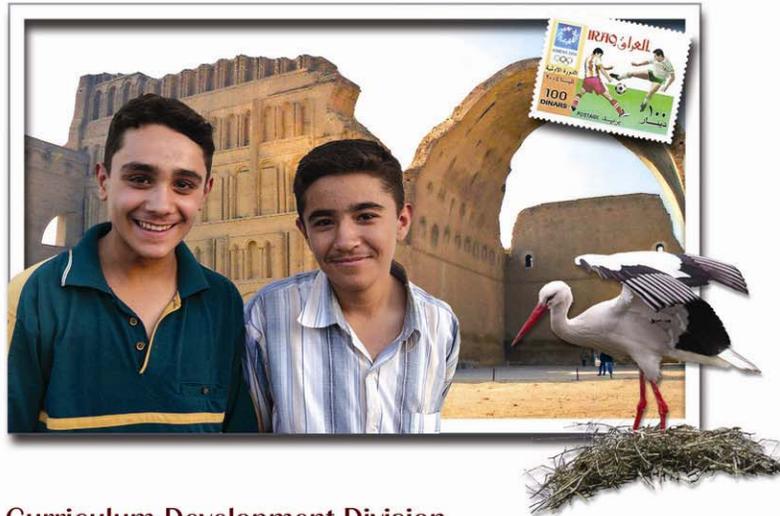


# IRAQ in Perspective

An Orientation Guide



Curriculum Development Division  
Instructional Design Department  
February 2008



DEFENSE LANGUAGE INSTITUTE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CENTER

## Table of Contents

Profile.....	6
Introduction.....	6
Iraq in Facts and Figures.....	6
Geography.....	9
Introduction and Area.....	9
Neighboring Countries.....	9
Geographic Regions.....	11
Climate.....	12
Rivers.....	12
Major Cities and Population.....	14
Natural Hazards.....	17
Environmental Concerns.....	18
History.....	19
Ancient Times - Mesopotamia.....	19
Spread of Islam.....	22
Sunni and Shi'a Divide.....	23
Muslim Holy Sites.....	23
Sunni Islam Dynasties.....	24
The Mongols.....	25
The Ottomans.....	25
Safavids and Ottoman Conflict.....	26
Young Turks.....	27
World War I.....	27
British Mandate.....	27

The Question of a Kurdish State.....	28
The Hashemites and Faisal I.....	29
World War II.....	30
Post World War II.....	31
Baghdad Pact .....	31
Hashemite Monarchy Ends.....	32
The Qasim Regime and the Republic of Iraq.....	33
Bakr and the Ba’athists .....	34
The Rise of Saddam Hussein .....	34
Kurdish Push for Autonomy.....	35
The Iran-Iraq War .....	36
The Invasion of Kuwait .....	37
Iraqi Kurdistan .....	38
Post-9/11 Developments.....	39
Recent Kurdish Activity .....	40
Party for a Free Life in Kurdistan (PEJAK) .....	41
Economy.....	42
Introduction.....	42
Economy during Saddam Hussein.....	42
Post-Saddam Economy.....	42
Standard of Living .....	43
Labor, Gender, and Unemployment.....	44
Industry .....	45
Energy.....	45
Agriculture .....	47

Trade .....	49
Banking, Finance, and Investment.....	50
Currency.....	51
Economic Effects on Housing .....	53
Economic Effects on Education.....	54
Economic Effects on Healthcare.....	54
Tourism.....	55
International Compact with Iraq .....	55
Renewed Internationalism .....	56
Business Outlook .....	57
Society.....	59
Ethnic Groups and Languages .....	59
Social Customs.....	60
Cuisine .....	61
Traditional Dress.....	62
Gender Issues .....	62
Arts.....	63
Sports and Recreation .....	64
National Security .....	66
Military and Police Structure .....	66
U.S.–Iraq Relations.....	67
Relations with Neighboring Countries.....	68
The Kurdish Question.....	75
Poverty .....	75
Terrorist Groups.....	76

Security Issues .....	78
Progress.....	80
Looking Forward .....	81

# Profile

## Introduction

Iraq, referred to in past centuries as “the cradle of civilization” and Mesopotamia, has frequently experienced invasions and dictatorships. Most notably, Iraq was ruled by the Mongols in the 13th century, by the Ottoman Empire for three centuries, and by the British in the early 20th century. The country also experienced over two decades of dictatorial rule by Saddam Hussein and the Ba’ath Party, ousted in 2003.

In the post-Saddam years, Iraq continues to struggle with insurgency groups seeking to disrupt reconstruction efforts and make regime change more difficult and protracted. But Iraq now has a new constitution and a democratically elected parliamentary government approved in 2005. This monumental change signals the possibility of a new direction forward. Progress has been compromised, however, by fragmentation of the state and lack of governing stability. Issues revolving around the Kurdish north, political discord, and armed conflict are all part of the complicated attempt to forge a multiethnic, multireligious state. These volatile issues continue to bring pressure to bear on the fledgling democracy.



DoD Photo  
Iraqi voters showing their inked fingers

## Iraq in Facts and Figures<sup>1</sup>

**Official name:** Republic of Iraq

**Government type:** parliamentary democracy

**Government structure:** Under Iraq’s constitution, approved by voters in October 2005, Iraq is a democracy with a republican form of government. The 40-member Executive Branch consists of a Presidency Council, made up of the President and two Deputy Presidents; and a Council of Ministers, which includes the Prime Minister, two Deputy Prime Ministers, and 34 cabinet ministers.<sup>2</sup> As is the case in many parliamentary systems, the President’s role is largely ceremonial.<sup>3</sup>

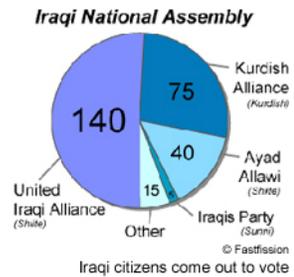
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<sup>1</sup> Central Intelligence Agency. CIA World Factbook. “Iraq.” 13 December 2007.  
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/iz.html>

<sup>2</sup> Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State. “Background Note: Iraq.” June 2007.  
<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/6804.htm>

<sup>3</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. “Country Profile: Iraq.” August 2006.  
<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Iraq.pdf>

The 275 members of the Council of Representatives and as yet undefined Federation Council currently form the Legislative Branch. In addition to enacting legislation, the Council of Representatives ratifies treaties, elects the President, and approves the nomination for Prime Minister, made by the Council's largest political bloc. Currently the largest voting bloc is the United Iraqi Alliance, a Shi'a coalition, which holds 41% of all seats.



Minority groups in the Council of Representatives include the Sunni Tawafuq Coalition (15% of seats) and the Democratic Patriotic Alliance of Kurdistan (22% of seats). The constitution also calls for a Council of Union to serve as an appointive upper house representing the 18 provinces of Iraq; the form and roles of this body have yet to be decided upon by the Council of Representatives.

**Legal system:** The Iraqi legal system is based on European civil and Islamic law under the framework outlined in the Iraqi Constitution.

**Judicial structure:** The Higher Judicial Council directs the independent federal judiciary.<sup>4</sup> The key features of the federal court system are the Federal Supreme Court, Federal Court of Cassation (Appeal), the Public Prosecution Department, Judiciary Oversight Commission, and other federal courts. The Council of Representatives, through the enactment of specific legislation, holds a key role in the establishment of the types of federal courts and the methods by which judicial appointments are made. The Federal Supreme Court, the highest court in the land, renders the final legal determinations.

**Heads of government:** Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki (since 20 May 2006); Deputy Prime Ministers Barham Salih, and Salam al-Zawbai (since 20 May 2006).



Courtesy of Wikimedia  
Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki

**Chiefs of state:** The Presidency Council is composed of the president and vice presidents:

President Jalal Talabani (since 6 April 2005); Vice Presidents Adil Abd al-Mahdi and Tariq al-Hashimi (since 22 April 2006).

**Elections:** The last elections were held 15 December 2005 to elect a 275-member Council of Representatives.

**Voting age:** 18 years old

**Population:** 27,499,638 (July 2007 estimate)



DoD Photo  
Iraqi citizens come out to vote

<sup>4</sup> Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: Iraq." June 2007. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/6804.htm>

**Population growth rate:** 2.618%

**Population density:** 62.92 persons per square km

**Life expectancy:** 69.31 years (2007 est.)

**Languages:** Arabic, Kurdish (official in Kurdish regions), Assyrian, and Armenian.

**Ethnic groups:** 75–80% Arab; 15–20% Kurdish, and 5% Turkmen, Chaldean, and Assyrian

**Religions:** Iraq is comprised of predominately 60%–65% Shi'a Muslims and 32%–37% Sunni Muslims. The remaining religious groups such as Christians, Jews, Bahai's, and others make up about 3%.

**Neighboring countries:**

- north: Turkey
- east: Iran
- south: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait
- west: Jordan, Syria

**Border:** total 3,650 km (2,268 mi); Iran 1,458 km (906 mi); Turkey 352 km (219 mi); Syria 605 km (376 mi); Jordan 181 km (112 mi); Saudi Arabia 814 km (506 mi); and Kuwait 240 km (149 mi)

**Area:** 437,072 sq km (168,754.44 sq mi)

**Coastline:** 58 km (36 mi)

**Currency:** new Iraqi dinar (NID) as of 22 January 2004

**Exports:** crude oil (84%), crude materials excluding fuels (8%), food and live animals (5%)

**Industries:** petroleum, chemicals, textiles, leather, construction materials, food processing, fertilizer, metal fabrication/processing

**Agriculture:** wheat, barley, rice, vegetables, dates, cotton, cattle, sheep, poultry

**Natural resources:** oil, natural gas, phosphates, sulfur



© M&S Investment GmbH  
New Iraqi dinar (NID)

## Geography

### Introduction and Area

Iraq is the old land of Mesopotamia: a fertile land between Southwest Asia's two main rivers, the Tigris (1,840 km, or 1,143 mi in length) and Euphrates (2,700 km, or 1,678 mi).<sup>5</sup> These rivers flow parallel through Iraq from the northwest to the southeast. They meet north of al Başrah (Basrah), forming the Shatt al-Arab, a tidal river which then flows for a distance of 193 km (120 mi) into the Persian Gulf.<sup>6</sup> Much of western and southern Iraq, outside the Tigris–Euphrates basin, is dry, hot, and sparsely populated. Except in the Northeast Highlands of northern Iraq (mostly in Kurdistan), there are almost no significant cities within the country that are more than 50 km (31 mi.) from both the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers.



© Christaan Briggs  
The Euphrates in Basra, Iraq

### Neighboring Countries

#### *Iran*

Iraq's entire eastern border is with Iran. The northern part of the boundary between the two countries lies in the Zagros Mountains. Here, the country's highest point is located, an unnamed peak that is 3,611 m (11,847 ft) in altitude.<sup>7</sup> South of Baghdad, the border region becomes the eastern part of the alluvial plain of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers.



© Adam Henning  
Tigris River

The Shatt al-Arab forms the southern end of the Iraq–Iran border. Navigation along this river has long been a point of contention between Iraq and Iran. In 1935, Iraq was granted total control of the tidal river by an international commission, limiting Iran's control to the two main ports and prohibiting it from any further port construction. The dispute culminated in 1980 in the eight-year Iraq–Iran War. Today the boundary disputes over access and maritime boundaries remain unresolved.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> ICE Case Studies. "Tigris-Euphrates River Dispute." November 1997.

<http://www.american.edu/ted/ice/tigris.htm>

<sup>6</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Shatt al-Arab." 2007. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9005317/Shatt-Al-Arab>

<sup>7</sup> Central Intelligence Agency. CIA World Factbook. "Iraq." 13 December 2007.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/iz.html>

<sup>8</sup> The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. Highbeam Encyclopedia. "Shatt al-Arab." 2007.

<http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1E1-ShattalA.html>

## *Turkey*

To Iraq's north lies Turkey, with which Iraq shares a mountainous border in the heart of the Kurdish majority areas. The Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, originating in Turkey, created tension between the two countries over upstream–downstream water usage. The Tigris enters Iraq at the point where Turkey, Syria, and Iraq share a triple border.

## *Syria*

Most of Iraq's northwestern border is with Syria. The northern part of the border is part of the Al Jazirah plateau that lies between the Tigris and Euphrates River. South of the Euphrates River, the border runs through a sparsely populated desert area. Of the approximately two million Iraqis who have tried to escape the present conflict in Iraq, the majority have fled west, taking refuge in Syria and Jordan.<sup>9</sup>

## *Jordan*

In the western corner of Iraq lies the short border region with Jordan. A single paved highway traverses the stony desert region between the two countries. This has been a well-traveled route for Iraqis who have fled to Jordan during the current conflict, but since early 2007 the border crossing has been almost entirely closed off to Iraqis hoping to enter Jordan.<sup>10, 11</sup>

## *Saudi Arabia*

Over 800 km (500 mi) of barren desert lies along Iraq's southwestern border with Saudi Arabia. Most of this area is virtually uninhabited, with the exception of the far eastern section near the Kuwaiti border.



© Jackson Lee  
Saudi Arabia desert

## *Kuwait*

The small oil-rich nation of Kuwait is Iraq's southern neighbor on the Persian Gulf. Kuwait's northeastern border squeezes Iraq's short coastal section. Improving its access to the Gulf waters was one of Iraq's motivations for its invasion of Kuwait in 1990. The Ar Rumaylah oil field also straddles the Iraq-Kuwait border, creating another source of tension between the two neighbors.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Central Intelligence Agency. CIA World Factbook. "Syria." 13 December 2007.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sy.html>

<sup>10</sup> Human Rights Watch. "Jordan: Government Pledges to Grant Iraqis Education, Health Rights." 16 August 2007. <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2007/08/16/jordan16687.htm>

<sup>11</sup> Human Rights Watch. "Iraq: Neighbors Stem Flow of Iraqis Fleeing War." 17 April 2007. <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2007/04/17/iraq15720.htm>

<sup>12</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *Country Studies: Persian Gulf States*. "Kuwait – Persian Gulf War." No date. <http://www.country-studies.com/persian-gulf-states/kuwait---persian-gulf-war.html>

## Geographic Regions

Iraq can be divided roughly into four major geographical regions: stony and sandy mixed desert in the west and southwest; a rolling upland between the upper Euphrates and Tigris Rivers, starting about 120 km (75 mi) north of Baghdad; mountainous highlands in the north and northeast; and alluvial plains to the south.<sup>13</sup>

### *Desert*

Much of Iraq that is south of the Euphrates River consists of rocky desert lands. The western portion of this region is an extension of the Syrian Desert. To the southeast, along the Saudi Arabian border, lie two lower-elevation deserts. The Al-Hajarah is the more western of these two deserts and consists of stony terrain marked by ridges, depressions, and *wadis* (dry riverbeds).<sup>14</sup> Southeast of it, the Ad-Dibdibah is a gravelly plain with scrub vegetation that extends eastward into Kuwait and southward into Saudi Arabia.

### *Upper Tigris and Euphrates Upland*

The dominant feature in this region that lies between the upper stretches of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers is the Al-Jazirah plateau. While primarily flat, this arid region also contains deep river valleys, the watershed of the two rivers, and some scattered highlands. The most prominent of these are the Jabal Sinjar (Sinjar Mountains), from which the region's most significant watercourse—the Wadi ath Tharthar—emerges.<sup>15</sup>

### *Northeast Highlands*

This region runs from the northwest to the southeast in the northernmost region of Iraq. Near and across the Iraqi border with Iran lie the Zagros Mountains, while to the north in Turkey are the Taurus Mountains. River basins between these mountain ranges provide areas for habitation and are mostly populated by ethnic Kurds and Turkmen. Moving southwest from the mountainous areas are hill regions that gradually become plains. It is in this area of the northeast that the larger cities, such as Kirkuk and Erbil, are found. The southwestern edge of the Northeast Highlands is marked by the Jabal Hamrin, a low-elevation ridge through which the Tigris River flows.



© TimoAndDog / Flickr.com  
The Taurus Mountains

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<sup>13</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. "Country Profile: Iraq." August 2006. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Iraq.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Iraq: Deserts." 2007. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-22926/Iraq>

<sup>15</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Iraq: Al Jazirah." 2007. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-232255/Iraq>

## Alluvial Plains

The central and southern parts of the Tigris-Euphrates drainage basin, occupying a region running from Ar Ramadi on the Euphrates and Balad on the Tigris south to the Persian Gulf, is a low-elevation plain subject to poor drainage and seasonal floods. It is within this region that Baghdad and Basrah, Iraq's two largest cities, are located. Numerous marshlands and lakes are found in this region. The largest of these is Hawr al Hammar, south of the confluence point between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. This marshy lake was once known as the home of many of Iraq's *Ma'dan* (Marsh Arabs), but most moved out of the area when much of the lake was drained following the 1991 Gulf War.<sup>16</sup>

## Climate

As part of a large continental land mass, Iraq's climate ranges from temperate in the north to subtropical in the south. The mountainous area in the north has cool summers and cold winters, but in the south and central areas the summer is long and hot, and the winter is short and cool. The temperature in Baghdad ranges from 2 to 15°C (35 to 60°F) in January. The highest temperature recorded in the city was 51°C (123°F) in July, although the average daytime temperature in Baghdad is approximately 35°C (95°F).<sup>17</sup>

Iraq depends on water from the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, as rainfall is insufficient. River water has been used extensively for irrigation, supporting the agricultural foundation of one of the very first civilizations in human history. The annual rainfall in inhabited areas varies between 150 mm (6 in) in the south and 700 mm (27.5 in) in the north. Iraq's northern highlands receive considerable rainfall from October to May, averaging 1000 mm (39.5 in), but in the south and central alluvial plain, the average is approximately 75–100 mm (3–4 in). The area of the two rivers, where most people live, is swampy.

Dust and sandstorms occur because of the easterly *sharqi* winds from the south and southeast. The storms can occur at any time of year, but the peak of the sandstorm season is July.<sup>18</sup>



© Charles Taber  
Sandstorm

## Rivers

### *Tigris River*

The Tigris is the easternmost of Mesopotamia's two great rivers. It originates in the Taurus Mountains of Turkey and briefly forms the Turkish–Syrian border before flowing into Iraq. Two of modern Iraq's largest cities—Baghdad and Mosul—lie on the Tigris, as

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<sup>16</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Lake Hammar." 2007. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9039053/Lake-Hammar>

<sup>17</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Iraq: Climate." 2007. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-22930>

<sup>18</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Iraq: Climate." 2007. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-22930>

did several of the most famous cities of antiquity, including Nineveh, Calah, and Assur, the three capitals of ancient Assyria.<sup>19</sup>

The modern Tigris gains substantial flow after the Nahr Diyala (Diyala River) joins it just south of Baghdad. Within Baghdad and its immediate outskirts, the city is protected from flooding by a series of embankments. South of Baghdad until the downstream city of Al Kut, the river has frequently flooded and has built high natural levees through silt deposits that make it impossible to tap the river for irrigation.<sup>20</sup>

### *Euphrates River*

The Euphrates River, upon whose banks were founded the fabled cities of Babylon and Ur, lies to the west of the Tigris. The river enters Iraq from Syria at the southern edge of Al-Jazirah and then flows southeastward toward Baghdad. Near the Iraqi capital, the Euphrates is only about 50 km (30 mi) away, and Euphrates floodwaters in the past (before dams were built) were known to reach the city.<sup>21</sup> Because the Euphrates' river bed is higher above the alluvial plain than the Tigris,' it has long been the primary irrigation source for the Mesopotamia region.<sup>22</sup>

Unlike the Tigris, none of Iraq's large cities lie along the Euphrates River, although several medium-size provincial capitals are located on the river. These cities include Ar Ramadi (Anbar Province), Nasiriyah (Dhi Qar Province), and As Samawah (Al Muthanna Province).

### *Shatt al-Arab*

The Shatt al-Arab, or *Arvand Rud*, formed by the convergence of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers 193 km (120 mi), constitutes the border between Iraq and Iran.<sup>23</sup> This tidal river is also a primary source of water for southern Iraq as well as Kuwait. Before flowing into the Persian Gulf, the Shatt al-Arab becomes a swampy marshland which opens up enough to allow oceangoing vessels to travel to Basra, Iraq's main port.



Courtesy of Wikipedia  
Shatt al-Arab river

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<sup>19</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Tigris-Euphrates River System: Physiography of the Tigris." 2007. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-48097/Tigris-Euphrates-river-system>

<sup>20</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Tigris-Euphrates River System: Physical Features." 2007. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9110543/Tigris-Euphrates-river-system>

<sup>21</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Tigris-Euphrates River System: Physical Features." 2007. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9110543/Tigris-Euphrates-river-system>

<sup>22</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Tigris-Euphrates River System: Physical Features." 2007. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9110543/Tigris-Euphrates-river-system>

<sup>23</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Shatt al-Arab." 2007. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9005317/Shatt-Al-Arab>

**Major Cities and Population** (2007 calculated estimates)<sup>24</sup>

Baghdad (8,040,000 urban, 5,830,000 city)	Diwaniya (333,000)
Basrah (2,780,000 urban, 2,270,000 city)	Al Kut (332,000)
Mosul (2.22 million)	Al Hillah (289,000)
Erbil (990,000)	Ar Ramadi (283,000)
As Sulaymaniyah (773,000)	Fallujah (202,000)
Kirkuk (620,000)	Tall ‘Afar (193,000)
Najaf (502,000)	Samarra (168,000)
Karbala (449,000)	As Samawah (164,000)
Nasiriyah (415,000)	Baqubah (156,000)
Amarah (336,000)	Dahuk (140,000)
	Al Kufah (136,000)

*Baghdad*

Known as the “Round City” due to the wall encircling it, Baghdad was first established in A.D.762 by the second Abbasid caliph, Abu Jafar al-Mansur. It remained the seat of power of the caliphate from the 9th through the 13th centuries. It was during this period that Baghdad realized the pinnacle of its commercial development and evolved as the focal point of international trade and Islamic



Courtesy of Wikipedia  
Baghdad 1932

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<sup>24</sup> World Gazetteer. Helder, Stephen. “Iraq: Metropolitan Areas.” 2007. <http://www.world-gazetteer.com/wg.php?x=&men=gcis&lng=en&dat=32&geo=-105&srt=npan&col=aohdq&va=&pt=a>

learning. Under the Ottomans in later centuries, the city also functioned as a Sunni buffer against the Iranian Shi'a Safavid Empire.<sup>25</sup>

In the wake of World War I, Iraq was administered by Britain through a League of Nations mandate until a viable government could be established. By 1932, shortly after Iraq's considerable oil wealth had been commercially tapped, it was made independent and became a constitutional monarchy until 1958.<sup>26</sup> In the early 1970s, Baghdad saw rapid economic growth due in large part to its considerable oil revenues. Today, Baghdad is the capital city and the hub of transportation, manufacturing, and oil refining. However, the city experienced considerable damage due to Coalition air bombardments in 1991 and again in 2003.<sup>27</sup>

### *Basrah*

Al Basrah, commonly known as Basrah, is the largest city of southern Iraq and a vitally important port city. Close to 80% of Iraq's proven oil reserves are located nearby, and much of the oil that Iraq exports is shipped out through the port of Basrah.<sup>28</sup> The city is also the capital of Al-Basrah Province. The local populace primarily consists of Shi'a Muslims who suffered greatly under the Saddam Hussein regime.

In addition to being the center of the southern Iraqi oil industry, Basrah serves as an agricultural center for the surrounding region, producing wool, grain, and dates.<sup>29</sup> The city was initially one of the more stable regions of the country following the early days of the present conflict. However, more recent intra-Shi'a violence, carried out by the militias of the city's political parties, has led to increasing instability as the various Shi'a factions vie for control of the local oil economy.<sup>30</sup>

### *Mosul (Al Mawsil)*

Iraq's third largest city is Mosul (Al Mawsil). It is the capital of the northern province of Ninawa and is the principal city in the northern part of Iraq. The older part of the city lies on the right (west) bank of the Tigris River.



Courtesy of Wikipedia  
Mosul Dam

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<sup>25</sup> GlobalSecurity.org. "Baghdad." c. 2000–2008.

<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/iraq/baghdad.htm>

<sup>26</sup> GlobalSecurity.org. "Baghdad." c. 2000–2008

<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/iraq/baghdad.htm>

<sup>27</sup> GlobalSecurity.org. "Baghdad." c. 2000–2008

<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/iraq/baghdad.htm>

<sup>28</sup> United Press International. Lando, Ben. "Analysis: Oil Flows in Basra Power Vacuum." 16 August 2007.

[http://www.upi.com/International\\_Security/Energy/Analysis/2007/08/16/analysis\\_oil\\_flows\\_in\\_basra\\_power\\_vacuum/5416/](http://www.upi.com/International_Security/Energy/Analysis/2007/08/16/analysis_oil_flows_in_basra_power_vacuum/5416/)

<sup>29</sup> LexicOrient. Encyclopedia of the Orient. Kjeilen, Tore. "Basra." 2007.

<http://lexicorient.com/e.o/basra.htm>

<sup>30</sup> United Press International. Lando, Ben. "Analysis: Oil Flows in Basra Power Vacuum." 16 August 2007.

[http://www.upi.com/International\\_Security/Energy/Analysis/2007/08/16/analysis\\_oil\\_flows\\_in\\_basra\\_power\\_vacuum/5416/](http://www.upi.com/International_Security/Energy/Analysis/2007/08/16/analysis_oil_flows_in_basra_power_vacuum/5416/)

In Iraq, however, “older” is often a relative term, as the left bank of the city features the partially excavated ruins of the ancient Assyrian capital of Ninevah where the Nahr al Khawsar (Khawsar River) flows into the Tigris.

Mosul has played an important part in Iraq’s oil industry. Oil fields are located nearby, and roads and pipelines running to Turkey are used, when operating, for oil transportation to and from Turkey. A recently rehabilitated refinery, damaged during the Iran-Iraq war, is located about one hour south of the city in the town of Al Qayyarah.<sup>31</sup>

Northwest of Mosul on the Tigris River is Mosul Dam, the largest dam in Iraq. Unfortunately, there have been several distressing reports about the safety of this dam, mainly because it was built on unstable bedrock that continually shifts. A recent assessment by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers states that “due to fundamental and irreversible flaws existing in the dam's foundation, [we] believe that the safety of the Mosul Dam against a potential catastrophic failure cannot be guaranteed.”<sup>32</sup> An ad hoc committee investigating the dam’s safety in 2007 recommended that it be drained.<sup>33</sup>

### *Kirkuk*

Kirkuk is the center of Iraq’s northern oil fields, one of the most productive in all of Iraq. Estimates are that nearly 40% of Iraq’s oil and 70% of its natural gas are produced from the oil fields in the region.<sup>34</sup> Prior to the emergence of the oil industry, the city was primarily known as a trading center for the local region’s agricultural and livestock industries, as well as a textile center.<sup>35, 36</sup> The modern city is located on the site of the ancient city of Arrapha, an important Assyrian city during the 10th and 9th centuries B.C.E.

