORGANISED OPPOSITION

Current speculation regarding possible military action by the United States to overthrow the Iraqi regime has put the spotlight on the Iraqi opposition. The surprisingly quick defeat of the Taliban in Afghanistan through a U.S.-led military campaign combining special forces, advanced air power and ground troops from an indigenous opposition (the Northern Alliance) led some to draw a parallel with Iraq. That comparison, as many have now concluded, is imperfect. The Iraqi opposition is far weaker on the ground than was the Northern Alliance, and the Iraqi regime far stronger than were the Taliban. Still, the exiled opposition is likely to play an important role in the event of a successful externally-driven effort to oust the current Iraqi regime.

In an effort to prepare the ground for a smooth transition to a stable and broad-based post-Saddam Hussein regime and to show that the aftermath of a military intervention would be manageable, the U.S. has been seeking to unite the opposition around a common platform. For its part, eager to benefit from Washington's support and take part in a future regime, the opposition has reciprocated by emphasising its unity. Thus, while infighting continues, gatherings among opposition groups have multiplied, as have those between opposition groups and the U.S. administration. Over the past year, the Shiite Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) has been meeting with the two principal Kurdish organisations and the Iraqi National Accord (a group of military and security officials who have defected), creating the informal "Group of Four". Its discussions, which have been held regularly and discreetly for months in London, have dealt in part with options for a post-Saddam regime.[65] The most notable meeting with members of the U.S. administration was the August 2002 gathering in Washington of six of the more prominent opposition groups.[66] There also are reports of a possible international conference on Iraq, modelled after the December 2001 Bonn conference on Afghanistan, and designed to constitute a government-in-exile. Understanding

[65] See Brian Whitaker, "Iraqis Search for a Successor to Saddam", *The Guardian*, 13 March 2002.
[66] See Eli Lake, "Iraqi rebels stress unity", UPI, 9 August 2002.

who the opposition players are and what they stand for is, therefore, an important element in the overall Iraqi puzzle.

A. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Baathist rule ushered in a period of unusual political stability in Iraq's history. The national Kurdish movement and the Iraqi Communist Party – which long represented the two principal organised Iraqi political forces – were severely weakened by the Baath regime. This initially was achieved by their inclusion in a "National Progressive and Patriotic Front", a ruling coalition that served as a shallow cover for the Baath's growing omnipotence and that gradually faded away as dissenting voices were either silenced or exiled. The Islamic Shiite opposition, which had started to gain significant popularity by 1978-79, was harshly repressed and eradicated. Since then, the regime has fluctuated between absolute rejection of any domestic opposition, signs of which it brands as a "fifth column" serving hostile foreign interests, and periodic calls for dialogue – particularly at times of crisis – when it reaches out to dissidents, declares amnesties, negotiates with political organisations, and even legalises certain parties. Nevertheless, the opposition has developed a strong sense of mistrust and even hatred towards an implacable regime, seeking to overthrow it through armed struggle, including by allying with foreign powers.

The Gulf War and its aftermath seemed to augur a more promising future for the opposition. Groups of exiled Iraqis, formerly moribund and geographically scattered, grabbed the attention of the international media and foreign (mainly Western) governments. Reporting on the atrocities committed by the Baath regime together with the increase in the Iraqi diaspora in the 1990s as a result of economically-driven exile, revitalised an opposition that two decades of internal repression and international indifference had practically wiped out. Western powers also saw renewed value in Iraqi dissidents who fled the regime's persecution, particularly those possessing classified information. They sought to encourage defections through various inducements, including the issuance of immigration documents or the promise of more lucrative careers.

Today, the opposition comprises roughly 100 parties and has more than 40 regular publications. Their geographic distribution has evolved over time; in recent years, London has become the capital of the Iraqi opposition while Washington is an important source of political support. Faith (entertained in the aftermath of the Gulf War) in the capacity of the autonomous Kurdish zone to develop into the opposition's arena rapidly ran up against intra-Kurdish rivalries and infiltration by agents of the Iraqi security services. Tehran, which since the early 1980s had served as the centre of Iraqi Shiite religious forces, has been losing ground. Indeed, Iraqi Shiism has sought to free itself from Iran's tutelage by beginning to build roots in the West over the past decade. Although its main organisations still depend heavily on Iran for logistical support, it enjoys both a better reputation and greater receptivity in formerly hostile Western countries. A number of Arab countries, including Syria, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, have allowed opposition groups to open offices, though keeping them under close surveillance.

Over the years, the opposition groups have been plagued by feuds, receptive to foreign manipulation, and incapable for the most part of building a genuine presence inside Iraq. Indeed, aside from the Kurdish organisations, the Islamist Shiite forces (the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq and the Da'wa Party) and the Iraqi Communist Party – all of which maintain a limited presence within the country – the opposition currently exists in exile only. Its representative quality and the degree to which it is familiar with Iraq's current socio-economic realities, therefore, have inevitably suffered. Those who defected in the 1990s and joined the exiled opposition, in particular former officers and high-ranking Baath officials, face an uphill battle to persuade fellow Iraqis of their legitimacy and sincerity. Some Iraqis appear to resent that many in the exiled opposition for a long time backed sanctions as a means of putting pressure on a regime that is notoriously oblivious to its public opinion and so highly unlikely to shift course as a result of the people's hardships.

As a consequence of both the internal/external structure and the often incompatible ideological programs of an opposition that includes Arab and Kurdish nationalists, Islamists, communists, dissident Baath elements, liberals, royalists and representatives of regional or minority interests, consensus so far has been achieved only on the broadest level of generality. The groups share the goal of overthrowing Saddam Hussein and his inner circle; at the rhetorical level at least they endorse the

territorial integrity of Iraq, democracy, free elections and a federal solution to the Kurdish issue. Beyond this they have not agreed on any substantive vision of a future regime. Differences over the most fundamental issues, such as the role of religion and the structure of the state, have precluded a more unified and effective stance. Some of the most significant of these groups predate the current regime and therefore have grievances directed as much against the overall structure of contemporary Iraq – its treatment of Kurds or of Shiites, for example – as against the regime itself.

With increased international interest has come increased material and financial assistance, principally from the United States. Paradoxically, this support also constitutes one of the exiled opposition's vulnerabilities, as the regime has been quick to use it to undermine the opposition's credibility inside Iraq. The factionalism and feuds that have long undermined the exiled groups also have been exacerbated by the pursuit of foreign funding. Personal rivalries, new-found alliances and new-born political groupings often can be explained by the influx or cessation of foreign funding or the specific modalities attached to its allocation.[67] Allegations of corruption and embezzlement have surfaced repeatedly.

The client nature of the exiled opposition is, in and of itself, nothing new. But the scope of the international community's mobilisation against the Iraqi regime since 1990 and the attendant availability of funds almost certainly reinforced it. Splits within the current U.S. administration – mainly between the State Department and the Pentagon – over which group to support also have hampered efforts to unify the opposition. Those that have enjoyed the support of neither were quick to castigate the more fortunate as "imperialist agents" and to present themselves as the only authentic Iraqi "patriots". Press accounts concerning the list of persons or groups benefiting from U.S. funding have on occasion damaged the political credibility of a number of those aspiring to lead Iraq in a future regime.[68]

The exiled opposition's reliance on foreign assistance raises the question of the complexity and ambiguity of Iraqis' relationship with the United States. The exiled opposition faces a conundrum: it realises that without massive U.S. military support a political transition in Iraq is unlikely in the short term, and that should it nonetheless take place without US military action, the exiled opposition is unlikely to have a significant role. At the same time, its members must deflect the accusation that they are merely instruments of a foreign power whose intervention they are awaiting. As a representative of the liberal current of the exiled opposition told ICG, what they need is greater coordination with the U.S. and among themselves, and better treatment as more equal partners. "Each one of us presses his own demands and requests maximum assistance for his party, his clan, his religious or his ethnic group. Washington adds fuel to the fire, treating us as mere native adjuncts, corruptible and interchangeable at will".[69]

Ultimately, while the exiled opposition almost certainly will play a significant role in the event of a successful external operation to overthrow the current regime, its limitations also should be clearly recognised. For understandable reasons, it has been unable to maintain or build strong roots within Iraq; to an extent, it has become cut off from the realities of Iraqi society, and its domestic support and ability to rebuild the country are questionable. As a result, and despite the inclination to condemn everything associated in one way or another with the current regime, an effort to reconstruct Iraq would gain from the participation of a number of existing institutions (the parliament, professional and religious organisations, parts of the military). This is true for reasons of both economic efficiency – the current administration constitutes a pool of talent that any future government should take advantage of – and political astuteness. It will be important to

[67] For example, the split within the Iraqi National Accord that occurred between its two founders, Salah Omar Ali and Ayad Alawi, stemmed from a disagreement concerning the allocation of Saudi subsidies. See A. Cockburn and P. Cockburn, op. cit., pp.46-47.

[68] For example, the U.S. State Department's 1 May 2002 press release concerning U.S. funding for Iraqi opposition groups and the subsequent publication in the Arab press of different and contradictory lists of groups that had received Washington's funds provoked significant confusion and led several opposition groups to deny they were beneficiaries and to accuse their rivals of misrepresenting facts. See *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 2 June 2002.

[69] ICG interview with a representative of the Iraqi Democratic Movement, London, 13 June 2002.

avoid spreading fears of a witch-hunt that will disproportionately hurt Sunni holders of privileged positions.

B. WHO'S WHO

1. The Iraqi National Congress (INC)

Founded 1992
Led by Ahmad Chalabi
Base of Operations: London
Military Capabilities: Minimal

After the failure of the popular uprisings that followed the Gulf War, the Iraqi opposition organised a conference in Vienna in June 1992. Some 160 representatives created the INC, a broad-based grouping that included Kurdish organisations (the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan), major religious forces, former Iraqi military and security officials, and a variety of liberal and democratic movements. Claiming that Western powers were manipulating the initiative behind the scenes, some important Shiite groups such as the SCIRI and the Da'wa Party, along with the pro-Syrian Baathists distanced themselves from this embryonic organisation.[70]

In October 1992, a broader conference was held in Salah ad-Din, in Iraqi Kurdistan. Following intense bargaining, some 234 delegates representing as many as 90 per cent of the opposition groups gathered, including representatives from the SCIRI, Da'wa, other Islamist groups and an increased number of Arab nationalists, although pro-Syrian Baathists continued to boycott. The delegates elected a three-man presidential council giving equal representation to Shiite, Kurdish and Sunni elements. It consisted of Muhammad Bahr al-Ulum, a senior Shiite religious scholar from Najaf; Masoud Barzani, the head of the Kurdistan Democratic Party; and Hassan Mustafa al-Naqib, a retired Sunni general.

The conference also decided that the northern Iraqi city of Erbil would serve as the INC's headquarters and the "provisional capital of Iraq". A 26-member executive council was formed to work as a cabinet. Ahmad Chalabi, a Shiite who continues to head the INC, was selected as president of the executive council.[71]

The INC did not endorse any particular political program at Salah ad-Din. Rather, it presented itself as an umbrella organisation that "provides an institutional framework so that the popular will of the Iraqi people . . . can be democratically determined and implemented".[72] With the overwhelming majority of Iraq's opposition parties represented on the executive committee, the organisation possessed a political legitimacy it found difficult to retain.

