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**NAVAL  
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**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

**THESIS**

**WHAT LIES BENEATH: SADDAM'S LEGACY AND THE  
ROOTS OF RESISTANCE IN IRAQ**

by

Peter J. Munson

December 2005

Thesis Co-Advisors:

Vali Nasr  
James Russell

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**WHAT LIES BENEATH: SADDAM'S LEGACY AND THE ROOTS OF  
RESISTANCE IN IRAQ**

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Captain, United States Marine Corps  
B.S., John Carroll University, 1997

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS**

from the

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## **ABSTRACT**

Saddam Hussein's patrimonial coercive rule reshaped major aspects of the Iraqi state and society, providing structures and motivations that have fueled resistance in the wake of regime change. By linking literature describing the effects of Ba'ath rule on the Iraqi state, society, and individual to the characteristics and motivations of the resistance, a more nuanced understanding of the complex landscape of Iraqi transition is possible. Repressive regimes produce a lasting and complex legacy in the structures of state and society that they leave behind. This legacy is often contentious and unpredictable, complicating efforts toward a democratic transition. This thesis concludes that, in the case of Iraq, patrimonial coercive rule produced a set of Sunni sub-state power structures that coveted the state and personal powers enjoyed under the old system. This sub-state landscape has proven to be difficult terrain for a successful transition, producing a network of actors that resist for varied motives. Exploration of the case of Iraqi transition reveals a demand for balanced political and military policies that address the socio-political roots of the resistance as well as the violent symptoms. Military initiatives alone cannot produce a solution to the problems in Iraq.



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Semper fidelis, Gunshot 66. We will never forget.



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## I. INTRODUCTION

On April 9, 2003, the world watched as jubilant Iraqis and U.S. Marines toppled the statue of Saddam Hussein in Baghdad's Firdaus Square, symbolically ending the Ba'ath reign of terror. Chaos lurked nearby, however, as the start of rampant looting hinted at the instability to come in Iraq. The toppling of that statue symbolized the removal of the ruthless dictator who had dominated Iraq for decades, but it also yielded the first glance at what lay beneath the regime that had governed Iraq since the late 1960s.

In the two years since the fall of Baghdad, coalition forces have been engaged in a deadly campaign against a resistance that sprouted out of the chaos following Saddam Hussein's ouster. The predominately Sunni Iraqi resistance is a loose network of groups with disparate motivations, but a vague common goal of rejecting the new order in Iraq. This loose network defies easy categorization, owing to complex roots in Iraq state and societal structures. An understanding of the roots of the resistance is critical, for it: (1) provides the opportunity to explain the current phenomenon; (2) provides a solid basis for planning political and military counter-resistance measures; and (3) provides an example that may assist in predicting contentious legacies and latent structures in future cases of transition following the fall of a regime.<sup>1</sup>

The pronounced effects of Saddam Hussein's rule on the Iraqi state, society, and individual have been catalogued by scholars, exiles, and journalists. A growing body of literature and journalism attempts to describe the nature of the resistance or insurgency ongoing in Iraq, yet many facile categorizations of resistance groups overlook the complex legacy of the old regime. The complicated set of motives and structures that underlie the resistance can be fully understood only by tying the literature regarding the effects of Saddam's rule to the current explorations of insurgent characteristics. The sub-

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<sup>1</sup> The explain, plan, predict verbiage is borrowed from Graham T. Allison and Morton H. Halperin, "Bureaucratic Politics: A Paradigm and Some Policy Implications," *World Politics 24 Supplement: Theory and Policy in International Relations* (Spring 1972): 40.



state power structures left as a legacy of Saddam's patrimonial regime can be linked to the motives and organization of actors in the resistance by considering contemporary Iraq as a case of transition from autocratic rule.