The city is one of the most ethnically mixed in Iraq, with Arabs, Kurds, and Turkmen all having significant populations in and around the city. Kirkuk is a Kurdish ancestral home, and the majority of the population has traditionally been Kurdish. During Sadaam Hussein’s regime, up to 100,000 Kurds in the area were moved out and replaced by Arabs, to weaken Kurdish control of the



© Jan Kurdistan  
Kurdistan Ruksar

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<sup>31</sup> Defenselink.mil. U.S. Department of Defense. “Official Report on Rebuilding Progress in Iraq.” 7 August 2004. <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=25567>

<sup>32</sup> The Independent. Cockburn, Patrick. “Disaster Looms as ‘Saddam Dam’ Struggles to Hold Back the Tigris.” 8 August 2007. [http://news.independent.co.uk/world/middle\\_east/article2843961.ece](http://news.independent.co.uk/world/middle_east/article2843961.ece)

<sup>33</sup> Iraq Updates. Voice of Iraq. “Possible Dam Collapse Overshadows Mosul Residents.” 5 September 2007. [http://www.iraqupdates.com/p\\_articles.php/article/21429](http://www.iraqupdates.com/p_articles.php/article/21429)

<sup>34</sup> Council on Foreign Relations. Beehner, Lionel. “The Challenge in Iraq’s Other Cities: Kirkuk.” 30 June 2006. <http://www.cfr.org/publication/11036/>

<sup>35</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Kirkuk.” 2007. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9045628/Kirkuk>

<sup>36</sup> LexicOrient.com. Encyclopedia of the Orient. Kjeilen, Tore. “Kirkuk.” <http://lexicorient.com/e.o/kirkuk.htm>

city.<sup>37</sup> Since Sadaam's overthrow, many Kurds have moved back, resulting in tension about who will control the oil-rich region. Lesser populations of Assyrians and Armenians also live in the area.<sup>38</sup>

### *Erbil*

Erbil, the capital of the Kurdistan Regional Government, is one of the world's oldest continuously occupied places. The city is not as tied to the northern Iraq oil industry as is Kirkuk to the south, but the recent development of the Taq Taq oil field 80 km (50 mi) southeast of Erbil may begin to change the situation.<sup>39</sup> Historically, the city has been the center of the agricultural region surrounding it.

### **Natural Hazards**

Wind and water are the purveyors of Iraq's most frequently occurring natural hazards: dust storms, sand storms, and floods.

Iraq experiences two types of wind patterns that trigger dust and sand storms. From mid June to mid September, dry air masses from the Mediterranean are funneled between Saudi Arabia's high plateau and the mountain ranges north and west of Iraq. The resultant northwesterly winds (called *shamals*) intensify as the summer progresses and the ground continues to heat. From April to mid June and again from mid September to November, the wind pattern changes from a southerly to southeasterly one. Known as *sharqis*, these currents produce winds that in general are gustier but not as persistent as the summer *shamals*.<sup>40</sup> The resulting wind storms are sometimes interchangeably referenced as "sand storms" or "dust storms," but technically the two are different. Because of its smaller size, dust is able to be lifted hundreds of meters into the air (as opposed to only 15 m, or 49 ft, for sand particles). Thus, the wind storms that produce dramatic, towering walls of uplifted fine particles are dust storms.<sup>41</sup>



© Frank Boosman  
Dust storm

Iraq's other major hazard is flooding. Most of the population of the country is situated near the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, which have periodically flooded throughout recorded history. As a result, numerous dams and canals linked to overflow basins have been built in order to help mitigate the damage during periods of heavy rain and

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<sup>37</sup> Council on Foreign Relations. Beehner, Lionel. "The Challenge in Iraq's Other Cities: Kirkuk." 30 June 2006. <http://www.cfr.org/publication/11036/>

<sup>38</sup> Kirkuk Business Center. "About Kirkuk." 2005. <http://kbciraq.org/>

<sup>39</sup> The Guardian. Howard, Michael. "The Struggle for Iraq's Oil Flares Up as Kurds Open Doors to Foreign Investors." 8 August 2007. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/Iraq/Story/0,,2143141,00.html>

<sup>40</sup> Golden Gate Weather Services. Null, Jan. "Climate of Iraq." 2003. <http://ggweather.com/iraq.htm>

<sup>41</sup> National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce. "Dust Storms, Sand Storms and Related NOAA Activities in the Middle East." 28 October 2004. <http://www.magazine.noaa.gov/stories/mag86.htm>

springtime snow melt in the northern mountains.<sup>42</sup> In addition, numerous water projects on the upstream portions of the two rivers in Syria and Turkey have led to an overall reduction in river flow and a lowered threat of catastrophic flooding.

## Environmental Concerns

Since 1980, Iraq has suffered the environmental consequences of three wars, including one with Iran that lasted nearly eight years. Infrastructure damage has greatly increased the number of people who no longer have access to safe drinking water, and the destruction of military and industrial facilities has led to significant contamination of heavy metals into groundwater, soil, and the air. Oil spills from pipelines, refineries, and other oil infrastructures have led to groundwater contamination of areas near structures. In addition to pollution, land mines and unexploded ordnance have left tens of thousands of Iraqis injured or killed.<sup>43</sup>



© Sherurcij / Wikimedia Commons  
Sadr City

Iraq also suffers from some environmental problems unrelated to warfare or its aftereffects. Soils of the alluvial plain, which suffer poor drainage in general, have become salt laden through irrigation and flooding, making them increasingly unproductive for agricultural use. Desertification and erosion have also led to a decrease in arable land.<sup>44</sup>

One of the worst legacies of the Hussein era is the destruction of the marshlands of southern Iraq near the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers and the Shatt al-Arab. The Hussein government effectively drained these marshes by constructing diversion canals after the 1990–91 Gulf War, part of a concentrated assault on the Marsh Arabs living within this swampy region.<sup>45</sup> Some of the marshlands have been reclaimed since the fall of the Hussein regime in 2003, restoring a small fraction of the original marshes. Restoring the remaining marshes to their original bounty will require a major investment in a country with no shortage of investment needs.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> MSN Encarta. "Iraq. II. Land and Resources. B3. Drainage Issues." 2007.

[http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia\\_761567303\\_3/Iraq.html](http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761567303_3/Iraq.html)

<sup>43</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. "Country Profile: Iraq." August 2006.

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Iraq.pdf>

<sup>44</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. "Country Profile: Iraq." August 2006.

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Iraq.pdf>

<sup>45</sup> Human Rights Watch. "The Iraqi Government Assault on the Marsh Arabs." January 2003.

<http://www.hrw.org/backgrounder/mena/marsharabs1.htm>

<sup>46</sup> New York Times. Glanz, James. "For Iraq's Great Marshes, A Hesitant Comeback." 8 March 2005.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/03/08/science/earth/08mars.html?ex=1189828800&en=ea6b6f06689965d4&ei=5070>

## History

### Ancient Times - Mesopotamia

The area that is now 20th century Iraq is but the most recent political entity in the “land between the rivers,” or what used to be known as Mesopotamia. Iraq has a legacy that is the oldest of any state in the world, including China, Egypt and India.<sup>47</sup> This area has over the millennia seen more than its share of different political structures. It was the river and tributary systems as well as the floodplains of the Tigris and Euphrates that fostered the emergence of trade, agriculture and the gradual introduction of other world cultures.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, extremely difficult environmental conditions forced the early society to develop ways of overcoming these challenges, which impacted the region’s evolution.



© Marco Prins and Jona Lendering  
Babylonian delegation

Many of Mesopotamia’s early social developments emerged due to the need to build an agricultural sector. This involved maintaining the critical irrigation infrastructure in the Mesopotamian plain and responding to the severe environmental conditions.<sup>49</sup> Some of the first dykes and canals were built by farmers in about 5000 B.C., while, ironically, wetlands in other areas were being drained.<sup>50</sup> As cities arose, supported by the growth of agriculture, a rural to urban migration took place. This led to the emergence of non-agricultural pursuits. Eventually, specialized skills were needed in administration to guide and direct the expansion of the city-states.<sup>51</sup>

Four groups constitute Mesopotamia as the center of ancient civilization: the Sumerians, Akkadians, Babylonians, and Assyrians. Their significance to the history of Iraq is based upon development of the cornerstones of modern civilized society. Among these are: writing, mathematics, accountancy, astronomy, legal codes, organized religion, and models of government.<sup>52</sup> The proliferation of religion in 4000 B.C. provided the underpinnings for architecture, mythology, and social organization.

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<sup>47</sup> *Iraq: People, History, Politics*. Stansfield, Gareth. “Chapter 1: Legacies of Civilizations and Empires [p. 10].” 2007. Cambridge, Mass. Polity Press.

<sup>48</sup> *Iraq: From Sumer to Saddam*. Simons, Geoff. “Chapter 2: The Ancient Crucible [p. 80].” c1994. New York: St. Martin’s Press.

<sup>49</sup> *Iraq: People, History, Politics*. Stansfield, Gareth. “Chapter 1: Legacies of Civilizations and Empires [p. 10].” 2007. Cambridge, Mass. Polity Press.

<sup>50</sup> *Iraq: From Sumer to Saddam*. Stansfield, Gareth. “Chapter 2: The Ancient Crucible [p. 80].” 1994. New York: St. Martin’s Press.

<sup>51</sup> *Iraq: People, History, Politics*. Stansfield, Gareth. “Chapter 1: Legacies of Civilizations and Empires [p. 10].” 2007. Cambridge, Mass.: Polity Press.

<sup>52</sup> *Iraq: People, History, Politics*. Stansfield, Gareth. “Chapter 1: Legacies of Civilizations and Empires [p. 12].” 2007. Cambridge, Mass.: Polity Press.

## *Sumerians*

Arriving in the region about 3500 B.C., the Sumerians or the inhabitants of Sumer in southern Mesopotamia were not Semitic speaking people. (Semitic constitutes a subfamily of the Afro-Asiatic language family that includes Hebrew, Aramaic, Arabic, and Amharic. Moreover, Sumerian is not associated with any of the Indo-European languages such as English, the romance languages, Greek, Russian, Persian, and Hindi.)<sup>53</sup> Though their origin is unclear, there are indications that they were conquerors from what is today Iran or India. As early as 3000 B.C., the Sumerians had evolved into an urban society. Skilled at the construction of irrigation technologies, they were agricultural with a well-organized communal life.<sup>54, 55</sup> Their successes and advancements in irrigation, especially in regions with difficult terrain and alluvial plains, led to the accumulation of surplus grain. As a direct consequence of the large grain stores, it allowed them to venture into other pursuits such as trade, artisanal crafts, and engineering.

From these endeavors came some of civilizations earliest and most important achievements. Among the advancements credited to the Sumerians are the plough, which by 3000 B.C. was made of bronze; mathematics used by planners and engineers to construct dams and dykes; and instruments to perform calculations. They are credited with invention of the wheel, and, most importantly, the invention of writing.<sup>56</sup> The successes embodied in these inventions provided the groundwork in social, economic, and religious pursuits that would be passed on and embraced by future Iraqi civilizations.

## *Akkadians*

The people of Akkad, found in the northern part of Mesopotamia, spoke Akkadian, a Semitic language. Akkad thrived under the dynasty of King Sargon which he ruled from 2340 B.C. to 2305 B.C. His empire, acquired by conquest, extended from the entire expanse of Mesopotamia to Syria; his dynastic control also extended to regions of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. The dynasty founded by Sargon lasted approximately 160 years and was destroyed in 2180 B.C. by barbarians from the Zagros Mountains.<sup>57</sup> At the end of his reign, one of his major achievements was to unify the vast reaches of Mesopotamia into the single kingdom of Babylonia (the lower capital of Mesopotamia) which included southern Sumer and northern



© James Gordon  
Spiral minaret

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<sup>53</sup> *Understanding Iraq*. Polk, William. "Chapter 1: Ancient Iraq [p. 18]." 2005. New York: HarperCollins.

<sup>54</sup> *Iraq: From Sumer to Saddam*. Simons, Geoff. "Chapter 2: The Ancient Crucible [p. 80]." 1994. New York: St. Martin's Press.

<sup>55</sup> The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, 6th ed. "Sumer." 2007.

<http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/history/A0847193.html>

<sup>56</sup> *Iraq: From Sumer to Saddam*. Simons, Geoff. "Chapter 2: The Ancient Crucible [p 82]." 1994. New York: St. Martin's Press.

<sup>57</sup> The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, 6th ed. "Sargon." 2007.

<http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/people/A0843683.html>

Akkad.<sup>58</sup>

### *Babylon*

Babylon endured for nearly two thousand years from 2225 B.C. to 331 B.C. Among its most notable figures was Hammurabi (2123 B.C.–2081 B.C.). Of great significance during his reign of forty-three years was the civil code, better known as the Code of Hammurabi. It arose to impose discipline on the regions of the lower valley. The Code represents the first forms of secular legislation comprised of 285 laws organized to address specific areas such as personal property, real estate, trade and business, the family, injuries, and labor. Toward the end of this period, the demise of Babylon occurred over the course of several centuries. It was the Assyrian King Sennacherib in 689 B.C. who first razed Babylon, subsequently rebuilt by Nebuchadnezzar II, overthrown by Cyrus the Great of Persia in 538 B.C., and then taken by Alexander the Great in 331 B.C.<sup>59</sup>



### *Assyrians*

Assyrians, a Semitic race, arrived in Mesopotamia from current day Syria. The Sumerians in the south had a significant impact on the Assyrians, who established a small city-state near Nineveh, which is modern day Mosul. Initially they were of the farmer and merchant class until about 1350 B.C., but then began to transition into a military state.<sup>60</sup>

### *Muhammad*

Islam originated with Muhammad (570–632 A.D.) who was given revelations by Allah (The God), the essence of which was that “there is no god but Allah (God), and Muhammad is the messenger of God.” Furthermore, Muslims believe that the substance of the Quran is not to be taken as a restatement of earlier beliefs, but rather it is the accurate and final declaration of that which was given to earlier prophets such as Abraham and Jesus.<sup>61</sup>

Muhammad was born to Abdullah, who died before he was born, and Aminah. His mother died when Muhammad was about six years old, at which time Muhammad’s grandfather raised him. Though he seemed to have had a relatively uneventful childhood, when he was about twenty-five years old, he married a wealthy forty-year old widow, Khadijah. She and Muhammad had six children; two of the six children were boys and

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<sup>58</sup> The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, 6th ed. “Akkad.” 2007. <http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/history/A0802950.html>

<sup>59</sup> *Iraq: From Sumer to Saddam*. Simons, Geoff. “Chapter 2: The Ancient Crucible [p 88].” 1994. New York: St. Martin’s Press.

<sup>60</sup> *Understanding Iraq*. Polk, William. “Chapter 1: Ancient Iraq [p 28].” 2005. New York: HarperCollins.

<sup>61</sup> CQPress in Context. “Islam.” 2008. [http://www.cqpress.com/context/articles/epr\\_islam.html](http://www.cqpress.com/context/articles/epr_islam.html)

died soon after birth. Of his four daughters, two would go on to marry the third and fourth caliphs of Islam.<sup>62</sup>

At the age of forty while meditating in an area just outside of Mecca, Muhammad received the revelations in a dream by the archangel Gabriel. He was concerned about the growing chasm in Meccan society between the rich and the poor, who lived in abject poverty. From these social circumstances came Muhammad's desire to espouse monotheism and social justice within a unified faith.<sup>63</sup>

## Spread of Islam

From the outset of Muhammad's preaching, his followers were only a handful of people. They included his wife Khadijah, Abu Bakr (the future first caliph), a cousin, and an adopted son. After three years, his following grew to thirty people most of whom were from society's poor. Muhammad realized at this point that he needed to make a more public declaration of faith in an effort to appeal to a broader base of people. However, this public approach evoked very little interest.<sup>64</sup>



In 622 Muhammad and his followers, about one hundred families, fled Mecca for the city of Yathrib which later became known as "Madinat al-Rasul" or Medina. The flight from Mecca is known as the *hijra*; it is considered a pivotal event in the history of Islam and marks the first year of the Muslim calendar.<sup>65</sup> The retaking and subsequent conversion of the people of Mecca, which occurred in the eighth year of the Muslim calendar, is one of Muhammad's most notable achievements. It was soon after the submission of Mecca to Islam that, in 631, the tribes of Arabia also converted to Islam<sup>66</sup>

At the time of Muhammad's death in 632, Islam had become a driving political force in Arabia, and soon expanded its reach north into Mesopotamia.<sup>67</sup> It was Abu Bakr, the 1st caliph, friend and father-in-law, and successor of Muhammad, who guided his armies in conquest to spread the faith of Islam throughout the region, including into Syria and Iraq.

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<sup>62</sup> *Islam: Beliefs and Observances*, 5th ed. Farah, Caesar. "Chapter 3: Muhammad the Prophet [p. 37]." 1994. New York: Barron's.

<sup>63</sup> *Islam: Beliefs and Observances*, 5th ed. Farah, Caesar. "Chapter 3: Muhammad the Prophet [p. 38]." 1994. New York: Barron's.

<sup>64</sup> *Islam: Beliefs and Observances*, 5th ed. Farah, Caesar. "Chapter 3: Muhammad the Prophet [p.41-46]." 1994. New York: Barron's.

<sup>65</sup> *Islam: Beliefs and Observances*, 5th ed. Farah, Caesar. "Chapter 3: Muhammad the Prophet [p.55]." 1994. New York: Barron's.

<sup>66</sup> *Islam: Beliefs and Observances*, 5th ed. Farah, Caesar. "Chapter 3: Muhammad the Prophet [p.57]" 1994. New York: Barron's.

<sup>67</sup> *Iraq: People, History, Politics*. Stansfield, Gareth. "Chapter 1: Legacies of Civilizations and Empires [p. 18]." 2007. Cambridge, Mass: Polity Press.

In 634, Abu Bakr died and Umar succeeded him as caliph. It was only a matter of time before all of Mesopotamia would fall to the Muslims.<sup>68</sup>

### **Sunni and Shi'a Divide**

One of the most important historical elements of Islam is that the manner of succession from Muhammad on has been disputed. When Muhammad died in 632 A.D., the first caliphs or successors named were his companions. This early period is known as the age of the Rightly Guided Caliphate by the majority of Muslims in the world, even though tension over rightful succession began to surface with the 3rd Caliphate. A civil war followed and a split developed between the Sunni, who accepted the Rightfully Guided Caliphate, and the Shi'a, who did not. The Sunnis were proponents of having the successor caliph elected by the community leaders. The Shi'a, on the other hand, were opposed to this method as they believed that one of the special characteristics of the special guide that God provides is being one of the Prophet's descendants, related by blood. This split continues today to influence the political and geo-political dynamics of Islam.<sup>69, 70</sup>

### **Muslim Holy Sites**

Among the many holy shrines for Shi'a muslims, is the city of Karbala (Iraq) where the shrines of Imam Husayn ibn Ali along with his brother Abbas are found. Both were martyred in 680, during the Battle of Karbala. This battle was fought over the succession of leadership after Muhammad's death. Ali, the grandson of Muhammad, positioned himself to take the role of Caliph as had been promised at the death of Mu'awiyva. However, the pledge of succession was ignored culminating in the battle at Karbala between Ali and the opposing (Sunni) army, and Ali's small army was routed. Shi'a believers make pilgrimage to Karbala twice a year to consecrate Husayn's death.<sup>71</sup>



DoD Photo  
Husayn Mosque in Karbala

The global Shi'a community is centered in Iraq in the cities of Najaf, Karbala, Kazimayn, and Samarra. However, the Shi'a did not become a majority within Iraq until the 19th century. This turn of events is not related to the Islamic split culminating in the Shi'a and

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<sup>68</sup> The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, 6th ed. "Abu Bakr." 2007. <http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/people/A0802235.html>

<sup>69</sup> *Iraq: People, History, Politics*. Stansfield, Gareth. "Chapter 1: Legacies of Civilizations and Empires [p. 19]." 2007. Cambridge, Mass.: Polity Press.

<sup>70</sup> CQPress in Context. "Islam." 2008. [http://www.cqpress.com/context/articles/epr\\_islam.html](http://www.cqpress.com/context/articles/epr_islam.html)

<sup>71</sup> GlobalSecurity. "Karbala." Pike, John. October 4, 2006. <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/iraq/karbala.htm>

Sunni sects within Islam, but rather due to Najaf and Karbala developing into key economic centers.<sup>72</sup>

Mecca is the only pilgrimage site officially accepted by all Muslims. Followers of Islam commit to a life as laid out in the Quran, connected to and involved with all other believers of Islam.<sup>73</sup>

### Sunni Islam Dynasties

The Umayyads dynasty reigning from 661 to 750 was established in Damascus, Syria. The Umayyads were the descendants of Ummayya ibn Abdi Shams, a member of the Quraysh family of Mecca. Their first Caliph was Mu'awiyya (Sunni), who fought against Caliph Ali (Shi'a) until Ali was murdered in 661. The Shi'a constructed Najaf in the vicinity of the site of Ali's tomb at Kufa.<sup>74</sup> The Umayyads extended its territories during its Caliphate, at least until the early 700s. Most of the new land was to the west in Africa and the Iberian Peninsula, but they also reached the borders of China and northern India. In 750, the Abbasids overthrew the Umayyads.<sup>75</sup>

The Abbasid dynasty which governed from Baghdad was one of the two great Sunni Arab dynasties, founded in 762. The Abbasid Caliph descended from Muhammad's uncle al-Abbas. After the Abbasids took control from the first Sunni dynasty, they stayed in power until the Mongols conquered Baghdad in 1258. During the first 100 years, the Abbasids were leaders, both of Islam and of the Muslim community, even though the Shi'a during the same period continued to reject the legitimacy of the Abbasid leadership.<sup>76</sup> During the period of 786–833 Baghdad was to evolve into one of the grandest cities, becoming a cosmopolitan center of religious learning, power, and wealth.<sup>77</sup> The dynasty thrived for two centuries but waned with the emergence of the Mamluks, a Turkish mercenary army, and then fell from the Mongol onslaught.<sup>78</sup>



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<sup>72</sup> *Iraq: People, History, Politics*. Stansfield, Gareth. "Chapter 3 Conceptualizing Political Mobilization [p. 58]." 2007. Cambridge, Mass. Polity Press.

<sup>73</sup> University of Calgary. "Five Pillars of Islam," [http://www.ucalgary.ca/~elsegal/I\\_Transp/IO5\\_FivePillars.html](http://www.ucalgary.ca/~elsegal/I_Transp/IO5_FivePillars.html)

<sup>74</sup> *Iraq: From Sumer to Saddam*. Simons, Geoff. "Chapter 3: The Arabs, Islam and the Caliphate [p. 116]." 1994. New York: St. Martin's Press.

<sup>75</sup> Encyclopedia of the Orient. "Umayyad," <http://i-cias.com/e.o/umayyad.htm>

<sup>76</sup> Encyclopedia of the Orient. "Abbasids," <http://i-cias.com/e.o/abbasids.htm>

<sup>77</sup> *Iraq: From Sumer to Saddam*. Simons, Geoff. "Chapter 3: The Arabs, Islam and the Caliphate [p. 121]." 1994. New York: St. Martin's Press.

<sup>78</sup> *Iraq: From Sumer to Saddam*. Simons, Geoff. "Chapter 3: The Arabs, Islam and the Caliphate [p. 126]." 1994. New York: St. Martin's Press.

## The Mongols

The invasion by the Mongols led by Hulago Khan, brother to the Great Khan, destroyed the Abbasid caliphate in 1258. The Mongols attacked throughout Asia, motivated by desire to expand their realm and turn it into the nomadic herding “economy” to which they were familiar. The Abbasids’ urban cultural achievements were of little value to the Mongols, who destroyed people, urban structures, and irrigation systems partly by using floods from the irrigation canals.<sup>79</sup>



Courtesy of Wikimedia  
Sultan Suleyman I

The destruction of the Abbasid Dynasty in Baghdad by the Mongols in 1258 ushered in a host of invading powers from Mongolia, Turkey, and Persia. Among these powers vying for control, two emerged as especially notable: the Shi’a Safavids of Persia (1501–1736), and the Sunni Ottomans of Anatolia (1299–1922). The Safavids came out of Azerbaijan in the 14th century, taking Baghdad and then Mosul in 1508. This culminated in the Safavids and Ottomans colliding in battle in 1514, with the subsequent Ottoman- instigated collapse of northern Iraq occurring shortly thereafter. But the ultimate capture of Baghdad by the Sunni Ottomans would have to wait until 1534, when Suleiman the Magnificent reached the city. The political and economic failings that had characterized Iraq during the period just prior to the Ottomans would begin its reversal during the nearly four hundred year rule of the Sunni Ottomans.<sup>80</sup>

## The Ottomans

The Turks originated from nomadic tribes in the central plains and grasslands of China and Mongolia, raising small livestock.<sup>81</sup> The name “Turks,” according to historians, does not initially appear until the latter part of the 6th century A.D., referring to a Central Asian nomadic clan.<sup>82</sup> Before 1299 the Turks were predominately organized into autonomous tribes. Subsequently, the tribe become more closely associated with each other under Osman (1281–1326), taking power from the Seljuk Turks. The name “Ottoman,” in fact, is thought to have originated from the name Osman.<sup>83</sup>



Courtesy of Wikimedia  
Turkish leader Osman

The competition for supremacy between the Safavids in Iran and the

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<sup>79</sup> *Understanding Iraq*. Polk, William. “Chapter 2: Islamic Iraq [pp. 56-58].” 2005. New York: HarperCollins.

<sup>80</sup> *Iraq: People, History, Politics*. Stansfield, Gareth. “Chapter 1: Legacies of Civilizations and Empires [p. 24].” 2007. Cambridge, Mass.: Polity Press.

<sup>81</sup> *The History of Iraq*. Hunt, Courtney. “Chapter 5: The Ottoman Empire [p.48].” 2005. Westport, CT. Greenwood Press.