Indeed, the INC quickly became entangled in the increasingly complex and fractious politics of the Kurdish region – a problem that was particularly damaging given its Erbil base. The Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) were at loggerheads throughout the early 1990s over a range of issues. The most important related to the distribution of customs duties levied at the Iraq-Turkey border and control of the regional government in Erbil. As relations deteriorated and parties on the left and in the Shiite movement picked sides, it became harder to sustain the fiction that the INC spoke with one voice.[73] By late 1993 and into 1994, conflicts between the Kurdish parties erupted into open warfare. Both called on the INC to mediate, a role it could not perform effectively.

The INC also began to suffer a long series of defections. In September 1993 the Da'wa Party withdrew; in May 1995, one of the INC's three leaders, Muhammad Bahr al-Ulum, suspended his membership, followed by General al-Naqib. The latter claimed that the INC no longer represented Iraqi patriotic forces and had been reduced to serving as the "company of Ahmad Chalabi".[74] Parties outside the INC and largely based in Syria and Europe, including Baathists, Arab nationalists and some Communists, expressed misgivings on the INC political platform, its procedures for selecting

[70] Gunter, *The Kurdish Predicament in Iraq*, op. cit., pp. 37-38.

[71] Chalabi has been dogged by charges that, while head of the Petra Bank in Amman, he siphoned off large amounts of money for his personal use. He was convicted in absentia in Jordan on charges of embezzlement. He has strongly and consistently denied these charges, claiming they are politically motivated.

[72] See Gunter, *The Kurdish Predicament in Iraq*, op. cit., p.41.

[73] Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, op. cit., pp. 275-276.

[74] Gunter, *The Kurdish Predicament in Iraq*, op. cit., p. 47.

representatives, and its alleged dependence on the United States.[75]

A planned series of INC uprisings in northern Iraq in 1995-96 failed, in large part due to continuing infighting between Kurdish parties. In August 1996, the KDP invited Baghdad's forces back into the Kurdish region for help against the PUK, which enjoyed Iran's support. INC offices in Erbil, Salah ad-Din and elsewhere in the KDP-controlled territory were ransacked, and INC personnel either fled or fell to Iraqi security forces.[76] The INC was forced to move its operations to London from where Chalabi quickly began an intensive and successful campaign to attract support in the United States.

Other opposition groups greeted Chalabi's success in Washington with a mix of distrust and envy. The two Kurdish parties objected to what they viewed as U.S. favouritism toward the INC. INC supporters bitterly complained that the U.S. administration, and particularly the State Department, were paying lip service to legislation authorising support of the Iraqi opposition while in reality undermining its intent by refusing to release the necessary funds.[77]

In an effort to rebuild its support, the INC elected a new, provisional seven-member leadership in March 1999 in Windsor. It included representatives from the two major Kurdish parties, the SCIRI, the Iraqi National Accord (INA) and three independents. Yet the Kurdish groups immediately refused to accept their appointments, and the SCIRI, the Communists, the INA and others soon suspended their membership in the INC completely. The INC has been further hobbled by allegations of fiscal mismanagement that led the U.S. government temporarily to suspend funding for it in December 2001 while the State Department's inspector general conducted an audit.

Over the years, the INC simultaneously has elicited great support and great scepticism. Views are polarized within both the Iraqi opposition and the U.S. administration. While it commands the loyalty of some Iraqi oppositionists and many in the West who believe it can help promote democracy and pluralism in Iraq, others view it as a group lacking in-country roots and overly dependent on Washington.[78] Some of the INC's staunchest defenders are high-ranking former and current members of the U.S. administration, which also includes some of its harshest critics. A source from the State Department noted, "The INC could still be a useful umbrella to bring other political forces together, but not as it is currently constituted. We need an INC that is more representative of all the forces in Iraq".[79]

2. Kurdish Organisations

a) The KDP and the PUK

The Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP)

Founded 1946
Led by Masoud Barzani
Base of Operations: Northwestern part of the Autonomous Region
Military Capabilities (est.): 15,000 (KDP sources claim that they can count on 20,000 guerrilla fighters, in addition to a regular army of some 30,000 soldiers).[80]

---

[75] Francke, "The Opposition", Hazleton (ed.), *Iraq since the Gulf War,* op. cit., p. 174. The Secretary General of the Communist Party in Erbil dubbed Chalabi "a hotel lobby opposition, with no popular support". Quoted in Nicholas Birch, "Iraq's Kurds Aren't Looking for a Fight", *The Washington Post*, 5 May 2002.

[76] Following this reentry of Saddam's forces into the northern "safe heaven", hundreds of INC men and others were evacuated by the United States to U.S. territory via Guam. See D. Wurmser, "Tyranny's Ally. America's Failure to Defeat Saddam Hussein", AEI press, Washington D.C., 1999, p. 27.

[77] Chalabi's lobbying was instrumental in getting the U.S. Congress to pass the Iraq Liberation Act in October 1998. This act authorised (though it did not require) the disbursement of U.S.$97 million to arm and train the Iraqi opposition. Seven groups were earmarked for funding: the INC, the KDP, the PUK, the Iraqi National Accord, the Islamic Movement of Iraqi Kurdistan and the Movement for Constitutional Monarchy. The Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq was also included but reportedly rejected U.S. military support. Sarah Graham-Brown, *Sanctioning Saddam: The Politics of Intervention in Iraq* (London, 1999), p. 12.

[78] A senior official of the SCIRI said of the INC: "It is not an Iraqi opposition force, it's an employee of the Americans". Hamid Bayati, quoted in Daniel Williams, "Iraqi Exile Groups Wary of U.S., Each Other", *The Washington Post*, 2 June 2002.

[79] Quoted in Robin Wright, "Bush's Team Targets Hussein", *Los Angeles Times*, 10 February 2002, p. 1.

[80] ICG interview with KDP Minister of Peshmerga Affairs, Iraqi Kurdistan, August 2002.

The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK)

Founded 1975
Led by Jalal Talabani
Base of Operations: Southeastern part of the Autonomous Region
Military Capabilities (est.): 10,000[81]

Drawing on a long history of resistance to the central government, the Kurdish nationalist movement represents a significant force in Iraqi politics. Today, it is noteworthy in that its components are among the very few that are able to operate both within Iraq (albeit not in areas under government control) and in exile. Yet questions about their ability to mount an effective challenge to the regime persist. Though clearly the most militarily capable of the Iraqi opposition groups, they in all likelihood would be able to do no better than hold on to Kurdish territory currently under their control. Even then history suggests they would require massive outside support.[82]

In a region where the pull of tribal loyalty remains strong, two main nationalist political parties – the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) – dominate politics, each enjoying particular strength in its own geographic area.[83] The situation in Iraqi Kurdistan has been very much a function of the balance of power between these two organisations and of the willingness of their respective leaders to coexist peacefully. A far less significant Islamist movement and several parties defending the rights of ethno-religious minorities exist at the margins.

Founded in 1946, the KDP remains closely associated with the political fortunes of the Barzani clan. It currently is led by Masoud Barzani, the son of the legendary Kurdish leader Mullah Mustafa Barzani. The party's traditional stronghold is the Kurmanji-speaking northwest region of Iraq, an area that shares borders with Turkey and Syria and comprises two governorates (Dohuk and Erbil) that enjoy greater resources and host a slightly larger population than the PUK-controlled southern region. Approximately 125,000 civil servants work for the KDP-run administration; estimates of guerrilla fighters or *peshmerga* vary, with some sources saying 15,000 and KDP officials claiming 20,000 in addition to 30,000 regular soldiers.[84] The KDP also possesses significant financial resources as a result both of the oil-for-food program and of customs duties levied on goods going into and coming from Turkey. The KDP draws its inspiration from deep tribal traditions and an aspiration to achieve Kurdish self-rule or autonomy short of outright independence. Within that overarching goal, the KDP seeks dominance for the tribes and families of the Iraqi northwest – including the Barzanis, the Zeibaris and others.

The KDP began its insurgency against the central Iraqi government in the 1960s. Following the Baathist coup in 1968, it turned to negotiations over Kurdish autonomy. The resulting agreement broke down over Kirkuk, and in the new round of fighting, the KDP enjoyed the material support of the United States, Israel and Iran. Yet when Iraq and Iran (then under the Shah) reached an agreement over the Shatt al-Arab waterway, Iran withdrew its support, and the Kurds were left to fend for themselves. Iraqi government forces roundly defeated the KDP and thousands of Kurds were killed as Iran closed the border and the U.S. failed to respond to requests for help.[85] The KDP leadership fled into exile in Iran.

Saddam Hussein's response to the KDP's decision to side with Iran in the 1980-1988 war was brutal. In 1983, Iraqi forces arrested several thousand members of the Barzani clan following a battle in which the KDP fought with Iranian troops inside Iraqi territory; they were never seen again. For the remainder of the war, KDP guerrillas were active throughout Kurdish territory, while its leadership retained its headquarters inside Iran. In 1986, the

[81] In an interview with ICG in Iraqi Kurdistan, August 2002, the PUK representative was unable to provide an estimate.
[82] In particular, Kurdish troops were roundly defeated by the Republican Guard in 1991 and 1996. See Kenneth Pollack, "Next Stop Baghdad?", *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 2002), p.38.
[83] The KDP is strongest in the governorate of Dohuk (in the Kurmanji-speaking region of Badinan on the border with Turkey), while the PUK prevails in the primarily Surani-speaking governorate of Suleimaniyeh, adjacent to Iran. Both parties enjoy strong support in the Erbil and Kirkuk governorates.

[84] ICG interview with KDP Minister for Peshmerga Affairs, Iraqi Kurdistan, August 2002. Leaders of the KDP and PUK claim they could almost instantly and significantly boost the numbers of combatants should the need arise. Zanger, "The U.S. and the Kurds of Iraq", op. cit.
[85] Taken to task for the U.S. failure to intervene, Henry Kissinger famously remarked that "covert action should not be mistaken for missionary work". Quoted in ibid.

KDP joined forces with the other principal Kurdish opposition party, the PUK.

The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan was founded by Jalal Talabani on 1 June 1975 in Damascus. It was born in large part in reaction to the KDP's failed uprising strategy. Talabani blamed the Kurds' disastrous defeat in 1975 on Barzani's over-reliance on Iran and the United States. He also assailed the tribal structures of the KDP and declared that his PUK would be a more political, progressive organisation. Indeed, the PUK originally was made up of two major leftist groups, *Komala*, a Marxist organisation, and the Socialist Movement of Kurdistan. Many PUK cadres hail from urban areas.

PUK support is chiefly based in the Surani-speaking area between the Greater Zab and the Iranian border, including the Suleimaniyeh governorate, but also significant parts of the Erbil and Kirkuk governorates. The PUK employs 97,000 civil servants and has approximately 10,000 fighters.