<sup>82</sup> *Nomads in the Sedentary World*. Khazanov, Anatoly Michailovich, André Wink. “Chapter 9: India and the Turko-Mongol Frontier.” 2001. Richmond: Curzon.

<sup>83</sup> *The History of Iraq*. Hunt, Courtney. “Chapter 5: The Ottoman Empire [p.49].” 2005. Westport, CT.: Greenwood Press.

Ottomans was a protracted affair spanning nearly four centuries. The Safavids, who establish Shi'a Islam as the Iranian religion, looked to Iraq to further expand the Shi'a realm. Much of the justification for this lay in the fact that the Iraqi cities of Najaf and Karbala, as well as Baghdad held special religious meaning for the Shi'a. The Ottomans saw this move by the Safavids as a potential threat. If their influence should begin to penetrate deeper within Ottoman Anatolian heartland, Iraq would provide a degree of protection.<sup>84</sup>

Ultimately, this conflict had several consequences that still resonate today: the Shi'a–Sunni divide grew ever-wider and both groups rallied the support of their respective followers. However, at the outset of the Safavid period (1623–1638) of Shi'a control of Iraq, the Sunnis were practically outcasts. Yet after the Ottomans emerged as a significant regional power (1638–1916), the Shi'a were essentially ostracized from the political process. This provided the Sunnis with many additional advantages, to which the Shi'a were denied access and which kept them politically and economically isolated.<sup>85</sup>

### **Safavids and Ottoman Conflict**

The 17th century ushered in a period of frequent conflict between the Safavids and the Ottomans, and much of the Ottoman territorial order and control gradually dissipated. As the deterioration continued, Iraqi tribalism reemerged, causing upheaval until the Mamluks imposed control separate from that of the Ottomans. They maintained this power position from the early 1700s until about 1831. The demise of the Mamluks and the return of control by the Ottomans were not due to war or conflict, but rather from flood and plague that struck Baghdad.<sup>86</sup>

Between the end of Mamluk control over Iraq and 1869, when a reformist governor of Baghdad named Midhat Pasha took control, the Ottomans held only tenuous authority over Iraq. It was Pasha's modernizing reforms in Iraq, using the West as his model, which resulted in redistributing tribal power in the urban centers. In addition, land reform ending a feudal system and initiating property rights predicated on law, served as well to assimilate the tribal elders (sheiks) into the more stable political mainstream.<sup>87</sup>

At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of 20th century, regime change was imminent. Initially, in 1889, there was a foiled first attempt at a coup by a group of revolutionaries seeking to



Courtesy of Wikimedia  
Sultan Abd al Hamid II

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<sup>84</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *Country Studies: The Ottoman Period 1534–1918*. 1988. <http://countrystudies.us/iraq/18.htm>

<sup>85</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *Country Studies: The Ottoman Period 1534–1918*. 1988. <http://countrystudies.us/iraq/18.htm>

<sup>86</sup> *Iraq: A Country Study*. Metz, Helen Chapin “Chapter 1: The Ottoman Period [pp. 26-27].” 1990. Washington, D.C. Federal Research Division, Library of Congress.

<sup>87</sup> *Iraq: A Country Study*. Metz, Helen Chapin. “Chapter 1: The Ottoman Period [p. 27].” 1990. Washington, D.C. Federal Research Division, Library of Congress.

overthrow the pan-Islamic regime of Sultan Abd al Hamid II. The revolution succeeded, creating a Western-style constitutional government, reinstating the constitution of 1876. Its primary political feature was secular, replacing the Islamic-based political ideology espoused by Hamid II. Though the discovery by Hamid's regime of the Turk's coup attempt forced many of the conspirators to flee to Europe, forces from within the Ottoman Empire organized and executed the coup. Though the Young Turks' efforts resulted in a constitutional government, political frictions continued until they finally took control in 1913.

### **Young Turks**

Once in control, the Young Turks' modernizing reforms included industrialization, secularization of the legal system, and expanded education to women. Most notable of the policies was "Turkification," which had the effect of ostracizing segments of the Iraqi population. This in turn created the impetus for a broader Arab nationalist movement, compelling greater Iraqi political activism, with many joining the Young Arab Society. The Ottomans in the 19th century failed to quell the instability of the autonomous tribal communities, in both rural and urban areas. This failure set the stage in the 20th century for interwoven social conflicts that would seriously undermine the basis for the development of nation-state in Iraq.<sup>88</sup>

### **World War I**

At the dawn of the 20th century, the need for oil grew. The vast oil reserves that as early as the 1870s were known to lie beneath Iraq generated increased interest in the region. The British initially had concerns about maintaining its India Company trade routes which passed through Iraq, the shortest route, and oil soon became a reason to hold Iraq even closer. The Germans, under Kaiser Wilhelm II were equally interested in the region's oil. To circumvent any further German intrusion, the British in 1901 negotiated with the Ottomans for access to the region and established itself within the Iraqi society at large.<sup>89</sup> However, in 1914 the Ottomans betrayed the British, allying with the Germans and the Central Powers at the start of World War I (WWI). This disloyalty precipitated a series of confrontations between the British and the Ottoman Turks. Initially, the British were unable to prevail, until 1918 when they took Baghdad, allowing them to impose their authority throughout Iraq except in the Kurdish territories on the Turkish and Iranian borders.<sup>90</sup>

### **British Mandate**

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<sup>88</sup> *Iraq: A Country Study*. Metz, Helen Chapin. "Chapter 1: The Ottoman Period [p. 30]." 1990. Washington, D.C. Federal Research Division, Library of Congress.

<sup>89</sup> *The History of Iraq*. Hunt, Courtney. "Chapter 5: The Ottoman Empire [p.58]." 2005. Westport, CT. Greenwood Press.

<sup>90</sup> *The History of Iraq*. Hunt, Courtney. "Chapter 5: The Ottoman Empire [p.58]." 2005. Westport, CT. Greenwood Press.

The Paris Peace Conference in January 1919 and the Treaty of Versailles six months later ended World War I, with details to be finalized at the conference of San Remo in April 1920. Article 22 of the League of Nations Covenant placed Iraq under British mandate.<sup>91</sup>

Establishing a plan to execute the 1919 Treaty of Versailles was one of the most important objectives of the April 1920 conference of San Remo. In addition, the conference adopted the Treaty of Sevres which ended the war with the Ottomans along with their control over Mesopotamia. The Treaty of Sevres distributed much of the former Ottoman territory among the allies, except for Russia and the United States, almost entirely abrogating Turkish sovereignty.<sup>92, 93</sup> Under the Paris Peace Conference, Iraq was given Class A status under British control through a system of mandates, as established in Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations. The system would administer the former Ottoman territories and German colonies. The mandate system was a giant stride in international law in terms of handling dependent territories. Within a mandated territory, the mandated power took on obligations to the citizens of the state.<sup>94</sup>



Courtesy of Wikimedia  
The signing of the Treaty of Versailles

At the conclusion of WWI, Iraqis saw the British as their liberators from the Turkish Ottomans. Yet as British policy evolved it took on a form and direction that were far more insidious. This became clear to the Iraqis when de facto control over their country would remain in British hands as stipulated by a League of Nations mandate. The British Mandate of Iraq infuriated the Iraqis as they had long believed that they would eventually achieve independence as a Class A mandate. When the realities became apparent, both Sunni and Shi'a rose up in rebellion in 1920.<sup>95</sup>

### **The Question of a Kurdish State**

The first attempts to establish a Kurdish state emerged in the 19th century, driven primarily by a Czarist Russia seeking to expand.<sup>96</sup> Russia's Kurdish policy in general, however, lacked a broad plan; instead, it was guided by random needs as they arose. Foremost among Russian policy was its long sought control of Istanbul and the Dardanelles that would provide unimpeded access to the Mediterranean from the Black

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<sup>91</sup> *Iraq: A Country Study*. Metz, Helen Chapin. "Chapter 1: The Ottoman Period [p. 32]." 1990. Washington, D.C. Federal Research Division, Library of Congress.

<sup>92</sup> The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. "Treaty of Sevres." 2005.  
<http://www.bartleby.com/65/sa/SanRemC.html>

<sup>93</sup> The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. "Treaty of Sevres." 2005.  
<http://www.bartleby.com/65/se/Sevres-T.html>

<sup>94</sup> The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. "Treaty of Sevres." 2005.  
<http://www.bartleby.com/65/ma/mandates.html>

<sup>95</sup> *The Iraq War: Hidden Agendas and Babylonian Intrigue*. Israeli, Raphael. "Chapter 3: Shiites in the South [p.47]." 2004. Brighton, Portland, Or. Sussex Academic Press.

<sup>96</sup> *The Politics of Cultural Pluralism*. Young, Crawford. "Chapter 10: Identity and Nationalism in the Arab World: The Struggle between State and Nation [p. 405]." 1979. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Sea for both commercial and military purposes.<sup>97</sup> A Kurdish nationalist movement bolstered by the Russians would further these geopolitical ambitions and provide better positioning vis-à-vis Turkey. In other words, it became clear to Russia that the Kurds could provide them a badly needed leverage in dealing with Turkey, whose relations with Russia had been turbulent. To acquire such leverage, the Russians would have to cater to the Kurdish nationalist movement as a pawn in a much larger game.

At the center of the issue centering around the Kurds' desire for a state was the denial—post-World War I—of the agreement that had promised the Kurds an autonomous region and independence from Turkey. The 1920 Treaty of Sevres, which was intended to distribute the former Ottoman Empire among the Allied forces, also provided the means by which the Kurds would finally realize their independence from Turkey. To that end, article 62 of the Treaty of Sevres gave the Kurds an autonomous region of their own. Furthermore, article 64 of the same treaty would permit the Kurds to petition the League of Nations within a year for independence from Turkey.<sup>98</sup>

However, the Treaty of Sevres was never realized because the Turkish war for independence resulted in its refutation. Replacement of the Treaty of Sevres was forced on 24 July 1923 when the Treaty of Lausanne in effect abrogated all of the conditions set out in the 1920 Sevres document and left the Kurds stateless.<sup>99</sup> The treaty of 1923 carved up a sizeable portion of Kurdistan and gave it to Turkey and Iran as well as Syria and Iraq. The final outcome of the Kurdish issue arising from the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne has set the landscape for much of today's political turmoil.

### **The Hashemites and Faisal I**

In their 1920 rebellion against the British, the Sunnis and Shi'a were quickly routed by the British and ominous consequences followed. Soon after reestablishing order, on 27 August 1921, the British installed Faisal I as Iraqi King. Faisal was a non-Iraqi leader and a Sunni from the Hashemite family. The consequences of the British placing him on the throne were considerable. Though the Iraqi Sunnis acknowledged the religious legitimacy of Faisal, the Shi'a saw this as tantamount to a foreign invasion. Yet for the British the choice made sense, at least politically. It made strategic sense to have a leader who was in a position to foster good relations with Iraq's predominately Sunni neighbors especially where the exportation of oil was concerned. The fallacy of this policy, however, was failing to take



Courtesy of Wikimedia  
King Faisal of Iraq

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<sup>97</sup> Michigan State University. Sowards, Steven W. "The Great Powers and the Eastern Question." 6 May 2004. <http://www.lib.msu.edu/sowards/balkan/lect10.htm>

<sup>98</sup> *The Future of Kurdistan*. O'Leary, Brendon, and John McGarry, Khaled Salih, ed. "Chapter 1: The Denial, Resurrection, and Affirmation of Kurdistan [p. 4–7]." Philadelphia, Pa. University of Pennsylvania Press.

<sup>99</sup> *The Future of Kurdistan*. O'Leary, Brendon, and John McGarry, Khaled Salih, ed. "Chapter 1: The Denial, Resurrection, and Affirmation of Kurdistan [p. 4–7]." ed. Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press. 2005

into account the fact that the Shi'a were the majority in Iraq.<sup>100</sup>

Iraq attained its political goal of independence on 3 October 1932, and was admitted to the League of Nations. Initially, the issue of great concern to the Iraqi leadership was ending the British mandate of Iraq. Little attention was given to the complex policies needed to govern an Independent Iraq. For a short period after independence, Iraq had relative calm with what appeared to be a joint effort among all of the leaders to initiate and implement the first reforms of the new Iraqi state. However, it was to be nothing more than the calm before the storm as discontentment and related uprisings from minority elements occurred, resulting in a loss of control by Faisal I. He died soon after, in September 1933, and his son Ghazi I succeeded him.<sup>101</sup>

## World War II

Ghazi was firmly anti-British and a staunch supporter of pan-Arabism. In addition, like his father, he never had the respect of Iraqis as a legitimate ruler (the Hashemites were from Saudi Arabia). A 1936 coup comprised of various factions of Kurds, Shi'a, and Sunnis erupted uncontested by Ghazi. But Ghazi died in 1939 and his son, Faisal II, ascended the throne.



By September 1939, great change had come to Iraq. The British declared war on Germany, WWII had begun, and the oil fields of Kirkuk, discovered in 1927, were now bringing in oil revenues. The production of oil changed the dynamics of Iraq's international relationships.<sup>102</sup>

During the war years of WWII and soon afterward, Iraq saw volatility in its leadership. Rebellions became driven partially by a pan-Arab movement and partially by fervent Iraqi resentment of British control of Iraq and its governmental affairs. There was also a growing militancy from the opposition toward the pro-British leadership. In response to this and to prevent escalation of political and social unrest, the British implemented emergency laws. They sought to curtail any political activity and stymie social forces that would pose a political challenge to their proxy rule. It was not until 1946 that political opposition parties were allowed to form.<sup>103,104</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> *The History of Iraq*. Hunt, Courtney. "Chapter 5: The Ottoman Empire [p.58]." 2005. Westport, CT.: Greenwood Press.

<sup>101</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. *Iraq: Independence, 1932–39*. 23 January 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-22903>

<sup>102</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. *Iraq: Independence, 1932–39*. 23 January 2008. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-22903>

<sup>103</sup> *The History of Iraq*. Hunt, Courtney. "Chapter 7: The Kingdom of Iraq and the Revolution of 1958 [p.73]." 2005. Westport, CT.:Greenwood Press.

<sup>104</sup> *Iraq from Monarchy to Tyranny: From the Hashemites to the Rise of Saddam*. Eppel, Michael. "Chapter 3: Iraq after World War II [p. 59]." 2004. Gainesville, Fla.:University Press of Florida.

Against daunting odds, the British were also preoccupied with keeping a government in Iraq that would be in concert with them. Needless to say, this would help to secure British access to oil and land trading routes from India. Economic hardship in Iraq further destabilized the country's political climate. It arose from the worldwide depression that served only to add to Iraq's already serious social and political problems.<sup>105</sup>

## Post World War II

In the postwar period, oil and the onset of the Cold War dominated foreign policy especially for western powers. Iraq never fell under the communist umbrella, in large part due to aid from the west (U.S.), and was admitted into the United Nations in 1945. A year later the Arab League was formed with Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Syria, Egypt, and Iraq. The League, a creation of the U.S. and Britain, sought to establish a tool to counter the influence of the Soviet Union and its Cold War communist ideology in the region. However, the League ultimately stirred up latent Arab nationalism among its members.<sup>106</sup>



Courtesy of Wikimedia  
Members of the Arab League

The Portsmouth Treaty in 1948 sought to create a new treaty with Britain, and the 1958 rebellion ended the monarchy. In the interim period between those two events, uprisings and shifts in power occurred. In the main, they were focused on divisions between an "old guard" comprised of various factions and the up and coming younger generation who wanted change and progress, not the status quo. In addition, Iraq was fearful about Egyptian domination of the Arab world, the growing Zionist movement, and the partition of Palestine.<sup>107</sup>

## Baghdad Pact

On 4 February 1955, the Baghdad Pact was formed between Iraq and Turkey as a defense agreement. It was intended to further strengthen the synergies already established by several other defense treaties (e.g., NATO, SEATO, ANZUS, Balkan Pact) to counter the Soviet Union and would ultimately include Britain, Pakistan and Iran. For the U.S. it served as a counterweight to the Soviet threat in the Middle East.<sup>108</sup>

For Iraq and Egypt and much of the Middle East, the Pact had more to do with regional domination than it did fending off a perceived Soviet threat. Furthermore, the Pact was predicated not only upon issues of regional domination by Iraq and Egypt, but also upon

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<sup>105</sup> *The History of Iraq*. Hunt, Courtney. "Chapter 7: The Kingdom of Iraq and the Revolution of 1958 [p.73]." 2005. Westport, CT.:Greenwood Press.

<sup>106</sup> *The History of Iraq*. Hunt, Courtney. "Chapter 7: The Kingdom of Iraq and the Revolution of 1958 [p.73]." 2005. Westport, CT.: Greenwood Press.

<sup>107</sup> *Iraq from Monarchy to Tyranny: From the Hashemites to the Rise of Saddam*. Eppel, Michael. "Chapter 3: Iraq after World War II [pp. 77–85]." 2004. Gainesville, Fla.: University Press of Florida.

<sup>108</sup> *The Quest for Hegemony in the Arab World: The Struggle Over the Baghdad Pact*. Poteh, Elie. "Introduction [p.1]."1995. Leiden ; New York : E.J. Brill Publishing.

a broader theme of pan-Arabism. On the one side lay the Hashemite rulers in Baghdad who saw themselves as the rightful leaders of the Arab movement, which they believed flowed from their religious ancestry. It was from this that Iraq saw itself leading the Arab world, even if this required British support. On the other side lay Iraq that promoted the consolidation of those states making up the Fertile Crescent region, namely Iraq, Transjordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine. For Iraq, Egypt did not factor into the Arab world and Saudi Arabia disliked the Hashemites.<sup>109</sup>

### Hashemite Monarchy Ends

The revolution to bring down the Hashemite monarchy took place on 14 July 1958. Led by Brigadier General Abd al-Karim Qasim and Colonel Abd al-Salam Arif, it seemed destined to happen. The Hashemite monarchy had been based on several factors, none of which would prevent its demise at the hands of the military led by Qasim. Among the bases of the monarchy were the tribal landowners, the army, and a western oriented “regional defense alliance” also known as the Baghdad Pact. The landed tribal elders were so captivated with their new status in the ruling class, they became alienated from the majority of their poorer fellow-tribesmen. This class division deteriorated tribal relationships such that little if any unified support would be forthcoming to stave off the coup.<sup>110</sup>



Courtesy of Wikimedia  
Abdul Salam Aref with Abdul Karim Qasim

The second base of support for the monarchy was the army. This base was paramount to Iraq’s security given the extensive tribal system, its tenuous geopolitical position, and its latent social and radicalized political groups. The political elite intended to maintain the status quo which had stratified the social structure. However, it sought to do this with an armed force that was composed primarily of middle and lower class officers. As many of the military empathized with the suffering population, they were more drawn to the reform movements than to preserving a monarchy that denied them the benefits of their position within the government.<sup>111</sup>

Finally, the Baghdad Pact, notwithstanding its original defense role, was unable to prevent an internal local military coup. The Pact was not intended to thwart internal threats, but rather had a much larger international purpose: to counter the Soviet Union. Moreover, the coup had considerable local support as well as that of the broader Arab community. In the end, it was a failure of the elitist regime to recognize a social and

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<sup>109</sup> *The Quest for Hegemony in the Arab World: The Struggle Over the Baghdad Pact*. Podeh, Elie. “Introduction [p.1].” 1995. Leiden ; New York : E.J. Brill Publishing.

<sup>110</sup> *Iraq from Monarchy to Tyranny: From the Hashemites to the Rise of Saddam*. Eppel, Michael. “Chapter 8: The 1958 Revolution and the Qasim Regime [p. 148].” 2004. Gainesville, Fla. University Press of Florida.

<sup>111</sup> *Iraq from Monarchy to Tyranny: From the Hashemites to the Rise of Saddam*. Eppel, Michael. “Chapter 8: The 1958 Revolution and the Qasim Regime [p. 148].” 2004. Gainesville, Fla.: University Press of Florida.

ideological dynamic within the country. As social conditions in Iraq deteriorated, a political and social revolt was inevitable to bring down the Hashemite monarchy as it did.<sup>112</sup> This ushered in the new Republic of Iraq.

### **The Qasim Regime and the Republic of Iraq**

As was the case before the revolution, so it was again with Qasim's regime: internal conflicts erupted. Arif, who had helped bring down the Hashemite monarchy, promoted nationalist politics that supported a pan-Arab unification movement. Alternately, Qasim, with the backing of the communists, Kurds, and nominally the Shi'a, espoused a unified Iraq against Arab unity and emphasized the Iraqi identity.<sup>113</sup> Arif was ousted in October 1958, just three months after the revolution.

Over the years, however, Qasim would gradually lose favor throughout the regime. By February 1963, factional collusion among the army and an Arab nationalist group (Arab Socialist Party or the Ba'ath party) revolted. Led by Colonel Abd al-Salam Arif, they took power and executed Qasim.<sup>114, 115</sup> In retrospect, the broad base of support that Qasim initially enjoyed—the army, the Communists, the Kurds, the National Democratic Party, and the middle and poorer classes—facilitated the eventual demise of the pan-Arab nationalists.<sup>116</sup>

The ten year interim period after the 1958 revolution that led to the seizure of power by the Ba'athists and Colonel Arif in 1968 was tumultuous. Through it all, power struggles between the Ba'athists and the Iraqi Communist Party dominated the political landscape. It was these power struggles that created the circumstances that would culminate in a "Bloodless Revolution" leaving the Ba'athists in power in Iraq.<sup>117</sup> The collapse of the Iraqi monarchy and the formation of the United Arab Republic (UAR) further energized the pan-Arab nationalist fervor. This policy provided the impetus to establish Iraq and the UAR as one Arab state led by Gamal Abd al-Nasir.



Courtesy of Wikimedia  
Iraqi soldiers patrolling near Taji

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<sup>112</sup> *Iraq from Monarchy to Tyranny: From the Hashemites to the Rise of Saddam*. Eppel, Michael. "Chapter 8: The 1958 Revolution and the Qasim Regime [p. 149]." 2004. Gainesville, Fla.: University Press of Florida.

<sup>113</sup> *Iraq from Monarchy to Tyranny: From the Hashemites to the Rise of Saddam*. Eppel, Michael. "Chapter 8: The 1958 Revolution and the Qasim Regime [p. 164]." 2004. Gainesville, Fla.: University Press of Florida.

<sup>114</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Iraq." <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-22903>

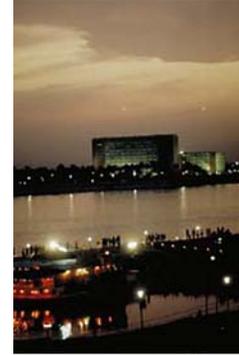
<sup>115</sup> "Ba'ath party- Arab political party, in Syria and in Iraq. Its main ideological objectives are secularism, socialism, and pan-Arab unionism. Founded in Damascus in 1941 and reformed, with the name Ba'ath, in the early 1950s, it rapidly achieved political power in Syria." Infoplease.com. "Ba'ath party." c2000–2007. <http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/history/A0805601.html>

<sup>116</sup> *Iraq from Monarchy to Tyranny: From the Hashemites to the Rise of Saddam*. Eppel, Michael. "Chapter 8: The 1958 Revolution and the Qasim Regime [p.192]." 2004. Gainesville, Fla. University Press of Florida.

<sup>117</sup> *The History of Iraq*. Hunt, Courtney. "Chapter 8: A Decade of Revolutions and the Rise of Saddam [p.79]." 2005. Westport, CT.: Greenwood Press.

## Bakr and the Ba'athists

On 17 July 1968, after a relatively non-violent “bloodless” revolt, Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr and the Ba'athists assumed power over the state, bringing an end to the Arif regime. Although charges of corruption (among other reasons) have been cited as the cause of Arif's downfall, the fact that his regime lacked the legitimacy that would have accompanied a true electoral process was a major weakness. In addition, the underpinning to his party was the military, and not a sound political party or extensive popular support.<sup>118</sup>



© Saudi Aramco World / PADIA/NIKWheeler  
Baghdad at night

Al-Bakr assumed the leadership role, the presidency and chairmanship of the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC). During the first two years, a purge of various government and military personnel also occurred in an effort to filter out any who opposed the Ba'athist party. By September 1968 an Interim Constitution had been introduced, establishing the government and the process by which the RCC were either nominated or elected. The strategy behind this was to allow the civilian political party under the de facto control of Vice President Saddam Hussein to rid itself of the military element in the party and bolster their control. And as was the case in 1963, the terror tactics by the Ba'athists had now returned with night time house raids and party thugs on the streets of Baghdad.<sup>119</sup>

## The Rise of Saddam Hussein

It was soon after the Ba'athists took control of Iraq in 1968 that they began an initiative to wrest absolute control of the entire social and political infrastructure. The Ba'ath Party in Iraq had managed to grow from a fledgling political party to a powerful machine with almost 1.5 million members. The control which the party exercised over the internal institutions had the effect of fortifying both the security forces and Hussein's power.<sup>120</sup>



Courtesy of Wikimedia  
Saddam with Ba'ath Party leaders in 1990

Since the early 1970s Saddam Hussein had been essentially the “strong man” within the government, though he was officially the Vice President of Iraq. And though al-Bakr presided over the presidency and secretary of the Ba'ath Party, over time his influence began to wane. On 16 July 1970, al-Bakr turned over the reins of state control to Saddam Hussein and resigned. Once in office, Hussein secured his position through various

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<sup>118</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Iraq.” <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-22903>

<sup>119</sup> *Iraq Since 1958: From Revolution to Dictatorship*. Farouk-Sluglett, Marion and Peter Sluglett. “Chapter 4: 1968–1972 [pp. 118–121].” 2001. London; New York : I.B. Tauris & Co, St. Martin's Press.

<sup>120</sup> *Iraq from Monarchy to Tyranny: From the Hashemites to the Rise of Saddam*, Eppel, Michael. “Chapter 11: The Rise of Saddam Husayn's Regime [p. 254].” 2004. Gainesville, Fla.: University Press of Florida.

tactics that included a massive purge of the Ba'ath Party, security forces, and the military.<sup>121</sup>

Throughout much of Saddam Hussein's dictatorship, a deeply-seated drive existed to strengthen absolute control and heighten his international regional status. Saddam sought nothing less than a powerful Iraqi leadership role in the Middle East, and access to the Gulf to exploit fully his oil resources. In addition, he was well aware that to realize a key role in the global community, especially in the Middle East, Iraq would need to rapidly develop. In an effort to put Iraq on a path of development, Hussein implemented several policies that touched multiple layers of Iraq. His government collectivized the agricultural sector, expanded industry, and emphasized Iraq's educational system, especially at the secondary level.<sup>122</sup>

The 1970s and early 80s saw an increased emphasis placed on Iraq's historical characteristics as they related to the Arab World. This policy orientation was to put pan-Arabism squarely in the context of Iraqi national interests and "ancient Mesopotamian elements" as defined by Hussein and the Ba'ath Party.<sup>123</sup> Furthermore, Hussein increasingly placed importance on Iraqi tribalism to underscore this as a key identifier of the Iraqi Arab Nation. This strategy also helped to prevent the smaller Shi'a tribal groups from unifying and growing.

### **Kurdish Push for Autonomy**

Since Iraq's independence in 1932, the Kurds in Kurdistan have successively clashed violently with other regional powers, including the Iraqi government. During the 1960s numerous confrontations took place between Kurdish guerillas and the Iraqi army. With the rise of the Ba'ath Party in July 1968, violent clashes continued until a brief respite in March 1970, when an agreement between the Ba'ath Party and the Kurds opened the door to a new plan. Under this arrangement, the three Kurdish majority northern governorates, Dahuk, Irbil, and As Sulaymaniyah, which form Iraqi Kurdistan, would gain autonomy over a four-year period.<sup>124</sup> However, the intended outcome to the agreement with Baghdad never materialized and would end in disaster for the Iraqi Kurds.



Courtesy of Wikimedia  
Jalal Talabani

The mid-1970s saw further deterioration in the political position of the Kurds in Iraq. A major source of support, namely Iran, ended when the Iranian Shah entered into an

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<sup>121</sup> *Iraq from Monarchy to Tyranny: From the Hashemites to the Rise of Saddam*. Eppel, Michael. "Chapter 11: The Rise of Saddam Husayn's Regime [p. 257]." Gainesville, Fla.: University Press of Florida.

<sup>122</sup> *Iraq from Monarchy to Tyranny: From the Hashemites to the Rise of Saddam*. Eppel, Michael. "Chapter 11: The Rise of Saddam Husayn's Regime [p. 255]." 2004. Gainesville, Fla.: University Press of Florida.

<sup>123</sup> *Iraq from Monarchy to Tyranny: From the Hashemites to the Rise of Saddam*. Eppel, Michael. "Chapter 11: The Rise of Saddam Husayn's Regime [p. 255]." 2004. Gainesville, Fla.: University Press of Florida.

<sup>124</sup> GlobalSecurity. "Kurdistan-Iraq." John Pike. June 2007.

<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/kurdistan-iraq.htm>

agreement with Iraq. Out of this realignment, Kurdish factions emerged, each seeking to advance its own particular brand of Kurdish Nationalism. Among these groups was the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP), led by Mullah Mustalafa-al-Barzani, founded in 1946 in the Soviet occupied territory of northern Iran. A tribal party, it is based in the northern governorates of Dohuk and Arbil. Since June of 2005, Barzani has been the President of Iraqi Kurdistan as well as the leader of the KDP.<sup>125</sup>

The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), headed by Jalal Talabani, emerged from the KDP in the late 1970s. With much of its power emanating from Sulaymaniyah, its support came from the urban Kurds and radical elements. On 7 April 2005, Mr. Talabani, the first non-Arab president of Iraq, was sworn into office; he would also continue his role as the leader of the PUK.<sup>126</sup>

### The Iran-Iraq War

The eight-year war that Iraq launched on Iran began in 1980. The loss to life was in the hundreds of thousands, and destruction to infrastructure and oil production caused a near collapse of the economies. Between 150,000 and 350,000 Iraqis died; economic damage was close to USD 160 billion.<sup>127</sup> Although the territorial dispute over access and control of the Shatt al-Arab waterway is often cited as the war's sole cause, in fact there are several causes. In terms of the dispute over the Shatt al-Arab, it was the Peace Treaty of 1639 between the Persian and Ottoman Empires that largely occupied the center of this particular dispute. Setting the stage for future problems, the treaty created an ill-defined border predicated upon primarily tribal loyalties.<sup>128</sup>



Courtesy of Wikimedia  
Iranian resistance

Aside from the Shatt al-Arab, Iran posed a significant threat to Iraq and its power position in the region through its influence over Iraqi Shi'a. The 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran also ushered in new dynamics that deeply divided the Kurds along national lines. Both Iran and Iraq sought to champion those factions that opposed the governments of the other's regimes. Alongside these factors was Saddam's perception that the Islamic Revolution in Iran led by Khomeini had greatly undermined the strength of the state, especially the military ranks. This motivated Hussein to take advantage of these

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<sup>125</sup> GlobalSecurity. "Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP)." John Pike, 7 January 7, 2007.

<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/kdp.htm>

<sup>126</sup> GlobalSecurity. "Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK)." John Pike, 7 January 7, 2007.

<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/puk.htm>

<sup>127</sup> *Iraq from Monarchy to Tyranny: From the Hashemites to the Rise of Saddam*. Eppel, Michael. "Chapter 11: The Rise of Saddam Husayn's Regime [p. 263]." 2004. Gainesville, Fla.: University Press of Florida.

<sup>128</sup> Inventory of Conflict and Environment (ICE). American University, School of International Service, "Iran-Iraq War and Waterways Claims." Brad Martsching. May 1998.

<http://www.american.edu/ted/ice/iraniraq.htm>

circumstances to take control of the Shatt al-Arab.<sup>129</sup> The war in 1988 ended essentially in a stalemate with no definitive victor.<sup>130</sup>

During the Iran-Iraq war, Kurdish militant anti-government activities were left relatively unchecked by Baghdad, which feared a two-front conflict that it could ill afford.<sup>131</sup> In 1983, the KDP established base camps along the Turkish border areas after a major Kurdish offensive was launched. During the same period, the PUK became entrenched in the area around Kirkuk. By 1988, much of northern Iraq fell under the control of Kurdish separatists.<sup>132</sup>

## The Invasion of Kuwait

On 2 August 1990, the Iraqi military rolled into Kuwait even though the U.N. had condemned the invasion. Several days later, the U.N. Security Council imposed economic sanctions to compel the Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait. Iraq had based its invasion of Kuwait on an historical aspect. The issue was that Kuwait had been originally part of Basra in the 19th century, but was unjustly made an independent state by the British at a time when the Ottoman power was too weak to prevent the British from doing so. Saddam was firmly entrenched in Kuwait with no indications of leaving, declaring Kuwait Iraq's 19th province.<sup>133</sup>



Courtesy of Wikimedia  
Multi-national coalition forces

The United States along with an international coalition of forces launched a military operation to compel Saddam Hussein to leave Kuwait. Initiated by President George Bush, U.S. troops were ordered to deploy to Saudi Arabia to head a 28-member coalition, along with various states from the region to support the coalition demand for Hussein to leave Kuwait by 15 January 1991. Iraq failed to respond. By the 17th of January, air attacks began with full ground operations beginning on 24 February. Within one week the Iraqi forces had been routed and they surrendered. A consequence of the war was the destruction of much of the Iraqi military infrastructure.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> *Iraq from Monarchy to Tyranny: From the Hashemites to the Rise of Saddam*. Eppel, Michael. "Chapter 11: The Rise of Saddam Husayn's Regime [p. 263]." 2004. Gainesville, Fla.: University Press of Florida.

<sup>130</sup> *Inventories of Conflict and Environment (ICE)*. American University, School of International Service, "Iraq-Iraq War and Waterways Claims." Brad Martsching. May 1998.  
<http://www.american.edu/ted/ice/iraniraq.htm>

<sup>131</sup> GlobalSecurity. "Kurdistan-Iraq." John Pike. June 2007.  
<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/kurdistan-iraq.htm>.

<sup>132</sup> GlobalSecurity. "Kurdistan-Iraq." John Pike. June 2007.  
<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/kurdistan-iraq.htm>

<sup>133</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online.. "Iraq." <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-22903>

<sup>134</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online.. "Iraq." <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-22903>

## Iraqi Kurdistan

One consequence of the 1991 war was the development of an essentially independent Kurdish region in the northern part of Iraq. Iraqi Kurdistan, as this autonomous region has been informally known since 1991, seems to have fared better than other Kurdish areas. There are several reasons that are thought to have led to this. First, the Kurds in northern Iraq have far greater numbers than is the case in Syria and Iran. Moreover, the Kurds inside Iraq have managed to survive numerous attempts at extermination, and their numbers are relatively dense.<sup>135</sup> The electoral consequences emanating from such numbers may well change the political party structure within Iraq. It is believed that if the Kurdish vote were taken into account, the Kurdish share would probably constitute between one-fifth and one-third of the total votes cast.<sup>136</sup>

Second, the continued stability of the Iraqi Kurds is derived from the frailty of the state's military and administrative structures prior to the Ba'athists taking more complete control. In other words, the Ba'ath party was ineffective in managing its growing Kurdish population. In addition, the very construct of "Iraq," drawn from the three former Ottoman provinces of Baghdad, Basra, and Mosul, did not lend itself to integrating the Kurds into the larger state. At decolonization in 1932, Mosul with its Kurd majority remained out of step with the rest of Iraq, maintaining its Kurdish political, administrative, and cultural base.<sup>137</sup> Since the state's inception there has been periodic political turmoil marked by various uprisings and revolts from the Kurds and the Shi'a. Much of this violence was based on the fact that these groups vehemently opposed many policies of the fledgling state.



© David Shapinsky  
Mosul, Iraq 1932

A third explanation for the strength of Iraqi Kurdistan arises from somewhat of a contradiction. It is the Kurdish organizational continuity, despite its variations in language dialects, regionalism, religious divisions (Shi'a, Sunni, Feyli, Yezidi, Christian, and Jew), factionalism, and tribal loyalties, that seems to bind them together. This character is peculiar only to Iraqi Kurds. As a consequence, Iraqi Kurds possess a greater

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<sup>135</sup> *The Future of Kurdistan in Iraq*. Ed., O'Leary, Brendan, and John McGarry, Khaled Salih. "Chapter 1: The Denial, Resurrection, and Affirmation of Kurdistan [p.15]." 2005. Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press.

<sup>136</sup> *The Future of Kurdistan in Iraq*. Ed. O'Leary, Brendan and John McGarry, Khaled Salih. "Chapter 1: The Denial, Resurrection, and Affirmation of Kurdistan [p.15]." 2005. Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press.

<sup>137</sup> *The Future of Kurdistan in Iraq*. Ed. O'Leary, Brendan and John McGarry, Khaled Salih. "Chapter 1: The Denial, Resurrection, and Affirmation of Kurdistan [pp.16-17]." Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press.

capacity to combine its people in conflict, whether armed or political, and to foster a more cohesive society.<sup>138</sup>

## Post-9/11 Developments

The bombing of the World Trade Center and elsewhere on 11 September 2001 ushered in an era of terrorism to an extent never previously experienced in the U.S. Although no direct connection was established between the catastrophic events in New York and Iraq, President George W. Bush contended that the bombings on “9/11” exemplified the U.S. exposure to terrorism. He emphasized Iraq’s previous history of hostility to the U.S. as well as its history of pursuing weapons of mass destruction. On 8 November 2002, the U.N. Security Council directed Iraq, through Resolution 1441, to allow arms inspectors to return to Iraq to continue its inspections.<sup>139</sup>

During the inspections, the issue of Iraqi cooperation became a source of international debate. The United States and the United Kingdom insisted that Iraq was impeding the inspections by hiding material. However, France, Germany, and Russia wanted to give Iraq more time to comply with the inspectors. The U.S. and its coalition partners overruled this view. They terminated further negotiations on 17 March 2003, and began their air campaign on 20 March. By 9 April the Coalition Forces entered Baghdad while British Forces entered Basrah. Other major urban centers fell days later. Though the U.S. and Coalition announced the end of combat hostilities in April, urban violence, criminal activity, and looting became pervasive, while at the same time a latent insurgent element began to emerge.<sup>140</sup>

The Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) took the role of Iraqi government once the Ba’ath Party was dissolved. The CPA’s primary objective was to restore order, assure security, and begin reconstruction of Iraq’s infrastructure.<sup>141</sup> Its essential failure to set a financial and structural foundation and momentum for accomplishing this was paralleled by a disruptive growing insurgency of multi-national, multi-ethnic groups.<sup>142, 143, 144</sup> Also,

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<sup>138</sup> *The Future of Kurdistan in Iraq*. Ed. O’Leary, Brendan and John McGarry, Khaled Salih. “Chapter 1: The Denial, Resurrection, and Affirmation of Kurdistan [p.23].” 2005. Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press.

<sup>139</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Iraq.” <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-232299/Iraq>

<sup>140</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Iraq.” <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-232299/Iraq>

<sup>141</sup> RAND. National Defense Research Institute. Rathmell, Andrew, and Olga Oliker, Terrence K. Kelly, David Brannan, Keith Crane. “Developing Iraq’s Security Sector: The Coalition Provisional Authority’s Experience.” 2005. <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RL33110.pdf>

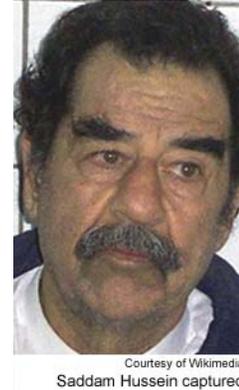
<sup>142</sup> RAND. National Defense Research Institute. Rathmell, Andrew, and Olga Oliker, Terrence K. Kelly, David Brannan, Keith Crane. “Developing Iraq’s Security Sector: The Coalition Provisional Authority’s Experience.” 2005. <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RL33110.pdf>

<sup>143</sup> Revenue Watch Institute. Reports and Briefings. “Disorder, Negligence, and Mismanagement: How the CPA Handled Iraq Reconstruction Funds.” September 2004. <http://www.iraqrevenuewatch.org/reports/092404.shtml>

<sup>144</sup> Guardian Unlimited (U.K.). “Iraq Was Awash in Cash. We Played Football with Bricks of \$100 Bills.” 20 March, 2006. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/Iraq/Story/0,,1734939,00.html>

assumptions that had prevailed about a “benign” security and social environment that would prevail after Saddam’s downfall proved to have been rather badly miscalculated.<sup>145</sup>

By 13 December 2003, Saddam Hussein was captured near Tikrit, along with other key players in the Iraq government. He was tried by an Iraqi court.<sup>146</sup> Ideally, a leader charged with the crimes Saddam committed should have a trial which offers the society he ruled the prospect of transitional justice.<sup>147</sup> This means a fair hearing of the evidence and competent legal representation. Unfortunately, partly owing to poor security which resulted in the successive murders of major participants, Saddam's trial degenerated into a "settling of accounts." When his death sentence was carried out on 30 December 2006, an unauthorized video ended up on YouTube and revealed invited observers to be a cheering Shi'ite crowd.<sup>148</sup> This left lingering bitterness in the minority Sunni community that did not facilitate sectarian reconciliation essential to a stable post-Saddam political order.



## Recent Kurdish Activity

### *Kurds and Turkey*

The PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party) has been launching attacks into southeastern Turkey from northern Iraq. The group is pushing for an autonomous Kurdish state in the region, antagonizing parts of southern Turkey with rebel attacks through kidnappings and bombings. The Kurdish group has been fighting with Turkey since 1984. Cross-border operations to counter the PKK were authorized by the Turkish parliament on 17 October.<sup>149</sup> The Turkish Prime Minister has worked with the U.S. to resolve the issue, but has also used Turkish troops in cross border attacks in Iraqi Kurdistan, including bombing parts of the region. The U.S. has expressed concern that such attacks by its NATO ally could complicate and exacerbate the situation in Iraq.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> RAND. National Defense Research Institute. Rathmell, Andrew, Olga Olikier, Terrence K. Kelly, David Brannan, Keith Crane. “Developing Iraq’s Security Sector: The Coalition Provisional Authority’s Experience.” 2005. <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RL33110.pdf>

<sup>146</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Iraq.” <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-232299/Iraq>

<sup>147</sup> An historical example would be the Nuremberg Trials of World War II Nazi war criminals. Article 16 of the “Charter of International Military Tribunal” of the Nuremberg Trials establishes the rights of the defendants, in order to ensure a fair trial. Source: The Nuremberg Trials: IMT Charter, Indictments, Verdicts, and Sentencing of Major War Figures.” 8 August 1945.

<http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/nuremberg/NurembergIndictments.html>

<sup>148</sup> BBC News. “Iraq Investigates Saddam Footage.” 3 January 2007.

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/6224531.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/6224531.stm)

<sup>149</sup> CNN.com/world. “Turkey Attacks Kurd Rebels in Iraq,” 1 December 2007.

<http://www.cnn.com/2007/WORLD/europe/12/01/turkey.kurds.ap/>

<sup>150</sup> CNN.com/world. “Turkish Soldiers Freed by PKK,” 4 November 2007.

<http://www.cnn.com/2007/WORLD/meast/11/04/turkey.kurds/index.html>

### **Party for a Free Life in Kurdistan (PEJAK)**

An Iranian Kurdish group known as the Party for a Free Life in Kurdistan (PEJAK, an offshoot of the Kurdish separatist PKK), and Iran have been involved in a conflict since 2003.<sup>151</sup>

Iran contends that this group is intent on liberating the Kurds in Iran. For Iran, this poses such a threat that Iranian and Turkish officials met several times during early 2007 to negotiate and coordinate their responses to both the PKK and the PEJAK.<sup>152</sup>

Kurdistan's volatile relations with Iran as well as with Turkey are problematic for the U.S. efforts in Iraq. Kurdistan may appear to be relatively well governed in relation to other parts of Iraq, but areas of high potential discord are present.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> National Public Radio (NPR). Watson, Ivan. "Tensions Mount Between Iraqi Kurdistan, Iran." 20 December 2007 <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=14781988>

<sup>152</sup> Cato Institute. Carpenter, Ted Galen. "Withdrawing to Kurdistan is no Withdrawal." Article appeared in the Baltimore Sun on 15 May 2007. [http://www.cato.org/pub\\_display.php?pub\\_id=8239](http://www.cato.org/pub_display.php?pub_id=8239)

<sup>153</sup> Cato Institute. Carpenter, Ted Galen. "Withdrawing to Kurdistan is no Withdrawal." Article appeared in the Baltimore Sun on 15 May 2007. [http://www.cato.org/pub\\_display.php?pub\\_id=8239](http://www.cato.org/pub_display.php?pub_id=8239)

## Economy

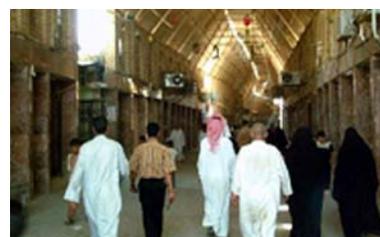
### Introduction

Since the mid 20th century, Iraq has had a nearly exclusive focus on generating oil-based revenues, especially during the 1970s. This single-minded focus directed the course of the economy and the terms upon which it conducted its international trade. As a result, the nation's developing economic diversification, resource base, and skilled work force atrophied from disuse.<sup>154</sup> Moreover, the "petro-economy" created during the 1970s with the "oil crisis" further strengthened the government's control over Iraqi society. Without oil revenues, the economy and the subsidies upon which Iraqis had come to rely on would come crashing down around them.<sup>155</sup>

### Economy during Saddam Hussein

The economy during Saddam Hussein's dictatorship was centralized, with a hint of market capitalism. Yet in the 1980s, it was one of the most developed Arab economies with a fairly modern and developed transportation system and infrastructure. Its educated middle class had per capita incomes on par with Venezuela and Korea.<sup>156</sup>

However, at the same time, the economy was feeling the strain of war with Iran. Which, during the 1980s, transformed the broader economy of the 1970s into one more driven by military need. This harmed the manufacturing and agricultural sectors. In addition, the eight year war diverted much investment away from more sustainable productive capital needs to provide funding for a protracted military effort.<sup>157</sup>



© James Gordon  
A covered market in central Samawa

The years just before Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 (the first Gulf War) narrowed Iraq's economic development. Economic policies continued to focus further around the nation's considerable petroleum reserves, at the expense of other economic sectors. The country's infrastructure became degraded by neglect and its institutions broke down as a result of war, war planning, and sanctions.

### Post-Saddam Economy

In the post-Saddam period, the international community has recognized the need to reconstruct Iraq's neglected and mismanaged institutional infrastructure. Prior to 1990,

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<sup>154</sup> Centre for Arab Gulf Studies, University of Exeter. Mahdi, [Dr. Kamil](http://www.casi.org.uk/info/mahdi98.html). "Rehabilitation Prospects for the Iraqi Economy." June 1998. <http://www.casi.org.uk/info/mahdi98.html>

<sup>155</sup> Iraq: People, History, Politics. Gareth Stansfield. "Chapter 3: From Authoritarian to Totalitarian State [p.80]." 2007. Cambridge, UK. Polity Press.

<sup>156</sup> Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress. "Iraq's Economy: Past, Present, Future." June 3, 2003. [http://www.export.gov/iraq/pdf/crs\\_iraq\\_economy.pdf](http://www.export.gov/iraq/pdf/crs_iraq_economy.pdf)

<sup>157</sup> Centre for Arab Gulf Studies. University of Exeter. Mahdi, Dr. Kamil. "Rehabilitation Prospects for the Iraqi Economy." June 1998. <http://www.casi.org.uk/info/mahdi98.html>

the institutions that form the bedrock of stable economies and societies were essentially absent in Iraq. The public sector had expanded by leaps and bounds and the private sector was strictly controlled by rigid and capricious political and bureaucratic controls. Managerial and administrative skills lay underdeveloped, and research and technological innovation were severely lacking.<sup>158</sup>

Besides Iraq's internal infrastructure problems in the two decades leading to Desert Storm, the War itself, sanctions, and the oil embargo left a broad economic footprint. Their negative effects included a costlier business environment, few economic alternatives to make up for the lost oil revenue, and stagnant foreign investment.



© CPT photo / Wikimedia  
Temporary mosque in Fallujah

Insofar as sanctions under Security Council Resolution 661 in August 1991 were concerned, they practically led to a virtual shutdown of oil exports along with restrictions on imports. Before 1990, Iraq's non-oil related exports were valued at about 4% of its imports.<sup>159</sup> Oil production today remains below the pre-war average, and the production of gasoline and diesel are still declining.<sup>160</sup> Economic recovery is currently hampered by the Iraqi government's inability to craft a law that would set forth equitable oil-sharing revenues within the Kurdish, Sunni, and Shi'a areas of the country.<sup>161</sup>

Although improvement is now present in some areas, circumstances have led to a national economy which overall has not advanced. The country has experienced severe declines in living standards, plunging incomes for many, and an unstable national economy marked by both growth and regression.

## Standard of Living

As is typical with most war and post-war economies, inflation is among the most critical to resolve, and Iraq is no exception. In January 2007, the State Department reported that Iraq's inflation rate was the second highest in the world.<sup>162</sup> Inflation for 2006 was over 64%, a considerable spike from the nearly 32% in 2005. Both years exceed the IMF

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<sup>158</sup> Centre for Arab Gulf Studies. Mahdi, Dr. Kamil. "Rehabilitation Prospects for the Iraqi Economy." June 1998. <http://www.casi.org.uk/info/mahdi98.html>

<sup>159</sup> Centre for Arab Gulf Studies. Mahdi, Dr. Kamil. "Rehabilitation Prospects for the Iraqi Economy." June 1998. <http://www.casi.org.uk/info/mahdi98.html>

<sup>160</sup> Reuters. David Morgan. "Iraq Development Lags Expectations Despite Success." 30 October, 2007. <http://www.reuters.com/article/politicsNews/idUSN2955867020071030?pageNumber=2&virtualBrandChannel=0>

<sup>161</sup> Reuters. David Morgan. "Iraq Development Lags Expectations Despite Success." 30 October, 2007. <http://www.reuters.com/article/politicsNews/idUSN2955867020071030?pageNumber=2&virtualBrandChannel=0>

<sup>162</sup> ABC News. Nagorski, Tom. "Iraq: Where Things Stand." 19 March 2007. <http://abcnews.go.com/International/Story?id=2962206&page=4>

annual target inflation rate of 30%.<sup>163</sup> Under such circumstances, price stability becomes critical. In November 2006, the Central Bank of Iraq (CBI) initiated a plan for the appreciation of the Iraqi Dinar (ID) relative to the U.S. Dollar (USD), and by June of 2007 the value of the ID had realized a 17% increase. In addition, the CIB has raised interest rates, resulting in a 20% deposit rate. This increase has the effect of helping to withdraw cash from the economy by using the enticement of interest earnings. But these monetary solutions do not address the serious problems on the supply side, which arise predominantly from security obstacles that create frequent supply bottlenecks.<sup>164</sup>

For 2007, median household income in Iraq was USD 286 per month.<sup>165</sup> Although median household income has reportedly increased in some areas, increases have been offset by the high rate of inflation. Problematically, much of Iraq's budget necessarily supports security costs due to the current conflict, rather than a foundational infrastructure that would increase employment and improve living standards.



Courtesy of Wikimedia  
Iraqi children, Samarra

### **Labor, Gender, and Unemployment**

Iraq's unemployment rate is increasing and standard of living lowering in recent years. In terms of gender, men dominate the labor roles, while women and younger men are less actively involved, similar to the pattern in neighboring countries. Educated women are more active in the work force than their lesser educated female counterparts. For working young men, heads of families are more apt to be the dominant earners.<sup>166</sup> In terms of labor trends, the ongoing violent insurgency that has caused over 2 million Iraqis to flee to neighboring countries has destabilized the labor markets.<sup>167</sup>

For those youth with little formal education, unemployment in 2004 reached 33.4%, with unemployment levels for those with secondary or higher education at 37.2%.<sup>168</sup> For 2007, unemployment in Iraq is high, standing somewhere between 30–50%.<sup>169, 170</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Dept. of State. Background Note: Iraq. June 2007. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/6804.htm>

<sup>164</sup> Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Dept. of State. Background Note: Iraq. June 2007. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/6804.htm>

<sup>165</sup> ABC News. "Iraq: Where Things Stand. Overview of Life in Iraq Four Years After Invasion." 19 March 2007. <http://abcnews.go.com/International/Story?id=2962206&page=3>

<sup>166</sup> United Nations Development Programme. Khalid, Khalid M. "2004 Iraq Living Conditions Survey," 2004. <http://www.iq.undp.org/ILCS/overview.htm>

<sup>167</sup> AFP. "UN Agencies Launch 85 Mln Dollar Iraqi Refugee Appeal." 18 September 2007. <http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5hzx2X7WSVklxJxuNpVKZx-5IKL5Q>

<sup>168</sup> United Nations Development Programme. Khalid, Khalid M. "2004 Iraq Living Conditions Survey," Khalid, Khalid M. 2004. <http://www.iq.undp.org/ILCS/overview.htm>

<sup>169</sup> Newsweek.com. Spring, Sylvia. "Blood and Money." 25 December 2006. <http://services.newsweek.com/search.aspx?offset=0&pageSize=10&sortField=pubdatetime&sortDirection=descending&mode=summary&q=Blood+and+Money&site-search-submit.x=41&site-search-submit.y=6>

## Industry

Manufacturing expansion in Iraq was stymied by restrictions on privatization and by UN sanctions. Since 2003, the growth of businesses has been slow mainly due to security concerns. Different factors have affected post-2003 industrial performance, in some cases spurring growth. As of October 2007, production capacity for 175 factories was running around 10%–30%, compared to pre-war levels of around 70%–80% for 240 factories.