During the Iran-Iraq war, the PUK first sought an accommodation with Baghdad but negotiations broke down over the perennial Kirkuk issue in 1985. The PUK rejoined the Kurdish insurgency, uniting with the KDP and smaller Kurdish parties in the Iraqi Kurdistan Front. As the war lumbered toward an end, the Front joined Iran in a last-ditch effort to gain territorial advantage and halt, or slow down, a vicious Iraqi counter-insurgency campaign that sought to depopulate the countryside through massive village destruction and resettlement. This triggered an even fiercer Iraqi response. In February 1988, the regime launched what it referred to as "the glorious Anfal" (spoils) campaign against the Kurds. Human Rights Watch has estimated that by its end in September 1988, Iraqi forces, extensively using poison gas, had destroyed several thousand villages and hamlets and caused the disappearance of some 100,000 Kurds, mostly civilians.[86] The main KDP and PUK forces were driven across the border into Iran, returning only during the uprising that broke out after the Gulf War.

After their defeat in the post-Gulf War uprising, the Kurdish parties managed to stay in Iraqi territory, taking advantage of allied concern over the refugee flow spilling into Turkey. In late 1991, Iraqi forces withdrew unilaterally to a line roughly equivalent to the border marking the boundary of the Kurdish Autonomous Zone (i.e., excluding Kirkuk). This enabled a blossoming of Kurdish democracy.

In the 1992 parliamentary elections, the KDP captured 51 per cent and the PUK 49 per cent. The regional government that was put in place reflected a 50-50 power-sharing arrangement in which KDP ministers were shadowed by PUK deputy ministers and vice versa. The result was the emergence of two parallel Kurdish administrations. Although the leaders, Barzani and Talabani, remained outside both parliament and the government, they exerted considerable power and influence from their respective party platforms, making it all the more difficult to develop and sustain unified democratic institutions in the autonomous region. Political quarrels soon developed into financial quarrels over the distribution of income, international aid and commodity smuggling across the Iranian and Turkish borders. A fratricidal war produced some 3,000 victims and hundreds of displaced persons.

In August 1996, clashes between the two parties intensified. Feeling threatened, the KDP appealed to Baghdad and, aided by Iraqi troops, gained temporary control of most of Iraqi Kurdistan. However, the PUK soon regained most of its lost territory, save for Erbil, seat of the Kurdish regional government. Several countries, including Iran and Turkey, engaged in mediation attempts and, after a number of aborted efforts, the U.S. and the UK finally secured a cease-fire in October 1996. Under intense U.S. mediation and pressure, and backed by a promise of U.S.$7.3 million in aid, the two parties agreed to a new power (and money) sharing settlement, the Washington Accord, in September 1998. Many of its provisions have remained dead letters.

The KDP controls the border crossings with Turkey and so is able to levy tens of millions of dollars of customs duties on all incoming goods and monopolise a major source of revenue. The PUK alleges that it has received only U.S.$4 million from the KDP since 1998 while the KDP is said to earn as much as $2 million daily from oil trafficking and other trade. In addition, elections contemplated in the Washington Accord have yet to be held.[87] Still,

[86] Human Rights Watch/Middle East Watch, *Iraq's Crime of Genocide*, op. cit.

[87] Several of these issues were discussed and reportedly resolved in recent meetings between the KDP and PUK leaderships. See "Statement on the KDP and PUK Leaders Meeting in Iraqi Kurdistan", 8 September 2002.

the Accord was successful in one key respect: it has maintained peace since 1998. It also committed both parties to the territorial integrity and unity of Iraq, on the basis of a pluralistic, democratic and federal political structure.[88] Since that time, the KDP and PUK leaderships reached agreement on a draft Iraqi constitution that contemplates a federal structure for the country.

KDP and PUK histories are testimony to the vagaries and risks of regional politics. Both dependent on and vulnerable to them, Kurdish organisations have had to navigate between Iran, Turkey, Syria and others. The PUK, at its origins critical of the KDP's over-reliance on Iran in the 1970s, gradually built a close relationship with Tehran during the latter years of the Iran/Iraq war. The KDP also has tried to strike an arrangement with Turkey, trading support in Ankara's fight against its own rebel Kurdish organization (PKK) for lucrative trans-border commercial deals. Yet both parties are aware that these alliances are tactical and short-lived, as both Iran and Turkey harbour their own fears about Kurdish national sentiment and have fought counterinsurgency campaigns against Kurds at home.

Nor has the relationship with the U.S. been trouble-free. Washington is seen as having embraced the Kurds in 1991 and again in 1996, only to abandon them to Saddam Hussein's fierce reprisals. As the prospect of a U.S. military intervention looms, they are caught between their hatred of the Iraqi regime, fear of losing the gains of the past few years in the aftermath of a war, apprehension of possible retaliation by the regime as the war unfolds, mistrust of Washington's long-term intentions in Iraq, and doubts that a new central government in Baghdad would accommodate key Kurdish demands concerning a federal arrangement and the status of Kirkuk.[89]

[88] Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, op. cit., p. 274. There would appear to be little, today, that distinguishes the two parties' programs for a post-Saddam regime. Both have proposed a federal system for Iraq to secure the rights of the Kurds. See Salim Mattar in *Al-Quds Al-Arabi*, 10 July 2002, p. 18; Nouri Talabany, "The Relationship Between the Kurds and the Central Government of Iraq", in *Irakisch-Kurdistan: Status und Perspektiven* (Berlin, 1999), p. 145.

[89] Less well endowed than its rival and less able to profit from oil trafficking and trade with Turkey, the PUK has been more vocal in support of regime change.

b) Islamist and Other Movements

The Islamic Unity Movement of Kurdistan (IMK)

Founded 1986
Led by Sheikh Ali Abdel Aziz
Base of Operations: Halabja, Northern Iraq
Military Capabilities: minimal

A relatively weak and fragmented Islamist movement has developed at the margins of the nationalist Kurdish movement. Kurdish Islamists, particularly active in the area referred to as the "Halabja Triangle", are organised within several groups that include armed militias. Perhaps most noteworthy is the Islamic Unity Movement of Kurdistan (IMK). Founded in 1986, and having inherited some of the organisational structures of the Muslim Brotherhood that existed in Kurdistan since the 1950s, the group declared holy war against "Saddam's unfaithful regime" during the Iran-Iraq war. Today, it continues to play an important role particularly in the realm of social and charitable work. Although it garnered minimal votes in the 1992 elections, the IMK performs better in local and professional elections. While willing to see the United States assume a leading role in efforts to topple the regime, the IMK remains deeply suspicious of the hegemonic ambitions of the more prominent Kurdish nationalist groups, the KDP and PUK, with which it has clashed in the past. As an essentially Sunni group, it also is concerned about the prospect that Iraqi Shiites would be given a decisive role in the future, preferring to see a Sunni military figure become the next Iraqi president.[90]

Some Kurdish veterans of the Afghan war have turned to far more radical alternatives, which are known under various and changing names such as Kurdistan Hizbullah, Hamas, Tawhid, and Army of Islam. A grouping termed Ansar al-Islam, which emerged in December 2001, is said to include several hundred members and to control a few villages in a tiny area bordering Iran above the town of Halabja. The group is small in numbers though some claim it is now a force to be reckoned with. Mullah Najm al-Din Faraj Ahmad, also known as Mullah Krekar, is a leading figure in this organisation,[91] which, like many if not all of the

[90] ICG interview with an IMK representative, Damascus, February 2002.

[91] He recently was arrested while in transit in the Netherlands.

Kurdish Islamist factions, is based on tribal affiliations. The two main Kurdish parties traditionally have taken an ambivalent attitude toward the Islamist groups, apparently out of concern that they not alienate the regional powers said to support them – namely Iran (or certain factions within the Iranian leadership) and Saudi Arabia,[92] but the PUK did battle with Ansar al-Islam forces in 2001 and 2002, and managed to hem them in their mountain strongholds.

The existence of possible links between the extreme Islamist elements in northern Iraq and the terror-network al-Qaeda has become a matter of some concern, particularly in the United States. Yet beyond the reported relocation of individuals from Afghanistan to Iraqi Kurdistan, claims of organised links with al-Qaeda remain unsubstantiated.[93] Allegations of a connection between Ansar and powerful factions inside the Iranian regime are more likely to be true. Given the group's location in a corner of Iraqi Kurdistan hemmed in by Iran from three sides and the fact that Ansar leader Mullah Krekar, who has legal residence in Norway, has been able to travel abroad via Iran, it seems reasonable to conclude that Iran has offered the small Islamist group a measure of logistical support and relative freedom of movement, possibly even military support in the form of ammunition and light weapons.

Minority groups also have been allowed to organise in the autonomous Kurdish region. The Chaldeo-Assyrian minority features no political parties, but was represented by five members in the elected parliament of 1992. The small Iraqi Christian community (roughly 4 per cent of Iraqis, and which includes Chaldeans, Assyrians and Orthodox) arguably has a stake in the survival of the current regime – which has basically left it unharmed and allowed it to practice its religion – and fears the consequences of a Shiite take-over. Chaldeans and Assyrians also are concerned about the prospect of increased power for the Kurds, with whom they traditionally have battled for land and resources in the North. Another minority in the region is the Turkoman. With an estimated 300,000 inhabitants in all of Iraqi Kurdistan (of whom only some 30,000 live in the autonomous area), it has several political parties. The Turkoman Front, established in 1995, is the umbrella organisation and receives solid financial and political support from Turkey. Yet it appears to enjoy little sympathy, whether among Kurds or Turkomans, many of whom view it merely as an extension of Turkish foreign policy.[94] The Turkomans also claim Kirkuk based on their historical presence in the city.

3. Religious Forces

a) The Da'wa Party

The Da'wa Party

Founded 1957-58
Base of Operations: Iran, Europe, some clandestine presence in Iraq
Military Capabilities: limited and clandestine

The Da'wa Party is the oldest of the currently active Islamist organisations in Iraq. Reports differ on when it was founded and by whom, but it is reasonable to assume that it was formally launched under that name in the late 1950s in the holy city of Najaf and that Sayyid Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr was the principal architect of its ideological and organisational structure. From the outset, the Da'wa was a clandestine movement organised around tightly knit secret cells (*halaqat*) and a strict hierarchy. It developed a comprehensive ideology based on the religious-philosophical and economic theories of Baqir al-Sadr. Its main objective is to preserve and fortify Shiite believers' religious identity against the influence of Western ideologies (in the Da'wa's earlier days, communism) through the renewal of Islamic thought and the reform and modernisation of religious institutions, including the hierarchically structured traditionalistic clergy. The party, which perceives itself as a religious and political vanguard, recruits its members from the Shiite intelligentsia of the modern urban middle class, students and professionals. But until 1978-1979 its influence was limited, as the bulk of Shiite believers continued to follow their old leadership,

[92] Gérard Chaliand, "Rumeurs de guerre en Irak...Voyage au coeur du Kurdistan", *Le Monde*, 15 June 2002.