Iraq's manufacturing sector with U.S. assistance has brought back on line roughly 17 factories, employing some 5,000 workers.<sup>171</sup> The construction industry has thrived primarily due to government support to address the dire need for housing. Short-term construction projects in 2005 put 150,000 Iraqis to work.<sup>172</sup>



US Government Photo  
Metal fabrication

Industry and manufacturing have typically been based on industries associated with oil such as refining, chemicals, and fertilizers. Cement is an exception, being the only non-oil industry.

Iraq's state-owned industrial sector provides a range of technological consulting services. They support areas such as hardware and software development, engineering, refinery and power plant operations, and construction of chemical and petrochemical projects.<sup>173</sup>

## Energy

Power production has been on the rise and has set periodic records for war-time generation in some areas, while at the same time experiencing severe setbacks in others. Overall, power generation meets approximately 60% of national demand.<sup>174</sup> Progress in power generation is due in large measure to a drop in violent attacks and heightened operational efficiencies. To meet current and anticipated demand, however, much work remains to be done, as Iraq's power infrastructure suffered during years of poor maintenance. Moreover,



Courtesy of Wikimedia  
Oil power plant in Iraq

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<sup>170</sup> ABC News. "Iraq: Where Things Stand. Overview of Life in Iraq Four Years After Invasion." 19 March 2007. <http://abcnews.go.com/International/Story?id=2962206&page=3>

<sup>171</sup> Reuters. David Morgan. "Iraq Development Lags Expectations Despite Success." 30 October, 2007. <http://www.reuters.com/article/politicsNews/idUSN2955867020071030?pageNumber=2&virtualBrandChannel=0>

<sup>172</sup> Federal Research Division. Library of Congress. "Country Profile-Iraq." August 2006. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Iraq.pdf>

<sup>173</sup> Export.Gov/Iraq. U.S. Dept. of Commerce. "Ministry of Industry & Minerals-Industrial Services Sector." 23 January, 2007. [http://www.export.gov/Iraq/market\\_ops/industrialservices.html](http://www.export.gov/Iraq/market_ops/industrialservices.html)

<sup>174</sup> Reuters. Morgan, David. "Iraq Development Lags Expectations Despite Success." 30 October, 2007. <http://www.reuters.com/article/politicsNews/idUSN2955867020071030?pageNumber=2&virtualBrandChannel=0>

war-time looting and sabotage are pervasive and consequently disable numerous transmission lines. As 40% of the population still lacks electricity and overall power production has yet to meet 2003 Coalition production benchmarks, this sector has growth potential. The UN, in association with the UNDP and Electricity Network Rehabilitation Program, has implemented several development programs aimed at rebuilding and expanding electric power capacity.<sup>175</sup>

### *Natural Gas*

Natural gas reserves in Iraq are estimated at 112 trillion ft<sup>3</sup> (3.17 trillion m<sup>3</sup>) as of early 2007, constituting the world's tenth largest reserves. Two-thirds of these reserves are associated gas resources (i.e., gas that comes up simultaneously with oil) with oil fields in Kirkuk and Ar Rumaylah among others. However, new resource evaluations of more accurate gas reserve figures in Iraq suggest that natural gas reserves in Iraq may well be in the 275–300 ft<sup>3</sup> (7.78–8.49 m<sup>3</sup>) range. However, the Energy Information Administration has indicated that there has been a consistent tapering off of Iraqi natural gas production during the last 10–15 years. This is attributed to an equal drop in oil production and loss of processing facilities due to poor maintenance. Gas production in 2005 of 87 billion ft<sup>3</sup> (2.46 m<sup>3</sup>) is a substantial drop in production compared to the 1989 level of 215 billion ft<sup>3</sup> (6.088 billion m<sup>3</sup>). In addition, lack of adequate processing infrastructure has necessitated much of the gas being flared off for domestic and export consumption.<sup>176</sup>

### *Oil*

Iraq has estimated proven oil reserves of 112–115 billion bbl (barrels).<sup>177, 178</sup> Experts also believe that there may be undiscovered petroleum resources that could put Iraq's total at nearly 200 billion bbl. If such estimates are correct, this would make Iraq the world's second largest source after Saudi Arabia. (Saudi Arabia, with 260 billion bbl of proven oil reserves, constitutes the largest reserve base with production capabilities of around 10.5 million bbl per day). Although Iraq has about 11% of the known global total petroleum reserves, field development has been slow with almost no drilling activities for many years. Only



Courtesy of Wikimedia  
Al Basrah oil terminal

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<sup>175</sup> Export.gov/Iraq. "Overview of Key Industry Sectors in Iraq." 23 January 2007. [http://www.export.gov/iraq/bus\\_climate/sector\\_overview.html#oil](http://www.export.gov/iraq/bus_climate/sector_overview.html#oil)

<sup>176</sup> Energy Information Administration. Natural Gas. "Reserves and Production." August 2007. <http://www.eia.doe.gov/cabs/Iraq/NaturalGas.html>

<sup>177</sup> Energy Information Administration. International Energy Outlook 2007. "Chapter 3 - Petroleum and other Liquid Fuels." May 2007, <http://www.eia.doe.gov/oiaf/ieo/oil.html>

<sup>178</sup> CIA World Factbook. "Iraq." 6 December, 2007. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/iz.html>

17 of the 80 fields have been developed, mostly in Kirkuk in the north and Ar Rumaylah in the south.<sup>179</sup>

It is no wonder that oil has long been the basis for nearly 75% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP). 2007 oil production in Iraq is estimated at 2.0 million bbl per day (2006 export revenue was about USD 28.6 billion<sup>180</sup>). The intent of the Iraq government to grow its productive capacity to over 6 million bbl per day will depend largely on the stability and security in the country.<sup>181</sup> To date, Iraq's oil output remains below the war-time average, and refining production for diesel and gasoline have dropped to 28 and 36% respectively below war-time levels.<sup>182</sup> This decrease is due to many factors to include poor equipment and maintenance, theft, and shortages of electricity and spare parts.

The northern Iraqi city of Kirkuk is at the epicenter of Iraq's oil industry, with pipelines to ports on the Mediterranean Sea. The oil fields in the area were originally developed by the Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC) in 1934, and these fields remain a major source of northern Iraqi oil production.<sup>183</sup> This is the geographic feature that has made the resolution of the Kurdish question in Iraq especially difficult. Kirkuk, some 150 mi (250 km) (north of Baghdad, is historically an ethnic hodgepodge of Kurds, Turkmen, Assyrians, Arabs, and Armenians. Yet it is oil—70% of Iraq's oil reserves are centered in and around Kirkuk—that truly ignites the animosities of the sundry ethnic groups in the city with Sunni and Shi'a Arabs and Turkmen on one side, and Kurds on the other. Additionally, for the Kurds, Kirkuk is akin to Jerusalem for the Christians and Muslims, in that it represents their national identity.<sup>184</sup>

## **Agriculture**

The current state of Iraqi agriculture is due to decades of state control which isolated that sector from new forms of innovation. Iraq's agricultural sector has lacked access to new

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<sup>179</sup> CRS Report for Congress. Kumins, Lawrence. "Iraq Oil: Reserves, Production, Potential Revenues." April 2006. [http://www.export.gov/iraq/pdf/iraq\\_oil\\_0406.pdf](http://www.export.gov/iraq/pdf/iraq_oil_0406.pdf)

<sup>180</sup> Energy Information Administration. "International Energy Outlook 2007." Country Analysis Briefs. Iraq. Economic Overview, May 2007 <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/Iraq/pdf.pdf>

<sup>181</sup> Energy Information Administration. International Energy Outlook 2007. "Chapter 3 - Petroleum and other Liquid Fuels." May 2007, <http://www.eia.doe.gov/oiaf/ieo/oil.html>

<sup>182</sup> Reuters. Morgan, David. "Iraq Development Lags Expectations Despite Success," 30 October, 2007. <http://www.reuters.com/article/politicsNews/idUSN2955867020071030?pageNumber=2&virtualBrandChannel=0>

<sup>183</sup> Global Security. "Kirkuk." 21 January, 2007. <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/iraq/kirkuk.htm>

<sup>184</sup> WorldPress.org. Integrated Regional Information Networks, United Nations. Iraq. "Ethnic Tensions Mount in Kirkuk." 17 November, 2006.

[http://www.worldpress.org/print\\_article.cfm?article\\_id=2687&dont=yes](http://www.worldpress.org/print_article.cfm?article_id=2687&dont=yes)

high-yield varieties, herbicides and pesticides, more developed techniques in tillage, planting, irrigation, fertilizer use, and post harvest technologies.<sup>185</sup>

When Coalition Forces ousted Saddam Hussein in 2003, there was minimal damage to Iraqi agriculture. In addition, the farm sector had favorable weather conditions that produced a 22% increase in grain yields over the previous year's yields. Despite this and continued high grain yields shortly after the war, Iraq will nonetheless remain a net agricultural importer.<sup>186</sup>



US Government Photo  
Farmers, Erbil

The two agencies with whom the USDA works to rebuild Iraqi agriculture are the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) and Ministry of Trade (MOT). The MOT is the agency responsible for importing all of the food stuffs that go to the Public Distribution System (PDS). It is the PDS which in turn assures that every Iraqi receives the food ration stipulated by the Oil for Food Program (1995–1996) under the direction of the U.N. Even before the Oil for Food Program, the MOT's Grain Board had been importing various grains and rice.<sup>187</sup>

The Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) oversees domestic agricultural production of food, livestock, and poultry. It also determines the composition and domestic procurement prices of agriculture products. Not least, the MOA provides oversight of the importation of input resources such as seeds, fertilizers, machine spare parts, and irrigation materials.<sup>188</sup>

As the largest employer in Iraq after oil, agriculture remains the second largest component to GDP growth. Driving 29% of GDP and 20% of employment,<sup>189</sup> agriculture is a key driver to stability by fostering private enterprise, growing incomes and jobs, improving living standards, and enhancing food security. Building on this potential, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) implemented the Agriculture Reconstruction and Development Program for Iraq (ARDI) during the period 2003 through the fall of 2005. The program sought to revitalize agriculture by repairing

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<sup>185</sup> Coalition Provisional Authority. Schatz, Lee H. "Iraq has Strong Farm Sector Potential, USDA Official Says." 16 June, 2004. [http://www.cpa-iraq.org/transcripts/20040615\\_farming.html](http://www.cpa-iraq.org/transcripts/20040615_farming.html)

<sup>186</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. "Country Profile: Iraq." August 2006. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Iraq.pdf>

<sup>187</sup> Coalition Provisional Authority. Schatz, Lee H. "Iraq has Strong Farm Sector Potential, USDA Official Says." 16 June, 2004. [http://www.cpa-iraq.org/transcripts/20040615\\_farming.html](http://www.cpa-iraq.org/transcripts/20040615_farming.html)

<sup>188</sup> Coalition Provisional Authority. Schatz, Lee H. "Iraq has Strong Farm Sector Potential, USDA Official Says." 16 June, 2004. [http://www.cpa-iraq.org/transcripts/20040615\\_farming.html](http://www.cpa-iraq.org/transcripts/20040615_farming.html)

<sup>189</sup> Export.gov/Iraq. "Overview of Key Industry Sectors in Iraq," 23 January, 2007. [http://www.export.gov/iraq/bus\\_climate/sector\\_overview.html#agriculture](http://www.export.gov/iraq/bus_climate/sector_overview.html#agriculture)

veterinary clinics and agricultural equipment. It also provided training to farmers and Agricultural Ministry staff.<sup>190</sup>

To further the development of agriculture, a USAID program known as Inma (Arabic for “growth”) will implement a three-year, USD 343 million rural project. Its goal is to expand agribusiness and agricultural markets that lead to improved conditions within the sector for farmers. In addition, it will begin to renew agricultural technology and infrastructure. It will also create stronger networks between farmers and their suppliers, agribusiness representatives, financial services, and domestic and international markets. Local and national policies will bolster public–private collaboration that will be the foundation to free-market economic growth.<sup>191</sup>



© Dominique Roger / UNESCO.org  
Date palm worker

Although this sector has challenges ahead, it has inherent features that will give its recovery and prospects for growth a leg up. Of Iraq’s total land area of 268,533 sq mi (432,162 sq km), 27% is arable. Of that total, more than 50% gets enough rain to allow farming; the remaining land is close enough to water sources that it can be irrigated. However, not all of the farm land available for irrigation is tapping that potential, and opportunities exist to expand agriculture in those areas. Many inefficiencies arise from inadequate infrastructure, technology, and water distribution systems, along with the weak influence of market mechanisms.<sup>192</sup>

## Trade

Trade relations between Iraq and the other members of the global trading community are slowly reestablishing themselves. Since September 2004 Iraq has been moving back into the international trade realm. In late 2004, the U.S. government granted Iraq official status as a beneficiary developing country, which could lead to stronger trade between Iraq and the U.S. Earlier in 2004, Iraq received observer status at the World Trade Organization (WTO), and its WTO accession process began by December of that year. Iraq’s first WTO working party meeting in May 2007 launched the nation further into the WTO accession process, crucial to Iraq’s entry into the international economy.<sup>193</sup>



Courtesy of Wikimedia  
Billboards in Baghdad

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<sup>190</sup> USAID from the American People. Assistance for Iraq, 16 May, 2007.  
<http://www.usaid.gov/iraq/accomplishments/agri.html>

<sup>191</sup> USAID from the American People. Assistance for Iraq, 16 May, 2007.  
<http://www.usaid.gov/iraq/accomplishments/agri.html>

<sup>192</sup> Export.gov/Iraq. “Overview of key Industry Sectors in Iraq,” 23 January, 2007.  
[http://www.export.gov/iraq/bus\\_climate/sector\\_overview.html#agriculture](http://www.export.gov/iraq/bus_climate/sector_overview.html#agriculture)

<sup>193</sup> Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs. U.S. Dept. of State. “Background Note: Iraq.” June 2007.  
<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/6804.htm#econ>

Based on the World Trade Organization 2007 Trade Report, fuels and mining products accounted for 99.4% of Iraq's total 2006 exports. Agricultural products and manufactured goods contributed 0.4% and 0.2%, respectively, to exports. Iraq's total 2006 share of world exports and imports was 0.24% and 0.23%, respectively.<sup>194</sup>

## Banking, Finance, and Investment

The Iraqi banking system has lacked the features of most industrialized nations. With an economy directed by the government, the Iraqi banking and financial systems were directed by it as well. The Iraqi state treasury provided the economy's money supply and lending was a function of politics, not good business. It is noteworthy that in spite of this impediment to efficiency, the Iraqi banking and financial system was one of the most successful in the Arab world until the latter part of the 1980s.<sup>195</sup>



© hdroads / flickr.com  
Iraqi money lender

Prior to the 1930s, economic growth and the savings rate drove the growth of Iraq's banks. Beginning in the mid 1930s through the mid 1950s, the government expanded the banking system. It did this by creating a series of new institutions, beginning with an agricultural and industrial bank, and including more specialty banks dealing in real estate during the 1940s. The country's first commercial bank, Rafidain Bank, was founded in 1941. Second was the state-owned National Bank of Iraq in 1947, becoming the Central Bank of Iraq in 1956. The period of 1991 to 2003 ushered in much greater government control over the financial sector when the government centralized the special service banks. In addition, government policy determined in large measure bank loan decisions that promoted development and housing growth at the outset of the 1980s.<sup>196</sup>

Iraq's highly developed financial system (until the late 1980s) arose predominately from government policies designed to expand the banking sector. Rafidain and Rashid banks, both commercial banks, have different objectives. Rafidain tended to concentrate on foreign activities while Rashid directed its attention toward domestic financial issues. The government allowed these banks a measure of competition, limited by centralized fiscal policy.

The nationalization of the financial sector in 1964 was repealed in May 1991. This act facilitated the growth of private institutions, which reached about 17 private banks in 2002. However, it is difficult to determine just how private these institutions actually were, since access to international capital markets and a fragile Iraqi economy forced

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<sup>194</sup> World Trade Organization. Trade Profiles 2007. "Iraq." 2007.

[http://www.wto.org/english/res\\_e/booksp\\_e/anrep\\_e/trade\\_profiles07\\_e.pdf](http://www.wto.org/english/res_e/booksp_e/anrep_e/trade_profiles07_e.pdf)

<sup>195</sup> Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress. "Iraq's Economy: Past, Present, Future," 3 June, 2003. [http://www.export.gov/iraq/pdf/crs\\_iraq\\_economy.pdf](http://www.export.gov/iraq/pdf/crs_iraq_economy.pdf)

<sup>196</sup> Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress. "Iraq's Economy: Past, Present, Future," 3 June, 2003. [http://www.export.gov/iraq/pdf/crs\\_iraq\\_economy.pdf](http://www.export.gov/iraq/pdf/crs_iraq_economy.pdf)

many of them to rely on the government to meet their capital needs. Moreover, since 1991 banking privatization was impacted by international circumstances, including the freeze on Iraq's international assets, sanctions, and the Oil for Food Program. Much of the private financial system during this time was reduced to accessing capital through a system of cronyism.<sup>197</sup>

Iraq's banking system has suffered due to Iraq's top-heavy, unstable, and inefficient financial and administrative environment. In the 1990s, Rafidain Bank, the primary channel through which foreign capital flowed in the 1970s and 1980s, became the institution held responsible for default on much of the international loan monies.<sup>198</sup> Also, the Central Bank, as with much of the financial and banking sectors, has fallen victim to looting since 2003. There are, however, signs of revival within the banking system. Banks have begun using reconstruction money and new economic rules, including greater freedom to issue consumer credit. They are replacing antiquated equipment, although electricity shortages often render new equipment dysfunctional. They are also investing in computer training and have introduced credit cards and more efficient coding systems. Although security concerns have depressed banking activity, the improved security that Iraq is now experiencing will add greatly to the banking system's recovery.<sup>199</sup>

## Currency

The Iraqi currency, the New Iraqi Dinar (NID), is now completely convertible. It is readily exchangeable with all other foreign exchange currencies, without taxes, subsidies on purchases, or sales of foreign exchange. This, however, was hardly the case soon after coalition forces liberated Baghdad.<sup>200</sup>



When Coalition contractors needed to conduct bank business, it became evident that electronic banking media was practically non-existent. Much of this was due to a cash-based society, in many respects a throwback to the days of Saddam Hussein, when banking was done almost entirely face-to-face. In the latter days of the 1980s, a time when Iraqi soldiers were returning from the war with Iran, the Iraqi state coffers were virtually empty. As a consequence, the Iraqi dictator prohibited banks from allowing any payments or withdrawals except to government employees. Many people saw their money simply disappear. This left a precarious situation in which to establish sound

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<sup>197</sup> Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress. "Iraq's Economy: Past, Present, Future," 3 June, 2003. [http://www.export.gov/iraq/pdf/crs\\_iraq\\_economy.pdf](http://www.export.gov/iraq/pdf/crs_iraq_economy.pdf)

<sup>198</sup> Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress. "Iraq's Economy: Past, Present, Future," 3 June, 2003. [http://www.export.gov/iraq/pdf/crs\\_iraq\\_economy.pdf](http://www.export.gov/iraq/pdf/crs_iraq_economy.pdf)

<sup>199</sup> The New York Times. Business. Daragahi, Borzou. "Iraq's Ailing Banking Industry Is Slowly Reviving." 30 December 2004.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2004/12/30/business/worldbusiness/30iraqbank.html>

<sup>200</sup> Bureau of Economic, Energy and Business Affairs. U.S. Dept. of State.

<http://www.state.gov/e/eeb/ifd/2007/80708.htm>

economic monetary policy and to foster trust in the state currency, as it existed in early 2003.<sup>201</sup>

Overcoming years of economic mismanagement and financial corruption is a necessary change that the new Iraqi regime faces, compounded by the difficulties inherent in forming a viable government. To help stabilize Iraq's economy, Iraq's new currency, the NID, was issued and began circulating throughout Iraq on 15 October, 2003. The official exchange period continued through 15 January, 2004. When the exchange period expired in January 2004, any remaining "print" or "Swiss" dinars were no longer accepted as legal tender.<sup>202</sup>

### *Transition to the NID*

There were several critical motivations to create a new currency. Probably foremost among them was the strong need to establish an entirely new monetary system. Also, the mandate that Saddam's face would no longer appear on any notes was, needless to say, a positive first step.



Courtesy of Wikimedia  
Swiss Iraq dinar, front

During the official exchange period, both the normal Iraqi "print" dinar—used in most of Iraq—and the "Swiss" dinar—used mainly in northern Iraq—were exchanged for the NID. The rates of exchange were one "print" dinar for one NID and 150 "Swiss" dinars for one NID. And for those who had cash in the bank, those would automatically be exchanged.<sup>203</sup>

A wider range of denominations was planned to facilitate business and trade on a daily basis. The currency used during the Saddam Hussein period was printed in only two denominations: the 10,000 dinar note worth slightly more than USD 5, and the 250 dinar note, worth between 10 and 25 cents. As most Iraqis live on less than a dollar a day, the large dinar note denominations were impractical to use in day-to-day transactions, even for those earning what is considered a "good salary" of about USD 50 per month. This became apparent when the 250 dinar note, a denomination circulated during Saddam's rule, continued to be widely used and even appreciated in value after his defeat. So, in an effort to improve the functionality of the new currency, the NID would be available in denominations that would be more user-friendly to the majority of Iraqis. The government printed them in 50, 250, 1,000, 5,000, 10,000, and 25,000 denominations.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> GlobalSecurity. "New Iraqi Currency," Pike, John. 7 September-7, 2005,  
<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/iraq/currency-reform.htm>

<sup>202</sup> America.gov. "New Iraqi Dinar to Be Released in October." 7 July, 2003.

<http://www.america.gov/st/washfile-english/2003/July/20030707153843namrevlisv0.8175318.html>

<sup>203</sup> America.gov. "Frequently Asked Questions Regarding New Iraqi Currency." 7 July, 2003.

<http://www.america.gov/st/washfile-english/2003/July/20030707154520namrevlisv0.1617504.html>

<sup>204</sup> GlobalSecurity.org. "New Iraqi Currency," 9 July, 2005,

<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/iraq/currency-reform.htm>

## *New Economic Policies and the NID*

To effectively install new economic policies, the new currency would have to be part of a larger economic policy effort. The overall effort would require bringing legitimacy and confidence to economic institutions such as the Central Bank of Iraq and to its newly enacted economic policies.<sup>205</sup> The Central Bank of Iraq (CBI) received its autonomy from the Finance Ministry at the same time as the launch of the NID. During Saddam

Hussein's rule, the Finance Ministry had been dominated by the Ba'ath Party, making it nearly impossible for the CBI to gain the international support it needed to develop the monetary policy initiatives that were so crucial to the country.<sup>206</sup>



Courtesy of Wikimedia  
Central Bank of Iraq

It now has what it needs to proceed with policies that make sense. One issue in particular was that the CBI had to have the requisite statutory mandates in place if monetary stability was to be realized. This would include a modernized structure through which monetary policy would be designed in order to achieve the price stability the Iraqi economy would need to grow. As the months passed after its official distribution, the new currency appreciated in value by about 25%, while prices and inflation remained stable.<sup>207</sup> If anything would demonstrate public confidence in the currency, this clearly sent the right message.

Since 2006, the current investment laws facilitate banking and capital transfers inside or outside of Iraq, offering greater investment flexibility. In addition, as the government's primary concern now is to create stable prices and exchange rates, it will be the Central Bank of Iraq that will intervene to maintain foreign exchange stability.<sup>208</sup>

### **Economic Effects on Housing**

Iraq's economic turmoil has affected housing, resulting in a variety of arrangements. They include the traditional detached units, apartments, or small traditional homes typical of other Middle Eastern domiciles. In addition, larger homes may have living quarters that have been added to the main structure. To accommodate refugees, living situations also include tents and huts, many located in refugee camps. Property ownership is a dominant form of social security in that owning a house is an investment. Home or property ownership is especially prevalent in the central and southern regions of Iraq. However, many returning refugees from the war and insurgency have seen their homes

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<sup>205</sup> Global Security.org. "New Iraqi Currency." 9 July, 2005.

<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/iraq/currency-reform.htm>

<sup>206</sup> Global Security.org. "New Iraqi Currency." 9 July, 2005.

<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/iraq/currency-reform.htm>

<sup>207</sup> Global Security.org. "New Iraqi Currency." 9 July, 2005.

<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/iraq/currency-reform.htm>

<sup>208</sup> Bureau of Economic, Energy and Business Affairs. U.S. Dept. of State. "2007 Investment Climate Statement – Iraq." <http://www.state.gov/e/eeb/ifd/2007/80708.htm>

occupied by squatters and are forced to live in refugee camps or shelters. Rental units of whatever type (15%) in Iraq tend to be high in urban areas. Similarly, living arrangements with squatters who occupy homes and pay no rent (2%) are numerous in the northern parts of Iraq, with Kurdistan having many cases of this type.<sup>209</sup>

### **Economic Effects on Education**

During Saddam Hussein's drive to develop and industrialize, education reforms during the 1970s and 1980s gave Iraq one of the most advanced educational systems in the Arab world. The high rate of adult literacy attests to this fact. However, political and economic circumstances, namely wars and sanctions, have stalled education progress and performance. Consequently, literacy among 15–24 year olds is 74%—marginally better than the literacy rate for most people, but lower than literacy for those among the 25–34 year olds. This suggests that the performance of the younger generation has fallen behind that of their parents and older siblings. Women's literacy has suffered the most with high rates of illiteracy. These rates have been relatively steady, compared to a decline in the literacy of men.<sup>210</sup>



### **Economic Effects on Healthcare**

Healthcare in this time of war and social instability is limited by access, especially to hospitals. Also, many people are unemployed and lack financial resources to pay for health care. The majority of Iraqis are within 60 minutes of the nearest hospital medical services, with most situated less than 30 minutes from a hospital if they have transportation. Then too, being able to reach a hospital does not necessarily mean that one receives appropriate care, since the quality of health care in hospitals varies. Many of Iraq's hospitals and clinics have been damaged by the war. Shortages of equipment and medical personnel are extreme, and hospitals cannot afford to replace damaged equipment.