[93] The two principal Kurdish parties arguably saw some advantage in exaggerating these purported links with al-Qaeda as a means of limiting the influence of religious tendencies in Iraqi Kurdish politics and of gathering greater U.S. support.

[94] ICG interviews in the autonomous area, July-August 2002.

represented by the socially conservative and strictly apolitical high-ranking Shiite clergy.[95]

In 1978-79, the Da'wa Party organised street demonstrations in several southern cities to protest the Iraqi government's repression of Shiites, which had intensified in the early 1970s.[96] Indeed, by Saddam Hussein's own account, between 1974 and 1980 the Iraqi government put to death 500 Shiite activists, a majority of whom belonged to the Da'wa Party.[97] The Da'wa initially refrained from taking up arms. However, when the more radical Organization of Islamic Action, its militant competitor for leadership of the politicised Shiite movement, resorted to violence in mid-1979, it followed suit. By then, the Islamic revolution in Iran had provided the Da'wa Party with a model it was eager to duplicate.[98]

The Da'wa carried out attacks on government officials, centres and installations, prompting the Baath regime to enact a special decree in March 1980 retroactively making membership in the party a capital offence.[99] In retaliation for the attacks by Shiite militants, the government began a vigorous counter-offensive and, in April 1980, the party's spiritual leader, Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, and his sister were arrested and hanged.[100] The regime's campaign and Baqir al-Sadr's death seriously damaged the Da'wa Party. When the government began to expel some 30,000 Shiites to Iran in April 1980, numerous party members and leaders fled there, regrouped and helped establish an Islamic umbrella group, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq. The Da'wa continued to maintain clandestine cells in Iraq, especially in urban areas such as the largely Shiite Madinat Saddam in Baghdad and in cities in the South.

The exile in Iran and the ambivalent relationship with its host and supporter confronted the Da'wa with a new type of challenge throughout the 1980s. The Iranian government did not formally compel other Shiite opposition parties and organisations to disband. But Tehran made clear its support for the SCIRI and for the SCIRI's claim to be the sole legitimate political representative of the Shiite Iraqi opposition, which diminished the Da'wa's importance. In addition, the permanent pressure Iran exercised on the party led to internal divisions, splits and leadership changes. The last of the pro-Iranian wings fell away only in the wake of the Iran-Iraq War, allowing the more nationalistic Iraqi view once again to gain the upper-hand.[101] Since then the party has been balanced and cautious towards Tehran.

Today, the party has branches in Tehran, Damascus and London.[102] In an interview with ICG, a leader of the Tehran branch strongly emphasised that the Da'wa, despite avowed Islamic solidarity with Shiite brethren in Iran, considers its Iraqi-Arab identity to be the guiding principle of its political actions. Underscoring efforts to maintain political and financial independence during the exile in Iran, which has lasted since 1980, he explained that the priority on its national Iraqi orientation is the major dividing line with the SCIRI.[103]

Unlike other Iraqi Islamist groups, the Da'wa possessed from the outset a defined political program based on a strict Islamic interpretation of the nation's history and social structure. Early on, it called for a government deriving its constitution and laws from *shari'a* law; later it attacked the Baath regime's secular character. At the same time, the Da'wa is a nationalistic party that claims to place the interests of Iraq (as it perceives them) above those of a putative Islamic *umma*. Like almost all opposition groups in exile, the Da'wai gradually embraced a more pragmatic ideology. It now accepts the need for free elections and the

---

[95] Ferhad Ibrahim, *Konfessionalismus und Politik in der Arabischen Welt. Die Schiiten im Irak* (Münster, 1997), pp. 259-271.

[96] See Tripp, op. cit., pp. 202-203.

[97] Hanna Batatu: "Shi'i Organizations in Iraq: Ad-Da'wa al-Islamiya and al-Mujahidin", in: Juan R. Cole and Nikki Keddie (eds.): *Shi'ism and Social Protest* (New Haven, 1986), p. 196.

[98] The party enjoyed close ties to Iran even before that time. Until the mid-1970s, a tactical convergence of interests linked it to the Shah of Iran, who helped the organisation in its efforts to undermine the Baath regime. See Masoud Kazemzadeh, "Thinking the Unthinkable: Solving the Problem of Saddam Hussein for Good", in *Middle East Policy*, 6 (1998), pp. 79-80.

[99] Marion Farouk-Sluglett and Peter Sluglett, *Iraq Since 1958*, op. cit., p. 200.

[100] Joyce N. Wiley, *The Islamic Movement of Iraqi Shi'is* (Boulder, 1992), p. 77.

[101] Ibrahim, *Konfessionalismus and Politik in der Arabischen Welt*, op. cit., p. 321.

[102] Leadership of the party is vested in the General Command, whose principal members are Abu Yasin al-Basri, Abu Ahmad Ibrahim al-Ja'fari, Abu Bilal al-Adib, and Kazim al-Hariri.

[103] ICG interview with Abu Bilal al-Adib, member of the political bureau of the Tehran wing of the Iraqi Da'wa Party, 17 August 2002, Tehran.

establishment of a democratic government in Iraq. Islamic rule no longer is seen as having to be imposed from the top down but rather as emanating from the popular will as expressed through voting. The Da'wa has been hostile toward a U.S attack against Iraq, stating that the will of the Iraqi people, not that of foreign powers, should determine the country's fate.

b) The Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq

The Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI)

Founded 1982
Led By Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim
Base of Operations: Iran
Military Capabilities: 4,000-8,000 militia, the Badr Brigade

The Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) was founded in 1982 in Tehran under the leadership of Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim, who has lived in exile there since 1980. Baqir al-Hakim is the second eldest son of Grand Ayatollah Muhsin al-Hakim, a leading spiritual guide of the Shia and one of the most respected clergy in its worldwide community. The organisation was culled largely from opposition Iraqi Shiites living in exile in Iran and prisoners of war. Prodded by Tehran, a number of Iraqi Shiite Islamic parties joined the SCIRI, among them the Da'wa and the Islamic Action Organisation. Originally designed as a loose organisation representing various Shiite parties and deriving its legitimacy principally from the stature of its leader, it was deeply influenced by (and dependent on) Iran. Hence its adoption of the principle of *velayet-e faqih* (Islamic rule under the direct leadership of a ruling Islamic jurist) developed by the late Ayatollah Khomeini.[104]

In 1983, the SCIRI established a government-in-exile and set up a military unit, the Badr Corps, which fought against Iraq. It remains active in southern Iraq under the official guidance of the SCIRI. Estimates of its strength range from 4,000 to 8,000 fighters.[105]

The SCIRI's first major action after the Iran-Iraq War was to participate in the February 1991 uprising against the Iraqi regime. However, as that uprising faltered and U.S. military backing failed to materialise, the government executed many of the Shiite community's political and religious leaders, destroyed mosques and expelled vast numbers of Shiites by draining the marshes in hopes of flushing out all resistance. These measures severely hurt SCIRI's capabilities, and only clandestine cells survived in southern rural Iraq.

The SCIRI's relationship with Iran has been a source of both strength and weakness. Tehran provides a logistical base and staging ground without which it would be unable to operate. At the same time, the close ties and the concerns they raised for many Iraqis – including Shiites – probably are a reason why the party failed to gain broad popular support during the 1991 uprising. The Iraqi regime consistently has invoked these links, accusing the organisation of being a pawn in Tehran's hands. Indeed, according to a former member of the Da'wa Party's collective leadership (Tehran wing), the SCIRI lacks effective control over its own military arm, the Badr Corps, which reportedly is commanded by officers of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRCG).[106] The relationship with Iran also has been the source of internal friction. During and after the Iran-Iraq War, a rift developed between the Da'wa Party and the rest of the SCIRI on this.[107] The split effectively ended the SCIRI's status as a broad umbrella organisation. It now essentially represents Baqir al-Hakim's followers, and its relationship with other Islamic groups appears largely formal.

---

[104] Jens-Uwe Rahe, *Irakische Schiiten im Londoner Exil. Eine Bestandsaufnahme ihrer Organisationen und Untersuchung ihrer Selbstdarstellung,1991-1994* (Würzburg, 1996), p. 32.

[105] According to some reports, the SCIRI has transferred certain units of its Badr Brigade to Kurdish areas under Patriotic Union of Kurdistan control. ICG interview with a representative from the SCIRI, Damascus, February 2002.

[106] ICG interview with a former member of the Da'wa Party's General Command, 15 August 2002, Tehran.

[107] A former Shiite Iraqi military commander of the Badr Brigade maintained that the main reason he broke away from the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1986 was that then Iranian president Ali Khamenei requested that he place himself under the command of the Ministry of Information and Security. ICG Interview with Hadi al-Qabanji, London, 14 June 2002.

Over time, the SCIRI has sought to project the image that it has loosened ties with Iran, largely to broaden its domestic appeal. Baqir al-Hakim now holds himself up as a leader not only of Shiites but of all Iraqis, regardless of religion or ethnicity and the SCIRI has sought to moderate its concept of a post-Saddam government. In particular, it has suggested that it would tolerate a post-Saddam Sunni military interim government.[108] That said, Tehran continues to provide the SCIRI with the vast bulk of its funding, weapons and training.[109]

The closeness of the relationship is evidenced in strong personal ties. Two former SCIRI leaders, Ayatollah Ali al-Taskhiri and Ayatollah Mahmud al-Hashimi Shahrudi, are among the most trusted confidants and most influential aides to Iran's Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei. Both belong to the Supreme Leadership Office, a centre of Iranian political power that includes only four members and that appoints the Leader's 2,000 clerical representatives entrusted with enforcing his authority throughout Iran (and beyond).[110] In August 1999, Khamenei appointed al-Hashim Shahrudi as head of the judiciary, thereby making an Iraqi Arab the third most powerful official in Iran. The SCIRI leader, Baqir al-Hakim, has shown unwavering support for Khamenei, including during his abortive attempt in December 1994 to claim the post of supreme religious and political authority (*marja'-e taqlid-e motlaq*) for all Shiites of the world.[111]

The SCIRI's ties with Iran inevitably have complicated relations with the United States. Nevertheless, by the late 1990s Washington began making overtures, presumably on the ground that it needed to build a bridge to the significant Shiite constituency. The SCIRI was designated a group eligible to receive support under the Iraq Liberation Act and was invited to the August 2002 opposition gathering in Washington. That the SCIRI chose to send Abdelaziz al-Hakim, the brother of its leader, despite renewed U.S.-Iranian tensions and official Iranian opposition to a U.S.-led war, probably is an indication of both the party's and Iran's growing anticipation of a military operation[112] and their desire to enhance their position by securing positions of power for the SCIRI in a post-Saddam regime.

The role and influence of the SCIRI in Iraq is a matter of some debate. Although it attracts much international media attention, it is believed by many to lack both any credible following among the country's Shiite population and the capacity on its own to decisively affect the future course of political developments.[113]

The SCIRI is ambiguous about a possible U.S. attack on the Iraqi regime while pursuing its contacts with Washington. These began in the context of the "Group of Four", which also includes the two principal Kurdish organizations and the Iraqi National Accord (INA) and have continued in the Washington gathering of the six opposition groups (the "Group of Four" plus the INC and the Constitutional Monarchy Movement.).[114] At times, al-Hakim has implied that he would support a U.S. operation that would nullify the regime's military advantage and facilitate the task of the opposition, though suggesting that any military action should not be unilateral.[115] He has pointed to the Kosovo model – where NATO strikes supported Kosovo Liberation Army fighters on the ground – as a potential strategy for Iraq, arguing that Saddam Hussein must be deposed by a domestic mass uprising, but that U.S. support could be critical in preventing the regime from turning its heavy weapons against the rebels. At other times, al-Hakim has sounded a more critical note, explaining that "a political solution is necessary for a regime change in Iraq", the SCIRI is

---

[108] ICG interview with a SCIRI representative, Damascus, February 2002.
[109] Francke, "The Opposition", op. cit. p. 160.
[110] On the functioning and the personal composition of the office and a short biography of Ayatollah Taskhiri, see Wilfried Buchta, *Who Rules Iran?*, Washington Institute, 2000, pp. 47-50. Ayatollah al-Hashimi Shahrudi, who from 1982 to 1987 was the official spokesman of the SCIRI, was its choice to become Iraq's president after the ouster of Saddam Hussein. See *Al-Moujaz an Iran* (London), N°96, September 1999, p. 18.
[111] See Wilfried Buchta, "Die Islamische Republik Iran und die religiös-politische Kontroverse um die marja'iyat", *Orient* N°36 (1995), pp. 449-474.
[112] ICG telephone interview with "Abu Safa" (nom de guerre), who in 1979-1980 was official spokesman of Iran's IRGC, 14 September 2002, London.
[113] ICG interviews, London and Tehran, June-August 2002.
[114] Hamid al-Bayati, a SCIRI member and a participant in the Washington talks, commented that: "We sense more seriousness and commitment from (the) U.S. government to overthrow (the) Saddam regime and to work with the opposition. . . We agree that (the) Iraqi people and Iraqi opposition are going to work to overthrow (the) Saddam regime with the help of the international community to protect (the) Iraqi people". Quoted in Richard Beeston, "US meets leaders vying to rule Iraq", *The Times*, 10 August 2002.
[115] See *Los Angeles Times*, 16 July 2002, p.5.

"against any attack or occupation", and its Washington contacts are designed to "keep off threats against Iraq".[116]

c) The Organisation of Islamic Action

Founded 1965
Base of Operations: Iran, Europe, Syria, some clandestine presence in Iraq
Military capabilities: very limited and clandestine

The *Munazzamat al-Amal al-Islami*, or Organisation of Islamic Action, was founded by Ayatollah Muhammad al-Shirazi in 1965 in Karbela. In the 1970s, it developed into a clandestine radical organisation, sending its members to Lebanon for military training during that country's civil war. The organisation also was able to recruit members outside Karbela, its original Iraqi stronghold, above all in the Gulf States, and particularly in Bahrain.[117] Encouraged by the Iranian revolution, the group launched an unsuccessful armed struggle against the Baath regime in 1980. One of its most spectacular actions was the attempted assassination of Tareq Aziz, then the Iraqi deputy premier. In the early 1990s, the organisation split into two branches, with one in Damascus following Muhammad Hadi al-Mudarrasi, a nephew of Ayatollah al-Shirazi,[118] and the other in Tehran, closer to Iran, under the leadership of Sheikh Qasim al-Husseini. Largely as a result of internal divisions regarding its relationship with Iran, the Organisation of Islamic Action has over the years lost ground relative to the SCIRI and the Da'wa.

d) The Iman al-Khoei-Foundation

Founded Late 1980s
Base of Operations: London, plus worldwide presence
Military capabilities: None

The Iman Al-Khoei Foundation, which represents the traditionalist, apolitical Shiite believers, may exercise considerable influence over Iraq's future though it denies being a party and refrains from supporting other political forces. It has a political agenda, albeit one that is neither publicly announced nor clearly defined. Consistent with the world-view of its founder, the leading Shiite religious authority of the time, Grand Ayatollah Saiyyid Abolqasem al-Khoei (1899-1992), it rejects any active involvement in politics, abhors the use of violence and devotes much of its substantial financial resources and organisational capacities to cultural and educational works. It is respected by Shiite believers in Iraq (and beyond, in Lebanon, the Gulf States, Pakistan, and East Africa, and even Iran).

The foundation, which was established in the late 1980s, differs from other Shiite Iraqi organisations insofar as it perceives itself not as a political party but merely as an international charitable body that works for the propagation and spread of Shiite Islam worldwide. Since 1992 it has run its diverse activities, which also include humanitarian and disaster-relief for Muslims in distress and missionary work, from a centre in London. The foundation has schools and religious centres in New York, Paris, Swansea (UK), Karachi, Montreal and Bangkok and is a large donor to the UN.[119] The source of its financial resources are religious contributions (*khoms*) of Shiite believers.

After the failed Shiite uprising in the wake of the Gulf War, the regime took reprisals against the religious centres of Najaf and Kerbala as well as against the traditionalist Shiite clergy in general. It kept Abolqasem Khoei under house arrest until his death and imprisoned or killed a number of his advisors in subsequent years. After his death, his successor as religious patron of the foundation and recipient of the religious donations was his former master-pupil Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani in Najaf. He has been under house arrest since 1994, and he and his closest collaborators have been targets of assassination attempts, for which Baghdad denies any responsibility.[120] The secretary-general of the foundation until 1994 was the founder's eldest son, Muhammad Taqi al-Khoei, for whose death in a mysterious car-accident near Najaf the foundation holds the Iraqi government responsible.[121] His

---

[116] "Iraqi Shiite opposition counsels U.S. against attack", AFP, 13 August 2002.
[117] Wiley, *The Islamic Movement,* op. cit., p. 84.
[118] Rahe, *Irakische Schiiten*, op. cit., pp. 74-75.
[119] For details about its activities see Al-Khoei Foundation, *Taqrir mujaz haula ba'd khadamat wa nashatat furu' wa markaz mu'assasat al-Imam al-Khoei al-khairiya 1989-2001* [A brief report on the services and activities of the branches and the headquarters of the charitable Imam al-Khoei-Foundation 1989-2001], (London, 2002), pp. 71-146.
[120] Buchta, *Who Rules Iran?* op. cit., p. 90.
[121] Rahe, *Irakische Schiiten,* op. cit., p. 84.

successor was his younger brother, Majid al-Khoei, who supervises the foundation from London.

Since 1994 the al-Khoei Foundation has intensified its diplomatic and public relations activity (it publishes three Arabic and English journals in London) and has advocated Saddam Hussein's removal and the establishment of a vaguely defined democratic government.[122] Although the foundation never articulates open opposition, it is also at loggerheads with Iran. Because the al-Khoei Foundation opposes the theocratic concept of *velayat-e faqih,* it presents a challenge to Iran's Supreme Leader's claim to religious and political leadership over Arab Shiites outside Iran.[123]

4. Military and Nationalists

a) The Iraqi National Accord and the Iraqi Free Officers

The Iraqi National Accord

Founded 1990
Led by Ayad Alawi
Base of Operations: Amman
Military Capabilities: Minimal, independent resources, relies on defections from Iraqi military

Iraqi Free Officers

Founded 1996
Led by General Najib Al-Salhi
Base of Operations: Washington
Military Capabilities: None

Formed with Saudi backing in 1990, the INA is composed largely of military and security officials who defected from Iraq. The group was founded by Ayad Allawi, a senior Iraqi intelligence official, who left in 1971, and Salah Omar al-Ali, a former senior member of the Baath Party and Minister of Information, who broke with Saddam Hussein over Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. After a brief stay in Damascus in the wake of the Gulf War, the INA settled in Amman where it has been headquartered since 1995. The INA's core strategy has been to attract dissident Baathists and Iraqi officers and encourage a conspiracy against the regime. Its natural constituency thus very much mirrors that of the regime itself – Sunni Arabs from central Iraq who dominate the Baath party, the security services and the officer corps. It is composed of strong Iraqi nationalists with a shared hatred of the current regime.

The INA's appeal among foreign countries intent on dislodging Saddam Hussein, particularly the U.S., rose after the failure of the 1991 uprising which seemed to show the limitations inherent in a "peripheral" approach – Shiites in the South and Kurds in the North seeking to squeeze the centre. The INA's attractiveness also was bolstered by the 1995 defection to Jordan of Saddam's son-in-law, Hussein Kamel, a key actor in Iraq's weapons program. Sensing the possibility of more significant haemorrhaging from Iraq, the United States in particular placed greater emphasis on the nationalist exile community located in Jordan and on its capacity to attract further defections within Iraq's military ranks.

In March 1996, General Nizar al-Khazraji, a former Iraqi chief-of-staff, fled and joined the INA, further enhancing its status. However, by that time the INA had been thoroughly penetrated by Iraqi security services and, in July, an attempted INA-backed coup against the regime failed. All the roughly 100 Iraqi officers and agents who had been involved in the plot were rounded up and executed. While the INA claims that its people continue to operate throughout Iraq, it is a greatly weakened organisation.

Nevertheless, its natural pool of recruits (disaffected Iraqi officers) has grown, a function of Iraq's general impoverishment and the collapse of the military's standard of living.[124] For such disaffected officers, there are few alternatives to the INA, since most external opposition groups are viewed as both hostile to Sunni interests and overly subservient to foreign powers.

The view shared by many nationalists and members of the military who have joined the INA is that the army is not an unbreakable, monolithic entity, and

---

[122] Ibid, p. 129. The al-Khoei Foundation has also cultivated close relations to the Aal al-Bayt Institute (*ma'had aal al-bayt*) in Amman, organised and funded by Jordan's Hashemite Monarchy, which has led to some speculation that it is interested in a possible Hashemite restoration in Iraq. The purpose and nature of this cooperation, however, are unknown. See Buchta, *Who Rules Iran?* op. cit., p. 99.

[123] For detail, see Buchta, "Die Islamische Republik", op. cit., pp. 449-474.

[124] ICG interview with two defected Iraqi generals, Damascus, February 2002.

defections can rapidly occur, perhaps in the face of a decisive U.S. attack.[125] In their opinion, the regime quickly will lose two of its four key security supports – the army and the Republican Guard – in the face of a heavy external air attack, leaving only the Special Republican Guard and the personal Presidential Guard. They point to the fact that the regime has transferred units of the Republican Guard outside of Baghdad as evidence of its declining faith in them.

Many higher-ranking military defectors have pitched their support behind al-Khazraji, who lives in exile in Denmark and whom they consider capable of leading Iraq through a transitional period.[126] A Sunni, General al-Khazraji is the highest-ranking officer to have defected and is considered a hero by many Iraqis at home and abroad for his conduct during the Iran-Iraq War. He has tried to remain above the fray and avoid involvement in disputes between opposition groups. However, he has been dogged by well-documented accusations that he was behind the ghastly use of chemical weapons against the Kurds.