In terms of chronic illness, which includes psychological illnesses, afflictions in many cases are caused by circumstances arising from the war. For example, during the 2003 war, cases of ill children under 9 years of age exceeded cases of ill adults between 20–29.

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<sup>209</sup> United Nations Development Programme, "Iraq Living Conditions Survey 2004." Khalid, Khalid M. 2004. <http://www.iq.undp.org/ILCS/overview.htm>

<sup>210</sup> United Nations Development Programme, "Iraq Living Conditions Survey 2004." Khalid, Khalid M. <http://www.iq.undp.org/ILCS/overview.htm>

This, according to the UNDP, indicates that the civilian population suffered more in the war than the military.<sup>211</sup>

Food shortages, poverty, and social dislocation have led to pervasive malnutrition among children between the ages of 6 months and 5 years. Nearly half of children in this age group suffer from varying degrees of poor nutrition, whether it is general, acute, or chronic malnutrition. Levels of malnutrition differ by geographic region with acute malnutrition being higher in the south. In general, income plays a less critical role than education of the caretaker in mitigating levels of poor nutrition. Where acute malnutrition is involved, however, no such relationship exists between caretaker education and income. Acute malnutrition is simply more likely to occur from food shortages or lack of economic ability to obtain food.<sup>212, 213</sup>

## **Tourism**

The war in Iraq that was initiated by a U.S.-led Coalition invasion in 2003 brought the country's international tourism to a dead halt. However, despite the ongoing conflict, there have been glimpses of a latent tourist industry waiting in the wings to revive its industry. As recent as early 2007, the foundation for the revival of tourism in Iraq was initiated at a "Spring Fair," held at a local Baghdad hotel within the heavily fortified Green Zone. Cultural displays at the Fair included exhibits of silk rugs, antique pistols, daggers encrusted with gems, and various other arts and crafts.



© James Gordon  
Al Rashid Hotel, Baghdad

Religious tourism continues to draw nearly 350,000 tourists and pilgrims per year. They come to Iraq to see many of Islam's most revered holy sites, including the Shi'a shrines in Karbala of the Imam Hussein and shrines in Najaf of the Imam Ali. The security concerns that have curtailed tourism in general have had little impact on these religious pilgrims.<sup>214</sup>

## **International Compact with Iraq**

In April 2007, the U.N. announced that the U.N. Secretary General and the Iraqi Prime Minister were launching an international partnership agreement, the International Compact with Iraq. This five-year national plan establishes the guidelines by which Iraq's economy can be brought into the international economy. Tying in issues of security

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<sup>211</sup> United Nations Development Programme, "Iraq Living Conditions Survey 2004." Khalid, Khalid M. <http://www.iq.undp.org/ILCS/overview.htm>

<sup>212</sup> United Nations Development Programme, "Iraq Living Conditions Survey 2004." Khalid, Khalid M. <http://www.iq.undp.org/ILCS/overview.htm>

<sup>213</sup> ABC News. "Iraq: Where Things Stand. Overview of Life in Iraq Four Years After Invasion." 19 March 2007. <http://abcnews.go.com/International/Story?id=2962206&page=3>

<sup>214</sup> USA Today. Rick Jervis. "Iraq Eyes Future Tourism." 29 March, 2007. [http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/iraq/2007-03-29-spring-fair\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/iraq/2007-03-29-spring-fair_N.htm)

disruption and political conflict, it addresses economic stability and peacebuilding as interdependent processes.<sup>215</sup> The Compact is responsive to the fact that controlling inflation and corruption, cultivating a private sector, and restructuring the financial sector underlie the growth of Iraq's economy.<sup>216</sup>

### **Renewed Internationalism**

Since October 2006, the passage of new legislation has encouraged international investment in Iraq. The rewriting of laws has opened the economy to foreign investment, creating a more investor-friendly business climate, even though considerable ambiguity is present in the new laws. Iraq's membership in the World Trade Organization (WTO) is another avenue through which international investment is being stimulated. Furthermore, the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) now has investment legislation which permits foreign ownership of land. Iraq received USD 300 million in total foreign direct investment in 2004 and USD 142 million from U.S. investment in Iraq in 2005.<sup>217</sup>



### *Paris Club*

Much of Iraq's sizable international debt is a remnant of the Saddam era and its resolution will require international assistance. In November 2004, a meeting held between the Paris Club and the Republic of Iraq culminated in an agreement to restructure Iraq's USD 38.9 billion external debt held by the Club. The Iraq representation was led by the Minister of Finance. It shared an overview of the obstacles that confront Iraq's financial systems with the Paris Club, which consists of 19 permanent member governments holding considerable world government debt.<sup>218</sup>

In recognition of these difficulties as well as Iraq's commitment to solve them, the Paris Club arrived at a plan that would effectively reduce Iraq's total debt to them by 80%. In other words, the Club agreed to forgive USD 31.1 billion of that debt. The restructuring plan involved several phases, beginning with an immediate cancellation of 30% of

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<sup>215</sup> Department of Public Information, United Nations. Press Release No. 6078, "Fact Sheet on the International Compact with Iraq," Department of Public Information, April 27, 2007. <http://www.iraqcompact.org/en/press/27-Apr-07%20FACT%20SHEET%20ON%20THE%20INTERNATIONAL%20COMPACT%20WITH%20IRAQ.pdf>

<sup>216</sup> CIA World Factbook. "Iraq." 15 November, 2007. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/iz.html>

<sup>217</sup> Bureau of Economic, Energy and Business Affairs. U.S. Dept. of State. "Iraq." 2007. <http://www.state.gov/e/eeb/ifd/2007/80708.htm>

<sup>218</sup> Paris Club. "The Paris Club and the Republic of Iraq Agree on Debt Relief." 21 November, 2004. <http://www.clubdeparis.org/sections/services/communiques/irak6017>

outstanding late interest charges as of 1 January, 2005. This phase is then followed by a series of subsequent debt reductions and deferments.<sup>219</sup>

As a part of the Paris Club agreement, Iraq has entered into a standby arrangement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Under this plan, the IMF has pledged nearly USD 700 million to support economic policies in Iraq. In return, the Iraqi government has pledged to implement economic reforms, such as reduction of price subsidies, privatization of state-owned industries, and the development of a restructuring strategy for the state-run banks.<sup>220</sup>

Few options currently exist for Iraqi small-business operators who are looking for funds to invest in their business. The last half of 2006 saw the start-up of three new Iraqi-operated microfinance institutions (MFI) in Kirkuk, Baghdad, and Fallujah, with initial capitalization provided by USAID. The Iraqi MFIs provide loans in the range of USD 2,000–5,000 for small-business owners.<sup>221, 222</sup> Recently, Al-Aman, the Kirkuk MFI, became an affiliate member of Kiva, an online, nonprofit loan-brokering service for MFIs around the world. Kiva has pledged to provide a minimum of USD 15,000 in loan capital each month for Al-Aman.<sup>223</sup>

## Business Outlook

Business development and economic growth is critical to the underpinnings of a more peaceful and stable environment in Iraq. In July 2006, the U.S. Commerce Secretary met with Iraqi Prime Minister Maliki and members of the private sector to discuss strategies that could help create jobs and foster domestic and international business partnerships. At that time, progress was already evident in the increased number of registered companies and cellular service users in Iraq. Furthermore, a previously state owned and operated stock market with only 13 listings had grown to become an independent exchange with total listings of over 90 companies.<sup>224</sup>



US Government Photo  
Road builder

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<sup>219</sup> Paris Club. “The Paris Club and the Republic of Iraq Agree on Debt Relief.” 21 November, 2004. <http://www.clubdeparis.org/sections/services/communiqués/irak6017>

<sup>220</sup> International Monetary Fund. “IMF Executive Board Approves First Ever Stand-By Arrangement for Iraq.” 23 December 2005. <http://www.imf.org/external/np/sec/pr/2005/pr05307.htm>

<sup>221</sup> U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Iraq: Success Stories. “New Microfinance Institution Provides Credit to Small Businesses in Kirkuk [p.9].” November 2006. [http://www.usaid.gov/iraq/updates/nov06/iraq\\_fs01\\_110106.pdf](http://www.usaid.gov/iraq/updates/nov06/iraq_fs01_110106.pdf)

<sup>222</sup> IZDIHAR. “Microfinance in Iraq.” February 2007. <http://www.izdihar-iraq.com/news/microfinance.html#story128>

<sup>223</sup> IZDIHAR. “News: Sustainable Microfinance.” 1 July 2007. <http://www.izdihar-iraq.com/news/microfinance.html#story128>

<sup>224</sup> Embassy of the United States. Baghdad, Iraq. “Gutierrez Visits Baghdad, Touts Economic Vitality...” 16 July, 2006. [http://iraq.usembassy.gov/iraq/20060717\\_gutierrez.html](http://iraq.usembassy.gov/iraq/20060717_gutierrez.html)

One pervasive issue that must be dealt with is corruption, an ongoing problem for business in Iraq. Since Saddam Hussein's overthrow, all levels of government and those interacting with it have operated in an atmosphere of bribery and corruption. No-bid contracts are commonly awarded in the reconstruction effort, avoiding a competitive process and favoring a few large firms. The World Bank has acknowledged the problem, noting that it not only undermines trust in government, but it also blocks the recovery of essential services. Further, diversion of public funds translates to a tax on the poor.<sup>225</sup> In December 2006, the U.S. Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction stated that corruption and smuggling in Iraq had reached levels that threatened the state's survival.<sup>226</sup> Millions of dollars in contracts have been wasted or diverted, much due to lack of oversight. Oil has been smuggled and sold on the black market, and close to USD 9 billion in Iraqi oil revenues are unaccounted for.<sup>227</sup> The U.S. State Department's Iraq policy coordinator, David Satterfield, stated in October 2007 that "official corruption in Iraq is real, endemic, and pernicious."<sup>228</sup> Other government officials have noted that corruption in the Al Maliki government not only harms business, it threatens the building of a stable democracy in Iraq.

The reduction in violence in recent months shows some positive indications for Iraq's business future. It stems from three factors: a major Shi'a militia ceasefire, the decision by many Sunnis to oppose radical insurgents rather than fight with them, and the U.S. surge of troops. The objective of the surge, to create space for political reconciliation, has yet to be realized, however.<sup>229</sup> In a recent report, the U.S. Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction stated that the inability of the Iraqi government to create an oil revenue-sharing law is harming Iraq's economic recovery.<sup>230</sup> It is through political reconciliation and a strong central government that solid stability can be achieved. This reconciliation and ability to work cooperatively would in turn open the route to restoration of services such as electricity and water. Within such a climate, business could pick up and thrive.

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<sup>225</sup> BBC News. "Iraq Facing 'Corruption Threat.'" 16 March 2005.  
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/4353491.stm>

<sup>226</sup> Guardian Unlimited (U.K.). Borger, Julian and David Pallister. "Corruption: The 'Second Insurgency' Costing \$4bn a Year." 2 December 2006. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/Iraq/Story/0,,1962245,00.html>

<sup>227</sup> Guardian Unlimited (U.K.). Borger, Julian and David Pallister. "Corruption: The 'Second Insurgency' Costing \$4bn a Year." 2 December 2006. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/Iraq/Story/0,,1962245,00.html>

<sup>228</sup> Washington Post.com. De Young, Karen and Water Pincus. "Corruption in Iraq 'Pernicious,' State Dept. Official Says." 16 October 2007. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/10/15/AR2007101501831.html>

<sup>229</sup> BBC News. "Iraqis Demand Better Life Amid New Calm." 17 December 2007.  
[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/7147162.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7147162.stm)

<sup>230</sup> Reuters. David Morgan "Iraq development lags expectations despite success." October 30, 2007.  
<http://www.reuters.com/article/politicsNews/idUSN2955867020071030?pageNumber=2&virtualBrandChannel=0>

## Society

### Ethnic Groups and Languages

The ethnic diversity that now characterizes Iraq evolved from the influx of Babylonians, Assyrians, and Sumerians who were gradually assimilated into current day Iraq. Then, during the 7th century C.E., the Arabization of central and southern Iraq came about from the Muslim invasion.<sup>231</sup> Today, Arabs comprise 75–80% of Iraq's population. Kurds are the second largest ethnic group, comprising roughly 15–20% of the total population. Turkmen, Assyrians, Armenians, and various other groups make up about 5% of Iraq's population.<sup>232</sup>



© Saudi Aramco World / PADIA/Dana Smilie  
Iraqi boy

Sunni and Shi'a Muslims create the Arab majority in Iraq. Aside from the historical tensions between these two groups, they are ethnically and linguistically very similar. The Kurds are an entirely different ethnic group, situated primarily in the northeastern mountains of Iraq, known as Kurdistan.<sup>233</sup> The Kurds in Iraqi-Kurdistan share a contiguous area with Kurds from other regions, especially those in Turkey. The Kurds are predominately Sunni Muslim. Apart from the Arab and Kurdish segments of Iraq's population, there are various smaller groups comprised of Turks, Turkmen, and Assyrians in the northern parts of the country. In southern Iraq, an original population of perhaps 500,000 *Ma'dan*, or Marsh Arabs, has declined. This decline is a result of damming the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, which reduced the flow of water to the marshes where the *Ma'dan* lived. For 5,000 years, the Marsh Arabs have lived in southern Iraq on islands that were either natural or man-made. They subsisted on fishing and raising water buffalo, lived in reed houses, and traveled in reed boats.<sup>234</sup> Finally, a group called the Lur live in the area close to the Iranian border. In addition, a small population of Armenians reside mostly in Baghdad and the northern parts of the country.<sup>235</sup>

The official language in Iraq is Arabic, spoken by about 75% of the population. Due to differences among some of the major dialects, communication between Arabs from nearby Arabic-speaking countries can be difficult. Modern Standard Arabic is the language of instruction in schools, and most people understand it. Kurdistan, in the northern part of Iraq, has Kurdish as its official language, spoken by about 20% of that

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<sup>231</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Iraq, Ethnic Groups." 25 January 2008.  
<http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-22936>

<sup>232</sup> Central Intelligence Agency. CIA World Factbook. "Iraq." 13 December 2007.  
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/print/iz.html>

<sup>233</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Iraq, Ethnic Groups." 25 January 2008.  
<http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-22936>

<sup>234</sup> The Guardian. Radford, Tim. "Marsh Arab Civilisation Disappearing as Iraqi Wetlands are Drained." 19 May 2001. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,3604,492986,00.html>

<sup>235</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Iraq, Ethnic Groups." 25 January 2008.  
<http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-22936>

population.<sup>236</sup> Kurdish, an Indo-European language somewhat like Persian, has two dialects: Kurmanji and Pahlawani. Kurmanji is spoken by roughly 75% of Kurds today.<sup>237</sup> From the various other ethnic groups come languages such as Turkish, Turkmen, Azerbaijanian, and Syriac. Persian was once widely spoken, but this is no longer the case. Commerce in Iraq is conducted primarily in English.

## Social Customs

Iraqis do not have the same notion of “personal space” as Americans do; this is especially true in public situations, one-on-one conversations, and private meetings. In addition, for Iraqis it is considered rude to step back or lean away from them during a conversation. Iraqis of the same gender also tend to touch each other as they talk and may walk holding hands or kiss when greeting.



© James Gordon  
Dinner party

Frequently, conversations are emotionally charged and exhibit many gestures. However, this does not apply to women. One should be especially mindful not to stand too close to, stare at, or touch Iraqi women.<sup>238, 239</sup>

When discussing business matters or issues of some importance, it is customary to acknowledge each person by greeting all men involved in the meeting by shaking their hands. It is also important to neither grip too firmly nor too passively. Furthermore, patience and time are customarily required. At the start of a business meeting or important discussion, Iraqis partake of refreshments and casual conversation. It is during this initial contact that trust and respect are established.<sup>240</sup>

Smoking and drinking tea are favorite pastimes for Iraqis, although smoking is more prevalent among males. American coffee is less dominant in Iraqi society even though it is widely available in cafés and restaurants—mostly in the form of instant coffee (referred to as *Nescafé*). Arabic coffee is considered the norm in the Iraqi countryside and is usually served in small cups. Custom dictates shaking the cup slightly once a person has had enough; otherwise the cup will continue to be refilled. In rural areas, Arabic coffee denotes generosity and serving it is a matter of tribal pride. Refusing to drink the coffee when it is offered could be mistaken for unfriendliness on the part of the guest. Again, this is more the case in Iraq’s rural areas and tribal settings.

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<sup>236</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Iraq, Ethnic Groups.” 25 January 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-22936>

<sup>237</sup> *The Kurds: A Concise Handbook*. Mehrdad R. Izady. “Chapter 6. Language, Literature, and Press [pp. 167, 172].” 1992. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

<sup>238</sup> Marine Corps Intelligence Activity. “Iraq Culture Smart Card.” 20 February 2005.

<http://cryptome.org/iraq-culture.htm>

<sup>239</sup> My Arabic Story.org. “My Iraqi Culture.” No date.

[http://www.myarabicstory.org/IRAQ/iraqi\\_culture.htm](http://www.myarabicstory.org/IRAQ/iraqi_culture.htm)

<sup>240</sup> Marine Corps Intelligence Activity. “Iraq Culture Smart Card.” 20 February 2005.

<http://cryptome.org/iraq-culture.htm>

While sitting, it is offensive to Iraqis for guests to show the soles of their shoes. Furthermore, the right hand is always used for eating and greeting people. The left hand is still reserved for the “untidy” duties of life.

## Cuisine

Arab food takes its origins from nomadic food, which is easily transported, herded and stored. For example, Arab food consists of lamb, goat, and beef, along with various grains and nuts.<sup>241</sup> Iraq borrows much of its cooking style from its regional neighbors, especially Turkey and Iran.

When preparing meats, Iraqis waste very little. They use almost everything including the kidneys, liver, brain, feet, eyes, and ears. For example, *pacha* is made from sheep’s head, stomach, feet, and various other parts slowly cooked together in a broth. Mutton, lamb, goat, beef, or poultry are the preferred meats in Iraq. Iraqis strictly avoid eating pork products. *Turshi*, a side dish, is made with different types of pickled vegetables.<sup>242</sup> *Dolma* is a favorite food made of ground meat, usually lamb, mixed with rice and chopped peppers and then wrapped in a grape leaf.

Two varieties of rice are generally eaten: amber rice in northern Iraq, and a variety called *neggaza* in the south. Main course dishes include *quzi*, lamb that has been roasted and stuffed; *kebab*, skewered chunks of meat grilled over a flame; and *kubba*, minced meat in a mixture of spices, raisins, and nuts. Other popular dishes include *masgouf*, specially prepared fish from the Tigris river; and tripe, a dish prepared from the lining of a cow’s stomach. Most meals are served with flat bread called *samoon*.



Courtesy of Wikimedia  
Kababi alborz

Various types of desserts, pastries, and candies are popular in Iraqi homes for snacks or for guests; Iraqis love desserts. One favorite treat is *shirini* or pumpkin pudding. Other desserts feature rice pudding, fruit, and Turkish Delight (*lokum*, a confection of starch and sugar, usually flavored with rosewater or lemon). A well-known dessert is *baklava*, a pastry made by layering honey, pistachios or walnuts, and rose water between thin sheets of phyllo dough. Unlike desserts served after the meal as is typical in the west, Iraqis serve only fruits for an after-meal dessert. Examples of Iraqi after-dinner desserts might be candied lemon, grapefruit, or *g'shur purtaghal*, which are orange peels.<sup>243</sup>

Coffee and tea are typically drunk before and after a meal, never during the meal. Iraqi coffee is prepared in a special way. The coffee is heated and then cooled nine times

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<sup>241</sup> Citizenship and Immigration Canada. Anti-Racism, Multiculturalism and Native Issues Centre, University of Toronto. “Eating the Iraqi Way.” 2002. <http://www.cp-pc.ca/english/iraq/eating.html>

<sup>242</sup> Food in Every Country. “Food in Iraq.” 2007. <http://www.foodbycountry.com/Germany-to-Japan/Iraq.html>

<sup>243</sup> Food in Every Country. “Food in Iraq.” 2007. <http://www.foodbycountry.com/Germany-to-Japan/Iraq.html>

before it is served and drunk. This technique, it is believed, removes any impurities. Tea is poured into small glasses and served sweetened, without milk. Soft drinks and fruit juices are common. At home, Iraqis make their own soft drinks from orange blossoms, rose petals, and fruits such as oranges, apricots, lemons, and pomegranates. Consumption of alcohol is officially forbidden to Muslims.<sup>244</sup>

### Traditional Dress

Typically, rural areas observe a more traditional style of dress than that seen in large cities. There is little distinction made among social classes based on clothing. Western-style clothing is becoming more pervasive, especially among the more educated.

Arab Iraqi men wear the *dishdasha*, a white, loose-fitting shirt that comes down to the ankles. They wear an *aba* during cooler weather. An *aba* resembles a long cloak and is tan or neutral in color. In addition, men wear the *Kaffiyeh*, a square scarf folded and placed over a white cap. A black rope or cord, called an *agal*, is used to secure the *kaffiyeh* to the head. For footwear, men wear sandals, and as with their western counterparts, Iraqi men also wear undershirts and trousers.<sup>245</sup>

Arab Iraqi women wear the *hijab*, which veils their hair and body to preserve their honor and modesty when out in public. This tradition also follows specific religious rules of Islam. Women veil themselves from head to foot to remain out of view from men who are not from their family. In this way, it is believed men will not fall victim to sexual temptation and unwanted advances. The *abayah*, which is a long black cloak, entirely covers the woman. Although, she may have a western-style dress underneath it, the dress is typically black (other colors may also be worn), long-sleeved, ankle-length. In addition, she will wear a black head scarf called an *asha*, a black chin scarf called a *foota*, and sandals. Jewelry such as ankle bracelets, earrings, and pendants may also be worn.<sup>246</sup>

### Gender Issues<sup>247</sup>

Prior to 2003, even Hussein's Iraq was known to have the most liberal Middle Eastern policies, toward women, who held key posts in business, education, and the public sector. Women's legal rights were protected by a statutory family law that has weakened as the central government disintegrated and tribalism strengthened. Despite various constitutional efforts to improve



© James Gordon  
Iraqi women with child

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<sup>244</sup> Food in Every Country. "Food in Iraq." 2007. <http://www.foodbycountry.com/Germany-to-Japan/Iraq.html>

<sup>245</sup> Book Rags. Encyclopedia of Modern Asia. "Traditional Clothing–Iraq." 2001–2006. <http://www.bookrags.com/research/clothing-traditionaliraq-ema-02/>

<sup>246</sup> Book Rags. Encyclopedia of Modern Asia. "Traditional Clothing–Iraq." 2001–2006. <http://www.bookrags.com/research/clothing-traditionaliraq-ema-02/>

<sup>247</sup> The Guardian. Lattimer, Mark. "Freedom Lost." 13 December 2007. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/Iraq/Story/0,,2226600,00.html>

women's status in society, after 2003, women's rights have deteriorated. Rape and abuse are endemic, and the murder rate of women has become "unprecedented." Much of the violence against women stems from the cultural tradition of "honor killings," which have increased in the last four years.

Accusations are frequently made against women about alleged adultery or relationships out of wedlock. Sexual interaction between unmarried people is forbidden in Islam, and therefore punishable by law. To restore family "honor" a woman's husband, brother, or even another relative will punish and kill the accused woman. Sometimes punishment may consist of burning parts of the woman's body. Khanim Rahim Latif, who manages the Kurdistan-based organization *Asuda*, which works with abused women, says, "Just here in Sulaimaniyah (Iraq Kurdistan), there were 400 cases of the burning of women last year [in 2006]."<sup>248</sup> In addition, women are often treated as second class citizens and many disputes may end with families or tribes paying a sum of money, or giving a gift of another woman.

In October 2007, the UN Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) stated their concern over the increasing number of alleged honor crimes in Iraqi Kurdistan. They confirmed that from 2003 through the first half of 2007, more than 1,000 cases of burnings occurred in Iraqi Kurdistan alone.

The future of women's rights in Iraq remains unclear. The passage of the new interim constitution, particularly Article 41, leaves many legal interpretations to their religious sects. Article 41, provides religious sects jurisdiction over laws concerning the family, such as marriage, divorce, custody, and inheritance. Though female parliamentarians have some influence the laws created, greater concern is for providing security and services not women's rights.<sup>249</sup> However, a constitutional review is expected to recommend amendments, further supported by women's groups seeking to have Article 41 of the constitution removed.

## Arts

The arts have long been an important feature in Iraq; this was true during the 1950s and 1960s under General Qasim and even during the Hussein era. In the post-Saddam world, the importance of the arts continues, including many western arts such as ballet, theater, and modern art.<sup>250</sup> However, this western influence runs parallel to traditionally recognized Middle Eastern art forms. Today, poetry stands out as an art form of great significance to Iraqis. Poets such as



Courtesy of Wikimedia  
Human-headed winged bull

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<sup>248</sup> The Guardian. Lattimer, Mark. "Freedom Lost." 13 December 2007.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/Iraq/Story/0,,2226600,00.html>

<sup>249</sup> Women's eNews. Soquel, Dominique. "Iraqi Reporters Run Risks to Cover Women's Angle." 1 November 2007. <http://www.womensenews.org/article.cfm/dyn/aid/3369>

<sup>250</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Iraq: Cultural Life—The Arts." 25 January 2008.