Another exiled general, Najib al-Salhi, has been touted as a potential future president. A former chief of staff in the Republican Guard, he fled in 1995 and resided in Jordan before moving to the U.S. He established a secret network of colleagues both inside and outside of Iraq, the Free Officers' Movement.[127] He has taken the position that Saddam Hussein can be removed through a combination of air attacks by an international coalition, U.S. special forces on the ground, domestic opposition groups and defecting Iraqi military units. In his view, once the Iraqi military becomes convinced that Washington is determined to overthrow Saddam Hussein, it will join the fight against him. Unlike al-Khazraji, he appears relatively untainted by previous military activities. Other ex-generals, such as Fawzi al-Shamari, a Shiite, and Wafiq al-Samarrai, former chief of military intelligence, also have their backers.[128] Many of the ex-generals claim strong contacts within the four central Iraqi governorates (Baghdad, Al-Anbar, Salah al-Din, Diyala) that so far have been loyal to the regime, unlike the remaining fourteen that joined the 1991 uprisings.

In July 2002, high-ranking Iraqi military living in exile (including Generals Najib Al-Salhi, Tawfiq al-Yassiri, and Saad Al-Obaidi) met in London and established a military council to prepare a political transition.[129] They also agreed on a "Covenant of Honour" calling for a pluralist and demilitarised Iraq and committed to transfer power to civilians if a U.S.-led intervention led to Saddam Hussein's ouster.

b) Pan-Arab and Baathist Parties

The Arab Baath Socialist Party: Iraqi Command

Founded 1963
Led by Fawzi al-Rawi
Base of Operations: Syria
Military Capabilities: None

Also: The Iraqi Socialist Party, The Independent Group, The Arab Socialist Movement, The Unionist Nasserite Grouping, The Democratic Pan-Arab Grouping, The National Reconciliation Group and the Free Iraq Council.

The most important pan-Arab group is the Arab Baath Socialist Party: Iraqi Command, an organisation of Iraqi Baathists living in exile in Syria.[130] While it still adheres to the old, quasi-socialist Baathist platform and continues to aspire to a United Arab Republic including Iraq and Syria,[131] it gradually has been moving toward a more reform agenda, advocating pluralism and democracy. In its view change in Iraq will be carried out by disaffected elements of the existing power structure – the army, the security apparatus and dissident Baath members such as themselves – rather than by a popular uprising or foreign intervention. It is suspicious of plans to establish a federal structure, fearful that it could lead to the country's de facto

[125] ICG interview with the chief of a leading Sunni Iraqi tribe, Damascus, February 2002.
[126] ICG interview with two defected Iraqi generals, Damascus, February 2002.
[127] See "Irak: bientôt la délivrance" (interview with Najib al-Salhi), *Politique internationale*, July 2002, pp. 102-112.
[128] U.S. officials have been meeting with these and other exiled Iraqi generals in an effort to gauge how much support could be counted on within Iraq's military and how they envisage a post-Saddam Iraq. See Anthony Shadid, "US Pursues Ex-Generals to Topple Saddam", *The Boston Globe*, 11 March 2002.
[129] See *Le Monde*, 16 July 2002, p. 4.
[130] Gunter, *The Kurdish Predicament in Iraq*, op. cit., p. 46.
[131] Dlawer Ala'Aldeen, "Playing by the Rules", in F. Halliday (ed.), *Iraq*, op. cit., p. 238.

partition. Other pan-Arab nationalist groups include the Iraqi Socialist Party, the Independent Group, the Arab Socialist Movement, the Unionist Nasserite Grouping, the Democratic Pan-Arab Grouping and the National Reconciliation Group.

5. Communists

The Iraqi Communist Party

Founded 1934
Base of Operations: Syria and Iraqi Kurdistan
Military Capabilities: NA

Founded in 1934, the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) is the oldest party on the political scene. From inception, it attracted young members of the Shiite community, and much of its recruitment and activity took place in southern Iraq. The Communists appealed to the educated and more secular minded – though often economically disadvantaged – members of the population, who welcomed its calls for political and social equality. Historically, it was one of the more effective parties, and to this day, it retains a degree of loyalty among Kurds and the Shiite urban population in the South, including possibly a presence on the ground, especially in urban centres like Baghdad.

The Communists faced repression until the monarchy was overthrown in 1958 but gained considerable influence during the 1960s. After the Baath Party seized power in 1968 and the new regime signed a "friendship agreement" with the Soviet Union in 1972, the pro-Soviet ICP joined the Baath-dominated National Progressive Patriotic Front in 1973. However, when Saddam Hussein took over the presidency and Baath Party leadership in 1979, the Front was brutally disbanded. The regime moved against the Communist Party and persecuted its members. As a result, the ICP took up arms, transferred its centre of operations to Kurdistan, and established close relations with the KDP and the PUK while fighting alongside their *peshmerga*. Following the 1987-88 campaigns against the Kurds, the ICP once more was forced to move, this time to Syria. After the Soviet Union's collapse, it kept its name, while shifting its ideological platform away from classical Marxism-Leninism.

While the Communist Party continues to hope that Saddam Hussein will be ousted by a mass uprising, it acknowledges the difficulties inherent in the absence of a unified opposition. It also has come to see the need for significant backing by the armed forces. Leery of a U.S.-led military intervention, it nonetheless has suggested that it could support it in order to overthrow the regime and establish a political system within which it once again could freely operate.[132]

How significant a role the ICP might play in a future Iraq is debatable. Certainly its strong domestic roots, its legitimacy as a nationalist party, and its ability to attract sympathisers across religious lines provide it with relative strengths compared to a number of other opposition groups.

6. Democrats

The Union of Iraqi Democrats

Founded 1989
Led by Faruq Ridha'a
Base of Operations: London
Military Capabilities: None

Movement of the Democratic Centre

Founded 2000
Led by Adnan Pachachi
Base of Operations: London
Military Capabilities: None

The Constitutional Monarchy Movement

Founded 1993
Led by Sharif Ali Ibn Hussein
Base of Operations: London
Military Capabilities: None

Also: the Iraqi Democratic Party

While all opposition groups currently espouse democratic principles, this was the original premise of several. The last to be formed inside Iraq was the National Democratic Party, which existed from the 1940s until the Baath took power in 1968, at which point it was essentially disbanded, and most of its leaders went into exile. Since that time, only relatively small democratic parties have emerged, all established abroad. They include the Union of Iraqi Democrats, the Iraqi Democratic Party and the Movement of the Democratic Centre. While

[132] ICG interview with an ICP representative, Damascus, February 2002.

they lack genuine roots or a following in Iraq, they can claim a measure of success in helping shape the opposition's political discourse. Through their efforts, they have helped push to the fore issues of political pluralism, individual freedoms, civil liberties and government accountability.

In conversations with ICG, representatives of these groups expressed optimism regarding prospects for regime change in the aftermath of the events of 11 September 2001. A representative of the Union of Iraqi Democrats asserted that Saddam Hussein could be ousted only through U.S. intervention.[133] Some members expressed the hope that their influence would increase in a post-Saddam Iraq with the return of some of the three to four million Iraqis living in exile, a majority of whom do not belong to any party and are both well-educated and accustomed to democratic systems. Yet at the same time, they appeared to harbour few illusions about their own role in a future Iraq.

The Constitutional Monarchy Movement (CMM) represents a slightly different tradition. It was founded in London in 1993 by Sharif Ali Ibn Hussein, a second cousin of King Faisal II, who was assassinated during the 1958 revolution. Ibn Hussein, who sees himself as a potential unifier for the opposition, is speaker of the Iraqi National Congress. He and his followers argue that after more than 40 years of turbulent politics and divisive government policies, the best solution for Iraq is a constitutional monarchy that would provide legitimacy and stability.[134] The CMM believes that Iraqis should be asked to approve a constitutional monarchy through a referendum. It was invited by the United States to attend the August 2002 gathering.

Amman/Brussels, 1 October 2002

[133] ICG interview, London, January 2002.

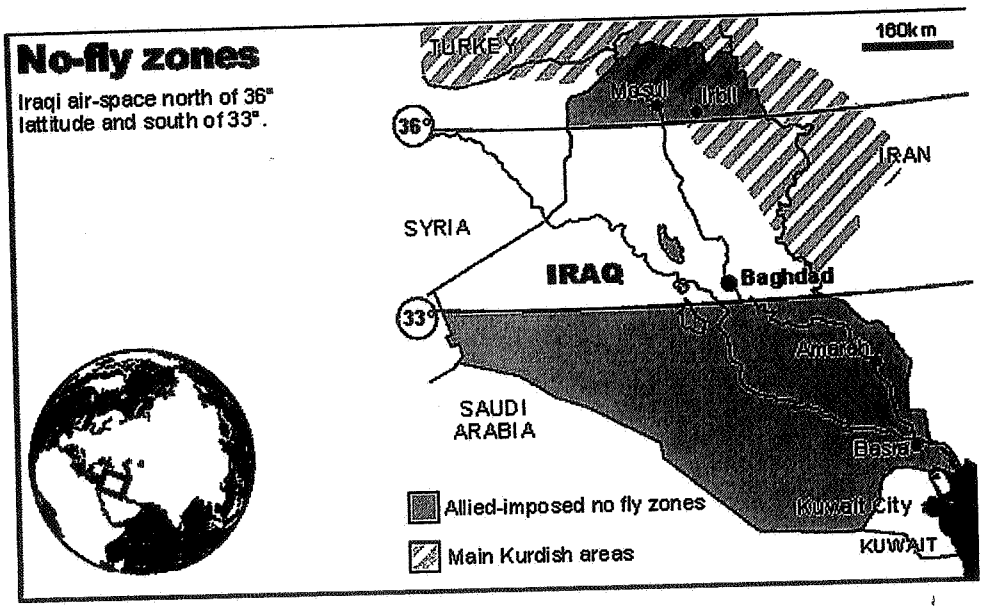
[134] Francke, "The Opposition", op. cit., pp. 174-175.

APPENDIX A

MAP OF IRAQ

APPENDIX B

MAP OF NO-FLY ZONES AND MAIN KURDISH AREAS IN IRAQ



APPENDIX C

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP

The International Crisis Group (ICG) is a private, multinational organisation, with over 80 staff members on five continents, working through field-based analysis and high-level advocacy to prevent and resolve deadly conflict.

ICG's approach is grounded in field research. Teams of political analysts are located within or close by countries at risk of outbreak, escalation or recurrence of violent conflict. Based on information and assessments from the field, ICG produces regular analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international decision-takers.

ICG's reports and briefing papers are distributed widely by email and printed copy to officials in foreign ministries and international organisations and made generally available at the same time via the organisation's Internet site, *www.crisisweb.org*. ICG works closely with governments and those who influence them, including the media, to highlight its crisis analyses and to generate support for its policy prescriptions.

The ICG Board – which includes prominent figures from the fields of politics, diplomacy, business and the media – is directly involved in helping to bring ICG reports and recommendations to the attention of senior policy-makers around the world. ICG is chaired by former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari; and its President and Chief Executive since January 2000 has been former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans.

ICG's international headquarters are in Brussels, with advocacy offices in Washington DC, New York and Paris and a media liaison office in London. The organisation currently operates eleven field offices with analysts working in nearly 30 crisis-affected countries and territories across four continents.

In *Africa*, those locations include Burundi, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone-Liberia-Guinea, Somalia, Sudan and Zimbabwe; in *Asia*, Indonesia, Myanmar, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Kashmir; in *Europe*, Albania, Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia; in the *Middle East*, the whole region from North Africa to Iran; and in *Latin America*, Colombia.

ICG raises funds from governments, charitable foundations, companies and individual donors. The following governments currently provide funding: Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the Republic of China (Taiwan), Turkey and the United Kingdom.

Foundation and private sector donors include The Atlantic Philanthropies, Carnegie Corporation of New York, Ford Foundation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, William & Flora Hewlett Foundation, The Henry Luce Foundation, Inc., John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, The John Merck Fund, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Open Society Institute, Ploughshares Fund, The Ruben & Elisabeth Rausing Trust and Sasakawa Peace Foundation.

October 2002

APPENDIX D

ICG REPORTS AND BRIEFING PAPERS*

AFRICA

ALGERIA**

The Algerian Crisis: Not Over Yet, Africa Report N°24, 20 October 2000 (also available in French)

The Civil Concord: A Peace Initiative Wasted, Africa Report N°31, 9 July 2001 (also available in French)

Algeria's Economy: A Vicious Circle of Oil and Violence, Africa Report N°36, 26 October 2001 (also available in French)

BURUNDI

The Mandela Effect: Evaluation and Perspectives of the Peace Process in Burundi, Africa Report N°21, 18 April 2000 (also available in French)

Unblocking Burundi's Peace Process: Political Parties, Political Prisoners, and Freedom of the Press, Africa Briefing, 22 June 2000

Burundi: The Issues at Stake. Political Parties, Freedom of the Press and Political Prisoners, Africa Report N°23, 12 July 2000 (also available in French)

Burundi Peace Process: Tough Challenges Ahead, Africa Briefing, 27 August 2000

Burundi: Neither War, nor Peace, Africa Report N°25, 1 December 2000 (also available in French)

Burundi: Breaking the Deadlock, The Urgent Need for a New Negotiating Framework, Africa Report N°29, 14 May 2001 (also available in French)

Burundi: 100 Days to put the Peace Process back on Track, Africa Report N°33, 14 August 2001 (also available in French)

Burundi: After Six Months of Transition: Continuing the War or Winning the Peace, Africa Report N°46, 24 May 2002 (also available in French)

The Burundi Rebellion and the Ceasefire Negotiations, Africa Briefing, 6 August 2002

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Scramble for the Congo: Anatomy of an Ugly War, Africa Report N°26, 20 December 2000 (also available in French)

From Kabila to Kabila: Prospects for Peace in the Congo, Africa Report N°27, 16 March 2001

Disarmament in the Congo: Investing in Conflict Prevention, Africa Briefing, 12 June 2001

The Inter-Congolese Dialogue: Political Negotiation or Game of Bluff? Africa Report N°37, 16 November 2001 (also available in French)

Disarmament in the Congo: Jump-Starting DDRRR to Prevent Further War, Africa Report N°38, 14 December 2001

Storm Clouds Over Sun City: The Urgent Need To Recast The Congolese Peace Process, Africa Report N°38, 14 May 2002 (also available in French)

RWANDA

Uganda and Rwanda: Friends or Enemies? Africa Report N°15, 4 May 2000

International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda: Justice Delayed, Africa Report N°30, 7 June 2001 (also available in French)

"Consensual Democracy" in Post Genocide Rwanda: Evaluating the March 2001 District Elections, Africa Report N°34, 9 October 2001

Rwanda/Uganda: a Dangerous War of Nerves, Africa Briefing, 21 December 2001

The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda: The Countdown, Africa Report N°50, 1 August 2002 (also available in French)

SOMALIA

Somalia: Countering Terrorism in a Failed State, Africa Report N°45, 23 May 2002

SUDAN

God, Oil & Country: Changing the Logic of War in Sudan, Africa Report N°39, 28 January 2002

Capturing the Moment: Sudan's Peace Process in the Balance, Africa Report N°42, 3 April 2002

Dialogue or Destruction? Organising for Peace as the War in Sudan Escalates, Africa Report N°48, 27 June 2002

Sudan's Best Chance For Peace: How Not To Lose It, Africa Report N°51, 17 September 2002

WEST AFRICA

Sierra Leone: Time for a New Military and Political Strategy, Africa Report N°28, 11 April 2001

Sierra Leone: Managing Uncertainty, Africa Report N°35, 24 October 2001

Sierra Leone: Ripe For Elections? Africa Briefing, 19 December 2001

Liberia: The Key to Ending Regional Instability, Africa Report N°43, 24 April 2002

Sierra Leone After Elections: Politics as Usual? Africa Report N°49, 12 July 2002

Liberia: Unravelling, Africa Briefing, 19 August 2002

ZIMBABWE

Zimbabwe: At the Crossroads, Africa Report N°22, 10 July 2000

---

* Released since January 2000.

** The Algeria project was transferred from the Africa Program in January 2002.

Zimbabwe: Three Months after the Elections, Africa Briefing, 25 September 2000

Zimbabwe in Crisis: Finding a way Forward, Africa Report N°32, 13 July 2001

Zimbabwe: Time for International Action, Africa Briefing, 12 October 2001

Zimbabwe's Election: The Stakes for Southern Africa, Africa Briefing, 11 January 2002

All Bark and No Bite: The International Response to Zimbabwe's Crisis, Africa Report N°40, 25 January 2002

Zimbabwe at the Crossroads: Transition or Conflict? Africa Report N°41, 22 March 2002

Zimbabwe: What Next? Africa Report N° 47, 14 June 2002

ASIA

CAMBODIA

Cambodia: The Elusive Peace Dividend, Asia Report N°8, 11 August 2000

CENTRAL ASIA

Central Asia: Crisis Conditions in Three States, Asia Report N°7, 7 August 2000 (also available in Russian)

Recent Violence in Central Asia: Causes and Consequences, Central Asia Briefing, 18 October 2000

Islamist Mobilisation and Regional Security, Asia Report N°14, 1 March 2001 (also available in Russian)

Incubators of Conflict: Central Asia's Localised Poverty and Social Unrest, Asia Report N°16, 8 June 2001 (also available in Russian)

Central Asia: Fault Lines in the New Security Map, Asia Report N°20, 4 July 2001 (also available in Russian)

Uzbekistan at Ten – Repression and Instability, Asia Report N°21, 21 August 2001 (also available in Russian)

Kyrgyzstan at Ten: Trouble in the "Island of Democracy", Asia Report N°22, 28 August 2001 (also available in Russian)

Central Asian Perspectives on the 11 September and the Afghan Crisis, Central Asia Briefing, 28 September 2001 (also available in French and Russian)

Central Asia: Drugs and Conflict, Asia Report N°25, 26 November 2001 (also available in Russian)

Afghanistan and Central Asia: Priorities for Reconstruction and Development, Asia Report N°26, 27 November 2001 (also available in Russian)

Tajikistan: An Uncertain Peace, Asia Report N°30, 24 December 2001 (also available in Russian)

The IMU and the Hizb-ut-Tahrir: Implications of the Afghanistan Campaign, Central Asia Briefing, 30 January 2002 (also available in Russian)

Central Asia: Border Disputes and Conflict Potential, Asia Report N°33, 4 April 2002

Central Asia: Water and Conflict, Asia Report N°34, 30 May 2002

Kyrgyzstan's Political Crisis: An Exit Strategy, Asia Report N°37, 20 August 2002 (also available in Russian)

The OSCE in Central Asia: A New Strategy, Asia Report N°38, 11 September 2002

INDONESIA

Indonesia's Crisis: Chronic but not Acute, Asia Report N°6, 31 May 2000

Indonesia's Maluku Crisis: The Issues, Indonesia Briefing, 19 July 2000

Indonesia: Keeping the Military Under Control, Asia Report N°9, 5 September 2000 (also available in Indonesian)

Aceh: Escalating Tension, Indonesia Briefing, 7 December 2000

Indonesia: Overcoming Murder and Chaos in Maluku, Asia Report N°10, 19 December 2000

Indonesia: Impunity Versus Accountability for Gross Human Rights Violations, Asia Report N°12, 2 February 2001

Indonesia: National Police Reform, Asia Report N°13, 20 February 2001 (also available in Indonesian)

Indonesia's Presidential Crisis, Indonesia Briefing, 21 February 2001

Bad Debt: The Politics of Financial Reform in Indonesia, Asia Report N°15, 13 March 2001

Indonesia's Presidential Crisis: The Second Round, Indonesia Briefing, 21 May 2001

Aceh: Why Military Force Won't Bring Lasting Peace, Asia Report N°17, 12 June 2001 (also available in Indonesian)

Aceh: Can Autonomy Stem the Conflict? Asia Report N°18, 27 June 2001

Communal Violence in Indonesia: Lessons from Kalimantan, Asia Report N°19, 27 June 2001

Indonesian-U.S. Military Ties, Indonesia Briefing, 18 July 2001

The Megawati Presidency, Indonesia Briefing, 10 September 2001

Indonesia: Ending Repression in Irian Jaya, Asia Report N°23, 20 September 2001

Indonesia: Violence and Radical Muslims, Indonesia Briefing, 10 October 2001

Indonesia: Next Steps in Military Reform, Asia Report N°24, 11 October 2001

Indonesia: Natural Resources and Law Enforcement, Asia Report N°29, 20 December 2001 (also available in Indonesian)

Indonesia: The Search for Peace in Maluku, Asia Report N°31, 8 February 2002

Aceh: Slim Chance for Peace, Indonesia Briefing, 27 March 2002

Indonesia: The Implications of the Timor Trials, Indonesia Briefing, 8 May 2002

Resuming U.S.-Indonesia Military Ties, Indonesia Briefing, 21 May 2002

Al-Qaeda in Southeast Asia: The case of the "Ngruki Network" in Indonesia, Indonesia Briefing, 8 August 2002

Indonesia: Resources And Conflict In Papua, Asia Report N°39, 13 September 2002

MYANMAR

Burma/Myanmar: How Strong is the Military Regime? Asia Report N°11, 21 December 2000

Myanmar: The Role of Civil Society, Asia Report N°27, 6 December 2001

Myanmar: The Military Regime's View of the World, Asia Report N°28, 7 December 2001

Myanmar: The Politics of Humanitarian Aid, Asia Report N°32, 2 April 2002

Myanmar: The HIV/AIDS Crisis, Myanmar Briefing, 2 April 2002

Myanmar: The Future of the Armed Forces, Asia Briefing, 27 September 2002

AFGHANISTAN/SOUTH ASIA

Afghanistan and Central Asia: Priorities for Reconstruction and Development, Asia Report N°26, 27 November 2001