<http://www.britannica.com/bps/topic/293631/Iraq#tab=active~checked Citems~checked E Fbps Ftopic F293631 FIraq&title=Iraq> – Britannica Online Encyclopedia

Muammad Mahdi al-Jawahiri, Nazik al-Malaika (one of the Arab world's most prominent woman poets), Badr Shakir al-Sayyab, and Abd al-Wahhab al-Bayati, are well established poets throughout the Arabic-speaking world.<sup>251</sup>

Painting and sculpture from Iraq rank high in the Middle East and the world, with internationally acclaimed artists in this field such as Ismail Fatta Turk, Khalid al-Raal, and Muammad Ghani. Moreover, the current Ministry of Culture and Information has made efforts to preserve Iraqi arts and crafts that reflect its traditions. World-renowned Iraqi traditions include leatherworking, copper working, and carpet making.<sup>252</sup>

As noted, the earlier Iraqi regimes, most notably that of the Ba'ath Party, supported the arts. Much of the momentum for developing the arts came from the regime's goal of creating a national identity that embodied the territorial origins of Iraqis. In fact, during the Ba'ath Party regime a government mandate supported the growth and success of the arts—among whose representatives included playwrights, novelists, film producers, poets, and sculptors.

The government, during Saddam Hussein's rule, supported the arts in order to emphasize the link between modern Iraqis and the people and civilizations of Mesopotamian antiquity. Every regime saw the construction of archaeological museums, and the introduction of festivals representing the variety of territorial culture, with the Babylon International Festival being the most noteworthy. However, the cultural renaissance also included an infusion of pervasive images, statues, photos, and portraits depicting Hussein himself.<sup>253</sup>

## Sports and Recreation

1948 is a noteworthy year in Iraqi sports, with the formation of the Iraqi National Olympic Committee (INOC) and Iraq's first participation in the Olympics, held in London that year. Iraq received its first Olympic medal in the 1960 Summer Olympics, winning in the category of weight lifting. Iraq has consistently



© Daniel Bryant  
Iraq playing Australia

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<sup>251</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Iraq: Cultural Life—The Arts." 25 January 2008.  
<http://www.britannica.com/bps/topic/293631/Iraq#tab=active~checked Citems~checked E Fbps Ftopic F293631 FIraq&title=Iraq – Britannica Online Encyclopedia>

<sup>252</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Iraq: Cultural Life—The Arts." 25 January 2008.  
<http://www.britannica.com/bps/topic/293631/Iraq#tab=active~checked Citems~checked E Fbps Ftopic F293631 FIraq&title=Iraq – Britannica Online Encyclopedia>

<sup>253</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Iraq: Cultural Life—The Arts." 25 January 2008.  
<http://www.britannica.com/bps/topic/293631/Iraq#tab=active~checked Citems~checked E Fbps Ftopic F293631 FIraq&title=Iraq – Britannica Online Encyclopedia>

participated in the Summer Games, after missing the 1972 and 1976 Games.<sup>254</sup>

Football, or what is commonly referred to in the west as soccer, is almost an obsession in the Arab Middle East. Iraq is no exception. During the war years of the 1980–1988 war with Iran, soccer provided an outlet for Iraqis. Al-Shab (“People’s”) Stadium served as the epicenter of Iraqi soccer, filling to capacity. Huge crowds surrounded its immediate perimeter to listen to the game and the roaring of the crowds who made it inside.<sup>255</sup>

In recent years, soccer has put Iraq in the limelight, despite the turmoil that seems to define the country since the ousting of Hussein. The national football team made it to the Asian Cup finals in 2006, a first for them in over 20 years. And in 2007, Iraq won the title against strong odds. While Saddam Hussein was in power, his son Uday chaired the INOC and was the president of the Iraqi Football Federation. He was known for the torture and murder of Iraqi athletes who “embarrassed” Iraq by failing to win in competition.<sup>256, 257</sup>

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<sup>254</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Iraq: Cultural Life–Sports and Recreation.” 25 January 2008.  
[http://www.britannica.com/bps/topic/293631/Iraq#tab=active~checked\\_Citems~checked\\_E\\_Fbps\\_Ftopic\\_F293631\\_FIraq&title=Iraq](http://www.britannica.com/bps/topic/293631/Iraq#tab=active~checked_Citems~checked_E_Fbps_Ftopic_F293631_FIraq&title=Iraq) – Britannica Online Encyclopedia

<sup>255</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Iraq: Cultural Life–Sports and Recreation.” 25 January 2008.  
[http://www.britannica.com/bps/topic/293631/Iraq#tab=active~checked\\_Citems~checked\\_E\\_Fbps\\_Ftopic\\_F293631\\_FIraq&title=Iraq](http://www.britannica.com/bps/topic/293631/Iraq#tab=active~checked_Citems~checked_E_Fbps_Ftopic_F293631_FIraq&title=Iraq) – Britannica Online Encyclopedia

<sup>256</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Iraq: Cultural Life–Sports and Recreation.” 25 January 2008.  
[http://www.britannica.com/bps/topic/293631/Iraq#tab=active~checked\\_Citems~checked\\_E\\_Fbps\\_Ftopic\\_F293631\\_FIraq&title=Iraq](http://www.britannica.com/bps/topic/293631/Iraq#tab=active~checked_Citems~checked_E_Fbps_Ftopic_F293631_FIraq&title=Iraq) – Britannica Online Encyclopedia

<sup>257</sup> Sports Illustrated.com. Yaeger, Don. “Son of Saddam.” 24 March 2003.  
[http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/si\\_online/news/2003/03/24/son\\_of\\_saddam/](http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/si_online/news/2003/03/24/son_of_saddam/)

## National Security

### Military and Police Structure

The armed forces of Iraq were disbanded by the Coalition Provisional Authority in May 2003. Since August 2003, the Multi-National Security Transition Command—Iraq (MNSTC-I) has been working with the Iraqi Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Interior to recruit, train, and deploy forces for the new Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). The ISF consists of both military and police forces.



Courtesy of Wikimedia  
Iraqi soldiers

Most of the Iraqi military forces, under the administration of the Ministry of Defense, are army units; the total number of operational Iraqi army personnel was 164,000 as of November 2007. An additional 2,000 Iraqi military members are deployed in Navy or Air Force units.<sup>258</sup>

The Ministry of Interior oversees all police units. These include both local police, organized as the Iraqi Police Service (135,000 members trained and equipped as of November 2007), and the National Police (26,000 members).<sup>259</sup> The latter group is a paramilitary organization that, to date, has been mostly dealing with security threats and performing counter-terrorism tasks. Thus, their operational purview has fallen between those of the army and the local police forces.

Reports in 2005 and beyond about sectarian attacks that were tolerated or even aided by National Police officers led to significant public distrust of these units, especially among Sunnis.<sup>260, 261</sup> In the fall of 2006, a three-phased program known as “Quick Look” was initiated to assess and retrain the National Police units. One major component of the retraining is to focus on policing skills that clearly abide by the rule of law and respect for human rights.<sup>262, 263</sup> However, questions remain about militia-dominated police who continue to operate outside the law. According to the British Secretary of State for Defense, civilians and suspects in police custody are still being subjected to abuse and torture, sometimes to the point of death. One British Army officer has asked the UN to

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<sup>258</sup> Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State. “Iraq Weekly Status Report: November 7, 2007 [p. 7].” 7 November 2007. <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/94911.pdf>

<sup>259</sup> Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State. “Iraq Weekly Status Report: November 7, 2007. [p. 7].” 7 November 2007. <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/94911.pdf>

<sup>260</sup> Time.com. Allbritton, Christopher. “Why Iraq’s Police are a Menace” 20 March 2006. <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1175055,00.html>

<sup>261</sup> U.S. Department of Defense. “Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq [p. 35].” 16 December 2006. <http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/pdfs/9010Quarterly-Report-20061216.pdf>

<sup>262</sup> GlobalSecurity.org. American Forces Press Service. Wood, Sgt. Sara. “Iraqi Peace Plans Give Citizens Responsibility, General Says.” 4 October 2006.

<http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/news/iraq/2006/10/iraq-061004-afps01.htm>

<sup>263</sup> Operation Iraqi Freedom. Civilian Police Assistance Training Program Public Affairs. Bertucci, Ann. “Iraqi National Police Unveil ‘Quick Look’.” 27 August 2006. [http://www.mnf-iraq.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=2439&Itemid=41](http://www.mnf-iraq.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2439&Itemid=41)

conduct an immediate investigation into police torture.<sup>264</sup> The Iraqi government claims it is going forward in its plans to retrain police forces and reprimand or fire them when necessary for violations in conduct. One difficulty lies in identifying those who are members of criminal gangs or sectarian militias.<sup>265</sup>

## U.S.–Iraq Relations

The United States has been working extensively with the current and previous interim Iraqi governments to establish a secure, constitutional government that respects the rights of all citizens. Common goals also try to ensure that Iraq’s security forces are capable of maintaining order and can effectively combat any actions planned by terrorist groups.<sup>266</sup> The challenges in achieving these goals have been widely reported. Impatience with the slow pace of transformation to a stable and secure Iraq has led to political concerns and pressures in both the United States and Iraq.



Courtesy of Wikimedia  
Iraqi Prime Minister Maliki and President Bush

The United States has invested in the revitalization of the Iraqi infrastructure and economy, particularly through the Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund. Funding for these large projects continues, although at a lesser amount than in earlier years following the 2003 invasion. More recently, the United States, besides continuing to work with the central government, has employed a grassroots approach to reconstruction through means of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). These groups, spread around the country’s 18 provinces, work with local government to address security, infrastructure, and economic concerns.<sup>267</sup>

Militarily, the U.S. has bolstered its forces within Baghdad. It has employed a security framework system that has divided the city into 10 security districts in which Iraqi brigades are partnered with U.S. battalions. Besides the obvious goal of establishing a secure environment in the nation’s capital, a primary focus of these military efforts has been to increase the ability of Iraqi troops to counter insurgency attacks.<sup>268</sup>

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<sup>264</sup> The Independent. Elliott, Francis and Raymond Whitaker, Kim Sengupta. “British-Trained Police in Iraq ‘Killed Prisoners with Drills.’” 20 December 2007.

[http://news.independent.co.uk/world/middle\\_east/article328214.ece](http://news.independent.co.uk/world/middle_east/article328214.ece)

<sup>265</sup> Jurist. University of Pittsburgh School of Law. Paper Chase Newsburst. Ossanova, Katerina. “Over 50 Iraqi Police Charged with Corruption and Abuse.” 7 November 2006.

<http://jurist.law.pitt.edu/paperchase/2006/11/over-50-iraqi-police-charged-with.php>

<sup>266</sup> Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State. “Background Note: Iraq.” June 2007.

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/6804.htm>

<sup>267</sup> Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State. Crocker, Ambassador Ryan. “Iraq: An Update from the Field.” 19 July 2007. <http://www.state.gov/p/nea/rls/rm/2007/88706.htm>

<sup>268</sup> U.S. Department of Defense. “Report to Congress [p. 4].” April 2007.

<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/84031.pdf>

The views within the Iraqi government are somewhat mixed concerning an extended U.S. military presence in Iraq. On one hand, the Iraqi government has asked U.S. troops to remain in Iraq after the UN mandate ends in late 2008. The extended U.S. presence would be in line with ongoing negotiations between both countries. Also, the Kurdish Deputy Prime Minister has advocated for ongoing presence of U.S. forces in Iraq to protect Kurdish interests. However, some within the Iraqi government are opposed to any long-term presence. The National Security Advisor of Iraq, Mowaffaq al-Rabaie, recently stated that he disagrees with the idea of a long term or permanent foreign military presence in Iraq.<sup>269</sup>

## Relations with Neighboring Countries

### *Iran*

Like Iraq, Iran is a country with a Shi'a-majority population. Relations between the two countries were mostly adversarial when Iraq was controlled by the Sunni Ba'athist Party of Saddam Hussein. In the 1980s, they were at war with each other for eight years. Times have changed, however. Ever since the Shi'a-dominated democratically elected government has taken power in Baghdad, there has been much suspicion and debate about the influence of Iran in the affairs of both the Iraqi government and the Shi'a militias. The United States government and military leaders have accused Iran of supporting militia activities in Iraq through means of weapons shipments and training.<sup>270</sup><sup>271</sup> These accusations have frequently focused on the Quds Force, a unit of Iran's Revolutionary Guards involved in military training and support for international revolutionary and terrorist movements.<sup>272</sup> For its part, Iran has denied these charges, insisting that their interest is in working with the Iraqi government in "strengthening security, peace, and brotherhood in Iraq."<sup>273</sup>



© Hamed Saber  
Natanz Nuclear Facility, Iran

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<sup>269</sup> Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Iraq Weekly Status Report: December 12, 2007." 12 December 2007. <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/97576.pdf>

<sup>270</sup> Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. "Iran Training Iraqi Insurgent Groups, General Says." 3 July 2007. <http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2007&m=July&x=20070703102256dmslahrellek0.3060114>

<sup>271</sup> Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Shelby, David. "Iran Should Reconcile Actions With Talk, U.S. Iraq Envoy Says." 24 July 2007. <http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2007&m=July&x=20070724113305ndyblehs0.2337915>

<sup>272</sup> New York Times. Glanz, James and Sabrina Tavernise. "U.S. is Holding Iranians Seized in Iraq." 25 December 2006. <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/25/world/middleeast/25iraq.html?ei=5090&en=d7bbb4578e61b6da&ex=1324702800&pagewanted=print>

<sup>273</sup> Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Esfandiari, Golnaz. "Iran: Ahmadinejad Declares Ties With Iraq 'Excellent'." 12 September 2006. <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2006/09/e10dfd4e-ceee-4934-a96e-38dd2813f25f.html>

Certainly there are numerous Iraqi government officials with ties to Iran. Several of the present-day government leaders, including Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, lived in exile in Iran during the reign of Saddam Hussein.<sup>274</sup> As Iran and Iraq have become politically closer, the result has been a complicated trilateral relationship between the two countries and the United States. In the past the United States has declared Iran to be a “rogue state” because of evidence believed to point toward Iran’s pursuit of weapons of mass destruction.<sup>275</sup> Despite these charges, as well as the more recent claims of Iran’s support for Iraqi militias, the United States agreed in July 2007 to cooperate with Iran by means of a joint committee on Iraqi security.<sup>276</sup> The U.S. government also recently gave some ground on its charges that Iran has been pursuing a nuclear weapons program. In November 2007, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence submitted its National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) debunking the assertion that Iran was building nuclear weapons. Charged with not only assessing Iran’s current nuclear program, the NIE also projects its development for the next ten years. Its report reached a conclusion that although Iran is continuing to enrich uranium, it discontinued its nuclear weapons program in 2003.<sup>277</sup>

### *Syria*

Syrian and Iraqi diplomatic ties were severed in 1982 during the Iran–Iraq war (during which Syria supported Iran). Relations were not restored until nearly 25 years later, in November 2006.<sup>278</sup> Since the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, the key point of division between Syria and Iraq has been the perception by Iraq as well as the U.S. that Syria was turning a “blind eye” to the infiltration of insurgents and arms across its border into Iraq. Syria has denied any such policy, and instead has claimed that the long isolated border between the two countries was impossible to fully police without assistance. Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad has likened the border enforcement issue to that between the U.S. and Mexico.<sup>279</sup>



© Catholic Relief Services  
Iraqi refugees in Syria

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<sup>274</sup> Voice of America. VOA News. “Iranian Officials Pledge to Help Boost Iraq’s Security.” 9 August 2007. <http://www.voanews.com/english/2007-08-09-voa22.cfm>

<sup>275</sup> Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security, U.S. Department of State. Bolton, John R. “Iran’s Continuing Pursuit of Weapons of Mass Destruction.” 24 June 2004. <http://64.233.169.104/search?q=cache:wtCeKyBQioEJ:www.state.gov/t/us/rm/33909.htm+Iran+rogue+state+State+Department&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=8&gl=us>

<sup>276</sup> Boston Globe. Stockman, Farah. “U.S., Iran Will Cooperate on Iraqi Security.” 25 July 2007. [http://www.boston.com/news/world/articles/2007/07/25/us\\_iran\\_will\\_cooperate\\_on\\_iraqi\\_security/](http://www.boston.com/news/world/articles/2007/07/25/us_iran_will_cooperate_on_iraqi_security/)

<sup>277</sup> Office of the Director of National Intelligence. “Iran: Nuclear Intentions and Capabilities.” November 2007. [http://media.npr.org/documents/2007/dec/nie\\_iran.pdf](http://media.npr.org/documents/2007/dec/nie_iran.pdf)

<sup>278</sup> BBC News, International Version. “Iraq and Syria Restore Relations.” 21 November 2006. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/6167968.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/6167968.stm)

<sup>279</sup> CNN.com. “Syrian Leader Denies Role in Lebanon Death.” 12 October 2005. <http://www.cnn.com/2005/WORLD/meast/10/12/assad.interview/index.html>

The improvement in relations between the two countries has led to the restoration of diplomatic ties and agreements to cooperate on security issues. Since then, cross-border infiltration from Syria to Iraq has decreased according to Iraqi Army Chief of Staff Babakir Zebari.<sup>280, 281</sup> Even with decreased infiltration, however, the National Intelligence Estimate on Iraq does not forecast a significant drop in Iraqi violence. This is because Iraq's sectarian dynamics are seen as primarily driven by forces within the country rather than by external sources.

Another cross-border issue between Iraq and Syria is the large number of Iraqi refugees who have moved to Syria to escape sectarian violence and insurgent activity. Current estimates find 1.2–1.4 million Iraqi refugees in Syria, with nearly 40,000 new refugees arriving monthly. Not surprisingly, the large influx of Iraqis into Syria has severely strained Syria's infrastructure and capacity to absorb them. The UN High Commission for Refugees has recently warned that refugee camps may soon need to be built within Syria and other neighboring countries of Iraq in order to accommodate this continuing stream of refugees.<sup>282</sup>

### *Jordan*

Jordan's shared border is the shortest of any of Iraq's neighbors. It is also the most remote from population centers within Iraq. Nonetheless, Jordan has arguably felt the impact of Iraqi refugees more than any other neighboring country, with an estimated 800,000–1,000,000 Iraqis now living in Jordan, a country with a population of only 5.9 million.<sup>283</sup> The majority of these refugees have been Sunni Arabs. As a consequence of the refugee influx, similar infrastructure strains as those being felt in Syria have developed in Jordan. In addition, Jordan has also long hosted a large Palestinian refugee population. Thus the country finds itself sandwiched between two areas in which radical Islamism (in the form of Hamas in the Palestinian region and Al Qaeda in Iraq) potentially threatens the moderate pro-Western Jordanian government.



A terrorist bombing by a Jordanian in Hilla, Iraq, which killed more than 120 Iraqis, led to a months-long rift between the two countries. As a result of the bombing, Iraqi leaders claimed that Jordan was importing terrorists to Iraq.<sup>284</sup> Later that year, three Iraqi suicide

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<sup>280</sup> VOA News. Yeranian, Edward. "Iraq Prime Minister Holds High-Level Talks in Syria." 21 August 2007. <http://voanews.com/english/2007-08-21-voa15.cfm>

<sup>281</sup> GulfNews.com. Adas, Basil. "Al Maliki Keen on Syrian Help." 20 August 2007. <http://www.gulfnews.com/region/Iraq/10148108.html>

<sup>282</sup> United States Institute of Peace. Yacoubian, Mona. "Syria's Relations with Iraq." April 2007. [http://www.usip.org/pubs/usipeace\\_briefings/2007/syria\\_iraq.pdf](http://www.usip.org/pubs/usipeace_briefings/2007/syria_iraq.pdf)

<sup>283</sup> United States Institute of Peace. Lasensky, Scott. "Jordan and Iraq: Between Cooperation and Crisis." December 2006. <http://www.usip.org/pubs/specialreports/sr178.pdf>

<sup>284</sup> United States Institute of Peace. Lasensky, Scott. "Jordan and Iraq: Between Cooperation and Crisis [p. 14]." December 2006. <http://www.usip.org/pubs/specialreports/sr178.pdf>

bombers struck hotels in Amman, Jordan, killing 60 people. The attack was later tied to Al Qaeda in Iraq, a group that at the time was led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who himself was a Jordanian.

The current instability in Iraq has affected Jordan economically. Most notably, it has ended below-market-price oil deals between the two countries that helped sustain the Jordanian economy during the 1990s and early 2000s. Since 2003, with the end of cheap Iraqi oil, Jordan has been able to secure short-term concessionary oil deals with other Arab states to avoid an economic crisis. However, oil-poor Jordan still finds itself wondering whether or not it will ever be able to reclaim anywhere near the type of Iraqi assistance with its energy needs that it received during the last decade or so of the Hussein regime. Former Jordanian Foreign Minister Marwan Muasher has stated his belief that high economic growth fueled by the subsidized oil deals is not sustainable. He claims that Jordan must “move to a situation where we can do it on our own.”<sup>285</sup>

### *Saudi Arabia*

Saudi Arabia, Iraq’s oil-rich neighbor to the south, is predominantly Sunni Arab but has a significant Shi’a minority in its Eastern Province. It is very concerned about Iraq’s stability. The kingdom’s longest and most porous international border is with Iraq, and continuing disorder there could facilitate an influx of terrorist elements into Saudi Arabia. Conversely, Iraq remains concerned about the infiltration of Saudi jihadists into their country.<sup>286</sup> While exact statistics are unavailable, based on reports on jihadist Web sites, it is believed that the highest percentage of suicide bombers in Iraq come from Saudi Arabia.<sup>287</sup> Because of these threats to both countries from terrorist elements, Saudi Arabia has announced plans to construct a high-tech fence along the Iraqi–Saudi Arabian border. It is estimated that it will take six years to complete construction.<sup>288</sup>



© Jen Rawlinson  
Oil plant, Saudi Arabia

A further Saudi concern is tied to Iraqi stability. The Saudis see the threat of increasing Sunni–Shi’a sectarian tensions and are keenly aware that this contributes to regional instability. Saudi Arabia’s foreign policy is broadly focused on maintaining a balance of power within the region. The threat of a Shi’a-dominated federation of Iran and Iraq or, worst case, the collapse of the Iraqi government followed by a violent civil war could place the Saudis in a difficult position. If either scenario were to occur, it would create

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<sup>285</sup> United States Institute of Peace. Lasensky, Scott. “Jordan and Iraq: Between Cooperation and Crisis [p. 14].” December 2006. <http://www.usip.org/pubs/specialreports/sr178.pdf>

<sup>286</sup> Washington Post. Glasser, Susan B. “‘Martyrs’ in Iraq Mostly Saudis.” 15 May 2005. [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/05/14/AR2005051401270\\_2.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/05/14/AR2005051401270_2.html)

<sup>287</sup> United States Institute of Peace. McMillan, Joseph. “Saudi Arabia and Iraq: Oil, Religion, and an Enduring Rivalry [p. 3].” January 2006. <http://www.usip.org/pubs/specialreports/sr157.pdf>

<sup>288</sup> Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. “Iraq: Saudi Arabia to Seal off Border with Security Fence.” 15 November 2006. <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2006/11/8E37A93B-4AB0-461A-AE68-E397ACA32F3F.html>

great pressure on the kingdom's leaders to take some sort of role to support Sunni groups.<sup>289</sup>

Any discussion of relations between Iraq and Saudi Arabia ultimately gets around to the topic of oil. Saudi Arabia, by virtue of its immense oil reserves, is the country best able to affect world oil prices by increasing or decreasing production. Iraq, which has major oil reserves itself, is significantly affected by these price swings. For example, since the U.S.-led invasion in 2003, Iraq's oil production has been well below pre-2003 levels because of insurgent sabotage and damage to its oil infrastructure.<sup>290</sup> Nonetheless, Iraq's oil export income has shown large increases as world prices have spiked. When Iraq's security situation eventually stabilizes, it will be able to focus on expanding its production capacity. It will probably need the cooperation of Saudi Arabia to help keep prices high during the investment phase of expansion.<sup>291</sup>

### *Kuwait*

Kuwaiti rulers have long been wary of Iraq, with good reason. In 1938, shortly after the discovery of oil in Kuwait, and also in 1961 and 1990, Iraq has asserted territorial claims on Kuwait.<sup>292</sup> Iraq has long based these claims on the Ottoman Empire's brief and tenuous sovereignty over Kuwait during the late 19th century.<sup>293</sup>

Besides the Kuwaiti oil fields, a major motivation in Iraq's claims on Kuwait has been improved access to Persian Gulf waters. Iraq's major cargo port, Umm Basr, is located along a narrow inlet that lies along Kuwait's northern border.



© Javier Blas  
Burgan oil field, Kuwait

In 1990, the Hussein regime acted out on these territorial claims, seizing and annexing Kuwait. Several months later, coalition forces subsequently restored Kuwaiti independence during the Gulf War. During the Iraqi retreat from Kuwait, many of Kuwait's oil wells were destroyed by Saddam Hussein's forces, creating a devastating environmental disaster.

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<sup>289</sup> Center for Contemporary Conflict, Naval Postgraduate School. *Strategic Insights*, Vol. VI (2). Gause, F. Gregory III. "Saudi Arabia: Iraq, Iran, the Regional Power Balance, and the Sectarian Question." March 2007. <http://www.ccc.nps.navy.mil/si/2007/Mar/gauseMar07.pdf>

<sup>290</sup> Energy Information Administration. *International Petroleum Monthly*. "Petroleum (Oil) Production Annually (Table 4.1b)." 7 August 2007. <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/ipsr/supply.html>

<sup>291</sup> United States Institute of Peace. McMillan, Joseph. "Saudi Arabia and Iraq: Oil, Religion, and an Enduring Rivalry [pp. 6, 7]." January 2006. <http://www.usip.org/pubs/specialreports/sr157.pdf>

<sup>292</sup> United States Institute of Peace. Alterman, Jon B. "Iraq and the Gulf States: The Balance of Fear [p. 4]." August 2007. <http://www.usip.org/pubs/specialreports/sr189.pdf>

<sup>293</sup> Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *Country Studies: Kuwait*. Tartter, Jean R. "Chapter 7: Regional and National Security Considerations: Territorial Disputes." January 1993. [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstody:@field\(DOCID+kw0053\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstody:@field(DOCID+kw0053))

Not surprisingly, Kuwait was keen to see the Hussein regime go. The Kuwaiti government has provided significant support for the U.S.-led military invasion in 2003 and the subsequent Iraqi reconstruction projects. New fears have emerged within Kuwait more recently, however, about the overall security situation within Iraq and the possibility for “spillover” unrest spreading across Kuwait’s border.<sup>294</sup> Kuwait, predominantly Sunni but with a Shi’a minority of 15 to 30%, abuts Iraq’s southern regions, where Shi’a militias are waging battles for control of key cities such as Basrah.<sup>295</sup> The main overland transportation route from Kuwait to Baghdad crosses the region around Basrah. This proximity has made coalition military leaders, whose troops use Kuwait as a staging ground, increasingly concerned about the rising amount of insurgent activity in the area.<sup>296</sup>

### *Turkey*

The relationship between Turkey and Iraq is focused on ethnic demographics. Turkey’s border with Iraq lies within a large region that is dominantly Kurdish. With a large Kurdish population in the eastern reaches of the country, Turkey is very interested in seeing Iraq strengthen and stay united. If Iraq were to fragment, Turkish officials fear that the emergence of an independent Kurdish state from the remains of northern Iraq would provide further impetus for a united Kurdistan within the Kurdish regions of Turkey.