Pakistan: The Dangers of Conventional Wisdom, Pakistan Briefing, 12 March 2002

Securing Afghanistan: The Need for More International Action, Afghanistan Briefing, 15 March 2002

The Loya Jirga: One Small Step Forward? Afghanistan & Pakistan Briefing, 16 May 2002

Kashmir: Confrontation and Miscalculation, Asia Report N°35, 11 July 2002

Pakistan: Madrasas, Extremism and the Military, Asia Report N°36, 29 July 2002

The Afghan Transitional Administration: Prospects and Perils, Afghanistan Briefing, 30 July 2002

BALKANS

ALBANIA

Albania: State of the Nation, Balkans Report N°87, 1 March 2000

Albania's Local Elections, A test of Stability and Democracy, Balkans Briefing, 25 August 2000

Albania: The State of the Nation 2001, Balkans Report N°111, 25 May 2001

Albania's Parliamentary Elections 2001, Balkans Briefing, 23 August 2001

BOSNIA

Denied Justice: Individuals Lost in a Legal Maze, Balkans Report N°86, 23 February 2000

European Vs. Bosnian Human Rights Standards, Handbook Overview, 14 April 2000

Reunifying Mostar: Opportunities for Progress, Balkans Report N°90, 19 April 2000

Bosnia's Municipal Elections 2000: Winners and Losers, Balkans Report N°91, 28 April 2000

Bosnia's Refugee Logjam Breaks: Is the International Community Ready? Balkans Report N°95, 31 May 2000

War Criminals in Bosnia's Republika Srpska, Balkans Report N°103, 2 November 2000

Bosnia's November Elections: Dayton Stumbles, Balkans Report N°104, 18 December 2000

Turning Strife to Advantage: A Blueprint to Integrate the Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Balkans Report N°106, 15 March 2001

No Early Exit: NATO's Continuing Challenge in Bosnia, Balkans Report N°110, 22 May 2001

Bosnia's Precarious Economy: Still Not Open For Business; Balkans Report N°115, 7 August 2001 (also available in Bosnian)

The Wages of Sin: Confronting Bosnia's Republika Srpska, Balkans Report N°118, 8 October 2001 (also available in Bosnian)

Bosnia: Reshaping the International Machinery, Balkans Report N°121, 29 November 2001 (also available in Bosnian)

Courting Disaster: The Misrule of Law in Bosnia & Herzegovina, Balkans Report N°127, 26 March 2002 (also available in Bosnian)

Implementing Equality: The "Constituent Peoples" Decision in Bosnia & Herzegovina, Balkans Report N°128, 16 April 2002 (also available in Bosnian)

Policing the Police in Bosnia: A Further Reform Agenda, Balkans Report N°130, 10 May 2002 (also available in Bosnian)

Bosnia's Alliance for (Smallish) Change, Balkans Report N°132, 2 August 2002 (also available in Bosnian)

CROATIA

Facing Up to War Crimes, Balkans Briefing, 16 October 2001

KOSOVO

Kosovo Albanians in Serbian Prisons: Kosovo's Unfinished Business, Balkans Report N°85, 26 January 2000

What Happened to the KLA? Balkans Report N°88, 3 March 2000

Kosovo's Linchpin: Overcoming Division in Mitrovica, Balkans Report N°96, 31 May 2000

Reality Demands: Documenting Violations of International Humanitarian Law in Kosovo 1999, Balkans Report, 27 June 2000

Elections in Kosovo: Moving Toward Democracy? Balkans Report N°97, 7 July 2000

Kosovo Report Card, Balkans Report N°100, 28 August 2000

Reaction in Kosovo to Kostunica's Victory, Balkans Briefing, 10 October 2000

Religion in Kosovo, Balkans Report N°105, 31 January 2001

Kosovo: Landmark Election, Balkans Report N°120, 21 November 2001 (also available in Albanian and Serbo-Croat)

Kosovo: A Strategy for Economic Development, Balkans Report N°123, 19 December 2001 (also available in Serbo-Croat)

A Kosovo Roadmap: I. Addressing Final Status, Balkans Report N°124, 28 February 2002 (also available in Albanian and Serbo-Croat)

A Kosovo Roadmap: II. Internal Benchmarks, Balkans Report N°125, 1 March 2002 (also available in Albanian and Serbo-Croat)

UNMIK's Kosovo Albatross: Tackling Division in Mitrovica, Balkans Report N°131, 3 June 2002 (also available in Albanian and Serbo-Croat)

Finding the Balance: The Scales of Justice in Kosovo, Balkans Report N°134, 12 September 2002

MACEDONIA

Macedonia's Ethnic Albanians: Bridging the Gulf, Balkans Report N°98, 2 August 2000

Macedonia Government Expects Setback in Local Elections, Balkans Briefing, 4 September 2000

The Macedonian Question: Reform or Rebellion, Balkans Report N°109, 5 April 2001

Macedonia: The Last Chance for Peace, Balkans Report N°113, 20 June 2001

Macedonia: Still Sliding, Balkans Briefing, 27 July 2001

Macedonia: War on Hold, Balkans Briefing, 15 August 2001

Macedonia: Filling the Security Vacuum, Balkans Briefing, 8 September 2001

Macedonia's Name: Why the Dispute Matters and How to Resolve It, Balkans Report N°122, 10 December 2001 (also available in Serbo-Croat)

Macedonia's Public Secret: How Corruption Drags The Country Down, Balkans Report N°133, 14 August 2002 (also available in Macedonian)

MONTENEGRO

Montenegro: In the Shadow of the Volcano, Balkans Report N°89, 21 March 2000

Montenegro's Socialist People's Party: A Loyal Opposition? Balkans Report N°92, 28 April 2000

Montenegro's Local Elections: Testing the National Temperature, Background Briefing, 26 May 2000

Montenegro: Which way Next? Balkans Briefing, 30 November 2000

Montenegro: Settling for Independence? Balkans Report N°107, 28 March 2001

Montenegro: Time to Decide, a Pre-Election Briefing, Balkans Briefing, 18 April 2001

Montenegro: Resolving the Independence Deadlock, Balkans Report N°114, 1 August 2001

Still Buying Time: Montenegro, Serbia and the European Union, Balkans Report N°129, 7 May 2002 (also available in Serbian)

SERBIA

Serbia's Embattled Opposition, Balkans Report N°94, 30 May 2000

Serbia's Grain Trade: Milosevic's Hidden Cash Crop, Balkans Report N°93, 5 June 2000

Serbia: The Milosevic Regime on the Eve of the September Elections, Balkans Report N°99, 17 August 2000

Current Legal Status of the Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) and of Serbia and Montenegro, Balkans Report N°101, 19 September 2000

Yugoslavia's Presidential Election: The Serbian People's Moment of Truth, Balkans Report N°102, 19 September 2000

Sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Balkans Briefing, 10 October 2000

Serbia on the Eve of the December Elections, Balkans Briefing, 20 December 2000

A Fair Exchange: Aid to Yugoslavia for Regional Stability, Balkans Report N°112, 15 June 2001

Peace in Presevo: Quick Fix or Long-Term Solution? Balkans Report N°116, 10 August 2001

Serbia's Transition: Reforms Under Siege, Balkans Report N°117, 21 September 2001 (also available in Serbo-Croat)

Belgrade's Lagging Reform: Cause for International Concern, Balkans Report N°126, 7 March 2002 (also available in Serbo-Croat)

Serbia: Military Intervention Threatens Democratic Reform, Balkans Briefing, 28 March 2002 (also available in Serbo-Croat)

Fighting To Control Yugoslavia's Military, Balkans Briefing, 12 July 2002

REGIONAL REPORTS

After Milosevic: A Practical Agenda for Lasting Balkans Peace, Balkans Report N°108, 26 April 2001

Milosevic in The Hague: What it Means for Yugoslavia and the Region, Balkans Briefing, 6 July 2001

Bin Laden and the Balkans: The Politics of Anti-Terrorism, Balkans Report N°119, 9 November 2001

LATIN AMERICA

Colombia's Elusive Quest for Peace, Latin America Report N°1, 26 March 2002 (also available in Spanish)

The 10 March 2002 Parliamentary Elections in Colombia, Latin America Briefing, 17 April 2002 (also available in Spanish)

The Stakes in the Presidential Election in Colombia, Latin America Briefing, 22 May 2002 (also available in Spanish)

MIDDLE EAST

A Time to Lead: The International Community and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, Middle East Report N°1, 10 April 2002

Middle East Endgame I: Getting to a Comprehensive Arab-Israeli Peace Settlement, Middle East Report N°2, 16 July 2002

Middle East Endgame II: How a Comprehensive Israeli-Palestinian Settlement Would Look, Middle East Report N°3; 16 July 2002

Middle East Endgame III: Israel, Syria and Lebanon – How Comprehensive Peace Settlements Would Look, Middle East Report N°4, 16 July 2002

Iran: The Struggle for the Revolution's Soul, Middle East Report N°5, 5 August 2002

ALGERIA*

Diminishing Returns: Algeria's 2002 Legislative Elections, Middle East Briefing, 24 June 2002

* The Algeria project was transferred from the Africa Program in January 2002.

ISSUES REPORTS

HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS as a Security Issue, Issues Report N°1, 19 June 2001

Myanmar: The HIV/AIDS Crisis, Myanmar Briefing, 2 April 2002

EU

The European Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO): Crisis Response in the Grey Lane, Issues Briefing, 26 June 2001

EU Crisis Response Capability: Institutions and Processes for Conflict Prevention and Management, Issues Report N°2, 26 June 2001

EU Crisis Response Capabilities: An Update, Issues Briefing, 29 April 2002

APPENDIX E

ICG BOARD MEMBERS

Itamar Rabinovich
President of Tel Aviv University; former Israeli Ambassador to the U.S. and Chief Negotiator with Syria

Fidel V. Ramos
Former President of the Philippines

Mohamed Sahnoun
Special Adviser to the United Nations Secretary-General on Africa

Salim A. Salim
Former Prime Minister of Tanzania; former Secretary General of the Organisation of African Unity

Douglas Schoen
Founding Partner of Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates, U.S.

William Shawcross
Journalist and author, UK

George Soros
Chairman, Open Society Institute

Eduardo Stein
Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Guatemala

Pär Stenbäck
Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Finland

Thorvald Stoltenberg
Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Norway

William O. Taylor
Chairman Emeritus, The Boston Globe, U.S.

Ed van Thijn
Former Netherlands Minister of Interior; former Mayor of Amsterdam

Simone Veil
Former President of the European Parliament; former Minister for Health, France

Shirley Williams
Former Secretary of State for Education and Science; Member House of Lords, UK

Jaushieh Joseph Wu
Deputy Secretary General to the President, Taiwan

Grigory Yavlinsky
Chairman of Yabloko Party and its Duma faction, Russia

Uta Zapf
Chairperson of the German Bundestag Subcommittee on Disarmament, Arms Control and Non-proliferation