© Smaque Emmanuel  
Kurdish refugees

Turkey’s fears over Kurdish separatism stem not only from demographics but also from the history of the region. Since the aftermath of the Gulf War, when Kurdish areas in Iraq became semi-autonomous under the protection of the U.S./U.K.-enforced no-fly zone, some Turkish Kurdish separatist groups have taken root in northern Iraq. Members of the most prominent of these groups, the Kurdistan Worker’s Party (PKK), have made cross-border attacks against Turkey. Angered, Turkey responded by threatening to invade Kurdish Iraq. Such action has the potential to destabilize the Kurdistan Regional Government, causing it to divide into factions.<sup>297, 298</sup> In mid December of 2007, this situation boiled over when Turkey targeted PKK militants and bombed areas in northern Iraq where they were believed to be established. The Turkish government also sent troops

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<sup>294</sup> United States Institute of Peace. Alterman, Jon B. “Iraq and the Gulf States: The Balance of Fear [p. 1].” August 2007. <http://www.usip.org/pubs/specialreports/sr189.pdf>

<sup>295</sup> The Christian Science Monitor. Murphy, Dan. “Iraqi Governor Killed as Inter-Shiite Competition Appears to Spread.” 21 August 2007. <http://www.csmonitor.com/2007/0820/p99s01-duts.html>

<sup>296</sup> The Sunday Telegraph. Shipman, Tim. “British Forces Useless in Basra, Say Officials.” 20 August 2007. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2007/08/19/wiraq119.xml>

<sup>297</sup> Power and Interest News Report (PINR). “Intelligence Brief: The Risk of Turkish Intervention in Northern Iraq.” 17 May 2007.

[http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view\\_report&report\\_id=651&language\\_id=1](http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view_report&report_id=651&language_id=1)

<sup>298</sup> Guardian Unlimited. Tran, Mark. “Turkey Urges US to Clamp Down on Kurdish Fighters.” 5 November 2007. [http://www.guardian.co.uk/The\\_Kurds/Story/0,,2205645,00.html](http://www.guardian.co.uk/The_Kurds/Story/0,,2205645,00.html)

over the border. Responding defiantly, the Iraqi foreign ministry harshly condemned the attacks.<sup>299</sup>

Another issue that divides Turkey and Iraq is the status of the ethnic Turkmen in northern Iraq. In particular, Iraqi Kurds and Turkmen vie for control of the city of Kirkuk, the center of the northern Iraqi oil fields. Some have speculated that Kirkuk could become one of the flash points for civil war if some sort of agreement between the two groups is not negotiated. Another flash point is with the minority Sunni Arab population of the city that moved to Kirkuk during the Hussein regime, who also need to be included in negotiations.<sup>300</sup>

Economic motivations also underlie Turkey's desire to see a secure and peaceful Iraq. An oil pipeline between the two countries has been frequently out of commission because of bombings. Before the Gulf War in 1991, this pipeline was responsible for generating half of Iraq's hard currency.<sup>301</sup> As a result of the continued inability to ship northern Iraq crude oil via the pipeline, the two countries tentatively negotiated in April 2007, a one-year deal. Under this agreement, oil tankers from southern Iraqi ports would transport northern Iraqi oil exports to Turkey.<sup>302</sup>



DoD Photo  
Pipeline repair

Water allotments, second only in importance to oil rights in the dry Middle East, is another issue that remains outstanding between Iraq and Turkey. The upstream portions of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers flow through Turkey, which is building a series of 22 dams along the rivers as part of the Southeastern Anatolia Project. Both Iraq and Syria have long expressed concerns over the effects of the project on their downstream flows, but continuing political divisions between the three countries have blocked attempts to negotiate a water-rights agreement.<sup>303</sup>

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<sup>299</sup> Voice of America.com. Bowman, Michael. "US Reacts Cautiously to Turkish Air Strikes in Iraq." 17 December 2007. <http://voanews.com/english/2007-12-17-voa62.cfm>

<sup>300</sup> Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Senanayake, Sumedha. "Iraq: Ethnic Tensions Increasing in Oil-Rich City." 2 November 2006. <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2006/11/304874c7-d3ff-471c-bfa3-087b0618c459.html>

<sup>301</sup> New York Times Archives. Reuters. "Turkey Rejects Iraq's Request to Reopen Vital Oil Pipeline." 14 June 1991. <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9D0CE5D81331F937A25755C0A967958260>

<sup>302</sup> United Press International. "Turkey, Iraq Strike Tentative Oil Deal." 25 April 2007. [http://www.upi.com/Energy/Briefing/2007/04/25/turkey\\_iraq\\_strike\\_tentative\\_oil\\_deal/](http://www.upi.com/Energy/Briefing/2007/04/25/turkey_iraq_strike_tentative_oil_deal/)

<sup>303</sup> The Fletcher School, Tufts University. *Al Nakhlah*. Akanda, Ali; and Sarah Freeman, Maria Placht. "The Tigris-Euphrates River Basin: Mediating a Path towards Regional Water Stability." Spring 2007. [http://fletcher.tufts.edu/al\\_nakhlah/archives/spring2007/placht-2.pdf](http://fletcher.tufts.edu/al_nakhlah/archives/spring2007/placht-2.pdf)

## The Kurdish Question

The Kurdish question has weighed heavily in the foreign policy of Turkey, Iraqi Kurdistan's northern neighbor, since the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923. Much of this is driven by the dispersion of the Kurds throughout several regional states. These regions include eastern Turkey, northeastern Iraq, a sizeable portion of northwestern Iran, and parts of north and northeastern Syria.<sup>304</sup> Since the period of 1925 to 1938, 16 Kurdish rebellions occurred with the intent



© James Gordon  
Kurdish shepherd

of fracturing the growing Turkish Republic. These rebellions served to rein in any ambitions of Kemal Ataturk, the founder of the Republic of Turkey, to make a land grab in Northern Iraq, especially in the oil-rich areas of Mosul and Kirkuk.<sup>305</sup> Today however, Turkey has yet to relinquish its claim and interest in regaining Kirkuk. Turkish leaders continue to assert the belief that Turkey was cheated by the West at the end of World War I.<sup>306</sup>

## Poverty

While reliable data is impossible to gather under current conditions in Iraq, it is no secret that rampant unemployment and inflation have increased poverty within the country. A report issued by the Iraqi Planning Ministry in early 2007 estimated the unemployment rate to be between 60 and 70%.<sup>307</sup> Unfortunately, many unemployed Iraqis have found their employment opportunities limited by a Catch-22 situation. As sectarian and insurgency attacks stunt economic opportunities in hotspots such as Baghdad, the jobless workers are more easily drawn into militant activities that further the bloody cycle of violence and insecurity.<sup>308</sup>

The increasing poverty rate among Iraqis is not just an internal problem either. It also imposes a problem on well-educated, professional Iraqis who have fled the country, often moving to nearby Syria and Jordan. These professionals have faced financial hardships as their money runs low and they are unable to secure non-menial employment because of their non-resident status.<sup>309</sup> The exodus of this class of workers also bodes poorly for the

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<sup>304</sup> *The Kurdish Movement: Its Origins and Development*. Wadie Jwaidhe. "Chapter 1/ Geographic, Historical, and Cultural Background [p. 3]." 2007. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.

<sup>305</sup> Brookings Institution. "Turkey's Kurdish Question," 6 April 2003, Washington, D.C., [http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2003/0406iraq\\_taspinar.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2003/0406iraq_taspinar.aspx)

<sup>306</sup> Asia Times, "Iraq's History Already Written," K Gajendra Singh. 15 July 2003. [http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle\\_East/EG15Ak01.html](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/EG15Ak01.html)

<sup>307</sup> Reuters Foundation. IRIN. "Iraq: Jobs Fair Aims to Reduce Unemployment, Insurgency." 10 July 2007. <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/IRIN/21ac2470e0a50a90a9fa0bf643be8207.htm>

<sup>308</sup> Boston.com. Associated Press. Salaheddin, Sinan. "Iraqis Grapple with High Unemployment." 10 July 2007. [http://www.boston.com/news/world/middleeast/articles/2007/07/10/iraqis\\_grapple\\_with\\_high\\_unemployment/](http://www.boston.com/news/world/middleeast/articles/2007/07/10/iraqis_grapple_with_high_unemployment/)

<sup>309</sup> International Herald Tribune. Tavernise, Sabrina. "Jordan Yields Poverty and Pain for the Well-Off Fleeing Iraq." 9 August 2007. <http://www.ihf.com/articles/2007/08/10/africa/10refugees.php>

future of Iraq. “The binding section of the population does not exist anymore,” states former Iraqi Prime Minister Ayad Allawi, himself now a resident of Jordan. “The middle class has left.”<sup>310</sup>

## Terrorist Groups

### *Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI)*

One infamous terrorist organization now operating in Iraq is Al Qaeda in Iraq (also known as AQI, Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, Islamic State of Iraq, and the Mujahidin Shura Council). Although much about the scope of its operations are unknown, many analysts consider it possibly the third or fourth most active group in an insurgency comprised of many groups. In terms of activity, AQI is ranked behind Shi’a militias, displaced Sunni resistance members from the Hussein regime, other native-born Sunnis who simply want a religion-based government, and criminal gangs.<sup>311</sup>

Al Qaeda in Iraq was founded by Jordanian Abu Muhab al-Zarqawi, a terrorist who spent much of the late 1990s and early 2000s in either Afghanistan or a Jordanian prison before moving his operations to northern Iraq sometime during 2002. Al-Zarqawi had some contacts with Osama bin Laden and other Al Qaeda operatives and may have been provided assistance while he was running a terrorist training camp in Afghanistan. Even so, his terrorist organization seems to have been mostly independent from Al Qaeda until 2004.<sup>312</sup>

Initially Zarqawi’s group focused on terrorist attacks aimed at destabilizing and ultimately overthrowing the Jordanian regime, but over time the group’s jihadist landscape broadened.<sup>313</sup> By October 2004, Zarqawi’s name had become synonymous with some of the most brutal insurgent attacks and kidnappings in Iraq. It was at this time that he pledged loyalty to Osama bin Laden and his group became formally associated with Al Qaeda.<sup>314</sup>

Zarqawi was killed by a U.S. bombing strike on 7 June 2006, and AQI is now led by Egyptian Abu Ayyub al-Masri (aka Abu Hamza al-Muhajir). While there have since been two reports of Masri’s



Courtesy of Wikimedia  
Al-Qaeda, Abu Ayyub Al-Masri

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<sup>310</sup> International Herald Tribune. Tavernise, Sabrina. “Jordan Yields Poverty and Pain for the Well-Off Fleeing Iraq.” 9 August 2007. <http://www.iht.com/articles/2007/08/10/africa/10refugees.php>

<sup>311</sup> Washington Monthly. Tilghman, Andrew. “The Myth of AQI.” July 2007. <http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/2007/0710.tilghman.html>

<sup>312</sup> The Jamestown Foundation. *Global Terrorism Analysis*, Vol. 2 (24). Gambill, Gary. “Abu Musab al-Zarqawi: A Biographical Sketch.” December 2004. <http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2369019>

<sup>313</sup> The Jamestown Foundation. *Global Terrorism Analysis*, Vol. 2 (24). Gambill, Gary. “Abu Musab al-Zarqawi: A Biographical Sketch.” December 2004. <http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2369019>

<sup>314</sup> The Jamestown Foundation. *Global Terrorism Analysis*. Vol. 2 (24). “Unraveling Zarqawi’s Al-Qaeda Connection.” 16 December 2004. <http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2369021>

death, no evidence has come forth to verify this claim. In November 2006, Masri declared allegiance to Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, purported leader of the Sunni Islamist group, Islamic State of Iraq (ISI). More recently, however, a captured AQI operative told military investigators that Baghdadi and the ISI were both fictional entities created to put an Iraqi front on what is mostly an organization made up of foreigners.<sup>315</sup>

The goal of AQI appears to be to instigate sectarian violence as a means to topple the present Iraqi government, ultimately leading to the establishment of an Islamic Caliphate in Iraq.<sup>316</sup> Sunnis, Shi'a, and Kurds have all been targets of AQI attacks.

### *Other Insurgent Organizations*

There are several other insurgent organizations operating within Iraq, many of which are jihadist and employ terrorist tactics. Several of these organizations, brutally violent in their own operations, have criticized AQI because of the indiscriminate nature of the AQI's attacks.<sup>317</sup>



DoD Photo  
Suspected insurgent is searched

*Ansar al-Sunnah* is a Sunni Arab and Kurdish Islamist terrorist group operating in Iraq that has pursued the same goal and many of the same terrorist tactics as AQI, although they are not affiliated with AQI.<sup>318</sup> They have been operating in Iraq since September 2003 and are thought to be an offshoot of the Kurdish Islamist group *Ansar Al-Islam*.<sup>319</sup>

Perhaps the largest insurgent organization in Iraq is the *Islamic Army of Iraq* (IAI). This purely Iraqi group primarily targets coalition and Iraqi forces, as well as Shi'a militias supported by Iran. The IAI claims to only target civilians who are working in support of the U.S., Iraqi, or Iranian governments. Like virtually all non-Kurdish terrorist organizations in Iraq, it seeks to establish a Sunni Islamic state in Iraq. Unlike most Iraqi terrorist organizations, however, the IAI supports negotiations with the U.S. if certain

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<sup>315</sup> Reuters. "Senior Qaeda Figure in Iraq a Myth: U.S. Military." 18 July 2007.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/topNews/idUSL1820065720070718?rpc=92&pageNumber=2>

<sup>316</sup> U.S. Department of Defense. "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq [p. 18]." 16 December 2006. <http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/pdfs/9010Quarterly-Report-20061216.pdf>

<sup>317</sup> Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Ridolfo, Kathleen. "Iraq: Al Qaeda Tactics Lead to Splits Among Insurgents." <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2007/4/CA95FAFC-1E70-450A-A4BF-9417B05CAA3C.html>

<sup>318</sup> WashingtonPost.com. Finer, Jonathan. "Iraq's Insurgents: Who's Who." 19 March 2006. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/03/17/AR2006031702087.html>

<sup>319</sup> The Jamestown Foundation. *Terrorism Monitor*, Vol. 3 (24). Khalil, Lydia. "The Transformation of Ansar al-Islam." 20 December 2005.

<http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2369855>

conditions are met.<sup>320</sup> The organization is considered more nationalistic than religious in its motivations.<sup>321</sup>

The *Mujahidin Army in Iraq* is a smaller Sunni jihadist group working to topple the current government and install an Islamic government in Iraq. Most of their attacks have been against U.S. or Iraqi military forces.<sup>322, 323</sup>

In the Kurdish areas of Iraq, *Kongra Gel* (aka Kurdistan Worker's Party) has been identified as a foreign terrorist group by the U.S. Government. The group primarily consists of Turkish Kurds but operates out of Iraq. Its goal is to establish an independent Kurdish state in southeastern Turkey and it has launched terrorist attacks within Turkey.<sup>324</sup>

Several Shi'a militias have carried out abductions, assassinations, and other acts of sectarian violence that are often associated with terrorism. The largest and best known of these militias are the *Mahdi Army*, associated with Islamic cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, and the *Badr Organization*, an Iranian-trained group that is the military arm of the Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council political party.<sup>325</sup>

## Security Issues

Virtually all parties agree that security must improve throughout Iraq before sectarian and ethnic reconciliation can take place. Indeed, the 21,500 additional U.S. troops deployed in Iraq in early 2007 were tasked to help stabilize the security situation within and around Baghdad. The focused purpose of this action was to give Iraqi political leaders the breathing space to address the outstanding political and social issues that continue to divide the country's population.<sup>326</sup>



Courtesy of Wikimedia  
Iraqi Army Division's military police

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<sup>320</sup> Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Kimmage, Daniel and Kathleen Ridolfo. "Iraqi Insurgent Media: The War of Ideas and Images [p. 41]." June 2007. <http://realaudio.rferl.org/online/OLPDFfiles/insurgent.pdf>

<sup>321</sup> WashingtonPost.com. Finer, Jonathan. "Iraq's Insurgents: Who's Who." 19 March 2006. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/03/17/AR2006031702087.html>

<sup>322</sup> Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Kimmage, Daniel and Kathleen Ridolfo. "Iraqi Insurgent Media: The War of Ideas and Images [p. 40]." June 2007. <http://realaudio.rferl.org/online/OLPDFfiles/insurgent.pdf>

<sup>323</sup> WashingtonPost.com. Finer, Jonathan. "Iraq's Insurgents: Who's Who." 19 March 2006. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/03/17/AR2006031702087.html>

<sup>324</sup> Office of the Coordinator for Counter-Terrorism, U.S. Department of State. "Country Reports on Terrorism: Chapter 6—Terrorist Organizations." April 2007. <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2006/82738.htm>

<sup>325</sup> Council on Foreign Relations. Beehner, Lionel. "Iraq: Militia Groups." 9 June 2005. <http://www.cfr.org/publication/8175/>

<sup>326</sup> Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Crawley, Vince. "U.S. General Cites Signs of Progress in Iraq." 20 March 2007. <http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2007&m=March&x=20070320164954MVyelwarC0.8219416>

The degree to which the troop “surge” has helped stabilize Baghdad and other areas remains to be determined. The August 2007 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) for Iraq cited evidence of “measurable but uneven improvements in Iraq’s security situation” since January 2007. The same report, however, also noted that “the level of overall violence, including attacks on and casualties among civilians, remains high... and to date, Iraqi political leaders remain unable to govern effectively.”<sup>327</sup>

Perhaps the most encouraging aspect of the August 2007 NIE assessment was its conclusion that Sunni Arab opposition to AQI was increasing. Neighborhood security groups in Sunni Arab areas have “proliferated in the past several months,” resulting in an erosion of “AQI’s operational presence and capabilities in some areas.”<sup>328</sup>

A crucial element in establishing security within Iraq is the development of the Iraqi armed forces. On this issue the NIE states that the “Iraqi Security Forces...have performed adequately, and some units have demonstrated increasing professional competence. However, we judge that the ISF have not improved enough to conduct major operations independent of the Coalition on a sustained basis in multiple locations.”<sup>329</sup>

Improvement in the capability and training of Iraq’s armed forces has generally been uneven. One recent success is the completion of a training program on 18 November, 2007, by a division of the Iraqi Army’s 3rd Brigade. It is the first division to complete this particular in-depth program, which “trains and equips entire units together.” Over the next five months, the Army expects to cycle four more brigades through the program.<sup>330</sup>



Courtesy of Wikimedia  
Iraqi army soldier

Addressing its future security needs, Iraq recently asked that the UN Security Council lengthen its mandate by one year over U.S. and multinational forces in Iraq. After the extension ends in late 2008, U.S. troops are scheduled to remain in Iraq according to the terms of ongoing bilateral discussions between both countries.<sup>331</sup>

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<sup>327</sup> Office of the Director of National Intelligence. “Prospects for Iraq’s Stability: Some Security Progress but Political Reconciliation Elusive [p. 7].” August 2007. [http://www.dni.gov/press\\_releases/20070823\\_release.pdf](http://www.dni.gov/press_releases/20070823_release.pdf)

<sup>328</sup> Office of the Director of National Intelligence. “Prospects for Iraq’s Stability: Some Security Progress but Political Reconciliation Elusive [p. 8].” August 2007. [http://www.dni.gov/press\\_releases/20070823\\_release.pdf](http://www.dni.gov/press_releases/20070823_release.pdf)

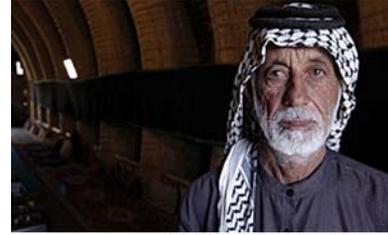
<sup>329</sup> Office of the Director of National Intelligence. “Prospects for Iraq’s Stability: Some Security Progress but Political Reconciliation Elusive [p. 8].” August 2007. [http://www.dni.gov/press\\_releases/20070823\\_release.pdf](http://www.dni.gov/press_releases/20070823_release.pdf)

<sup>330</sup> Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State. “Iraq Weekly Status Report: December 5, 2007.” 5 December 2007. <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/96634.pdf>

<sup>331</sup> Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State. “Iraq Weekly Status Report: December 12, 2007.” 12 December 2007. <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/97576.pdf>

## Progress

Charting Iraq's progress is challenging given the almost daily events that can quickly seem to contradict conclusions already drawn. For example, the northern regions of Iraq have long been pointed to as one of the more stable regions in Iraq. However, terrorist bombings during summer 2007, including one that killed over 500 Yazidi (ethnic Kurd) villagers in Ninawa Province, began to escalate in the region at a time in which other areas to the south—most notably, Baghdad and Anbar Province—saw a lessening of terrorist violence.<sup>332</sup> Officials believe that many insurgent groups have moved their operations northward after having been forced out of their Baghdad strongholds.<sup>333</sup>



© Saudi Aramco World / PADIA/Dana Smilie  
Man, southern Iraq

The purpose of the U.S. troop “surge” has been to provide time for the Iraqi government to become stronger and to “address the all-important issue of reconciliation” within Iraqi society.”<sup>334</sup> To date, it has helped to lower the violence in some areas, potentially giving the Iraqi government a window of opportunity to promote political compromise. Before Iraqis can unite, they need a strong central government to unite behind.

Unfortunately, the roadblocks to political reconciliation are many in Iraq. The country has been fragmented and a broad vision or direction forward that would unify people countrywide is lacking. Political progress has been stymied by dissolution or disunity within the state. Progress is stymied by the continued reluctance of Sunni leaders to fully engage in a process that they see as driven by Shi'a elements hostile to compromise. Shi'a, for their part, are wary of reconciliation based on the numerous attacks on Shi'a communities by Sunni terrorist groups.<sup>335</sup> The Shi'a community is also split politically, most conspicuously by the rift between Sadrists, who held six cabinet posts until they decided to pull out of the government, and the Supreme Iraqi Islamic Council.<sup>336</sup>

For a democratic government to flourish in Iraq, a key element will be the development of rules of law and legal institutions that are widely perceived to be impartial. Because of widespread terrorist threats and attacks on Iraqi court participants, legal proceedings in

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<sup>332</sup> CNN.com. “Iraqi Officials: Truck Bombings Killed at Least 500.” 15 August 2007.

<http://www.cnn.com/2007/WORLD/meast/08/15/iraq.main/index.html>

<sup>333</sup> MSNBC.com. Associated Press. “Bombings Are Deadliest Since Iraq War Began.” 15 August 2007.

<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/20274765/>

<sup>334</sup> The White House. “Initial Benchmark Assessment Report.” 12 July 2007.

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/iraq/2007/FinalBenchmarkReport.pdf>

<sup>335</sup> U.S. Department of Defense. “Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq [p. 2].” 8 June 2007.

<http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/pdfs/9010-Final-20070608.pdf>

<sup>336</sup> WashingtonPost.com. Brulliard, Karin and Saad Sarhan. “Sadr Aides Say 6 Allies in Cabinet Will Resign.” 16 April 2007. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/04/15/AR2007041500127.html>

terrorism cases or other criminal cases have been stalled. From 2004 to mid 2007, 31 Iraqi judges alone were assassinated.<sup>337</sup>

There are indications that this situation will begin to improve. Recently, a massive Rule of Law Complex (ROLC) opened in Baghdad that combines police, courts, forensic labs, and correctional facilities. The ROLC hosts 12 judges appointed to the Central Criminal Court of Iraq.<sup>338</sup> Most of these judges and their families will live in secure housing on the ROLC grounds.<sup>339</sup> Criminal investigators, lawyers, and paralegals are being provided by the U.S. to train Iraqi personnel to take on these tasks within the ROLC. Additional Iraqi criminal investigators are being trained by the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation.<sup>340</sup>

## Looking Forward

The future of Iraq has been the topic of an untold number of U.S. governmental reports, magazine articles, newspaper op-ed pieces, and debates by television pundits. Despite the onslaught of opinion, however, the only given is that nobody really knows for sure where Iraq is headed.

Certainly trends, both long term and short term, can be identified. For example, there are signs that militarily the situation on the ground is slowly improving, especially in Baghdad and adjacent Sunni-majority provinces. However, there is also evidence that political progress has not kept pace and may ultimately negate these gains.<sup>341</sup> Military officials consistently state that the situation in Iraq cannot be solved strictly by military means alone. Thus, ultimately there will need to be reconciliation and compromise, leading to a strengthening of governmental institutions and an acknowledgment of the needs of all Iraqis no matter what their ethnic, tribal, or sectarian associations may be.



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<sup>337</sup> The Weekly Standard. Shapiro, Ilya. "A New Sheriff is in Town: Building the Rule of Law in Baghdad and Beyond." 23 August 2007.

[http://www.weeklystandard.com/Utilities/printer\\_preview.asp?idArticle=14001&R=114A73AA7](http://www.weeklystandard.com/Utilities/printer_preview.asp?idArticle=14001&R=114A73AA7)

<sup>338</sup> The Weekly Standard. Shapiro, Ilya. "A New Sheriff is in Town: Building the Rule of Law in Baghdad and Beyond." 23 August 2007.

[http://www.weeklystandard.com/Utilities/printer\\_preview.asp?idArticle=14001&R=114A73AA7](http://www.weeklystandard.com/Utilities/printer_preview.asp?idArticle=14001&R=114A73AA7)

<sup>339</sup> U.S. Department of Defense. "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq [p. 5]." 8 June 2007.

<http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/pdfs/9010-Final-20070608.pdf>

<sup>340</sup> New York Times. Gordon, Michael R. "In Baghdad, Justice Behind the Barracks." 26 July 2007.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/30/world/middleeast/30military.html?pagewanted=1&ei=5088&en=00ae5b8f2d779e1b&ex=1343448000&partner>

<sup>341</sup> Office of the Director of National Intelligence. "Prospects for Iraq's Stability: Some Security Progress but Political Reconciliation Elusive [p. 7]." August 2007.

[http://www.dni.gov/press\\_releases/20070823\\_release.pdf](http://www.dni.gov/press_releases/20070823_release.pdf)