Saddam Hussein's patrimonial coercive rule reshaped major aspects of the Iraqi state and society, providing structures and motivations that have fueled resistance in the wake of regime change. By linking literature describing the effects of Ba'ath rule on the Iraqi state, society, and individual to accounts of resistance characteristics and motivations, a more nuanced understanding of the complex landscape of Iraqi transition is possible. Repressive regimes produce a lasting and complex legacy in the structures of state and society that they leave behind. This legacy is often contentious and unpredictable, complicating efforts toward a democratic transition. In the case of Iraq, patrimonial coercive rule produced a set of Sunni sub-state power structures that coveted the state and personal powers enjoyed under the old system. This sub-state landscape has proven to be difficult terrain for a successful democratic transition. Exploration of the case of Iraqi transition yields balanced political and military policy implications that address the socio-political roots of the resistance as well as the violent symptoms. Success in Iraq cannot be won by military means alone, but must come from a balance of security and political consensus that will yield a majority of Iraqi Sunnis willing to isolate violent rejectionists in pursuit of political engagement.

Former regime elements, Sunni nationalists, Islamic extremists, tribal elements, and criminals taking part in the resistance were all shaped by the legacy of Saddam's rule. All had motives to resist the new order facing Iraq, largely owing to their place in the power structure of the old regime. It is supremely important that analysts and policy makers approaching a case of transition clearly understand what enduring structures and motives lie beneath the former regime. By examining Iraq as a case of transition, the old order and the current events can be linked, making sense of the violence and producing some lessons about the potential dangers that lie beneath repressive regimes.

## A. FRAMING THE RESISTANCE PROBLEM IN IRAQ

Senior U.S. officials were caught unawares by the emergence of resistance to regime change in Iraq and were resultantly slow to acknowledge the nature of the problem.<sup>2</sup> In August 2003, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld defined the resistance as a group of “dead-enders... those remnants of the defeated regimes who’ll go on fighting long after their cause is lost.”<sup>3</sup> Subsequent events have demonstrated that the resistance in Iraq is much more complex.

Many of the earliest combatants were remnants of the former regime, but they were often tied into other Sunni structures by kinship or tribal identity, religion, and Sunni nationalism. Resultantly, Sunni nationalists, radical Islamists, tribal forces, and criminals soon followed this vanguard into the chaos of violent resistance. Not all of these forces were admirers of the former regime, but many held links to former regime staffers and most held rejection of occupation and Shi’a dominance in common with the former regime elements (FREs). Instead of being dead-enders, the FREs became the kernel around which a network of resistance groups formed. The FREs were not a leadership hub, but a violent vanguard willingly followed by others. The resistance network consists of groups that are motivated by a spectrum of ideologies, ranging from purely parochial motives, through a fusion of Islam and nationalism, to radical Islamist ideologies. The varied nature of resistance groups demands a nuanced understanding of the underlying structures and motivations from which they arose.

The rapid formation of the resistance suggests the existence of latent structures upon which it was based. The resilience of resistance activity despite the removal of numerous high-level figures suggests that the resistance is a horizontal organization without the vulnerabilities of hierarchical command. The ability of the resistance to expand in scope and membership implies that the resisters are not dead-enders, but have served as a cadre, attracting more fighters through various motivations and connections. Despite these strengths of the resistance, it lacks the singular, overarching political goal

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<sup>2</sup> See Thomas X. Hammes, *The Sling and the Stone*, (St. Paul, MN: Zenith Press, 2004), 173.

<sup>3</sup> Donald Rumsfeld, “Speech to Veterans of Foreign Wars,” (transcript of speech, San Antonio, TX, August 25, 2003), <http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/2003/sp20030825-secdef0403.html>, (accessed October 5, 2005).

and strategy characteristic of a classic insurgency. These observations require a different analytical framework than the model of classic insurgency.

A model which is helpful in explaining the chaotic nature of current Iraq is found in literature on regime transition. This body of work examines the process through which authoritarian and totalitarian regimes transition to a new form of rule and identifies how the legacies of the old regime affect the negotiation of new political relationships between actors.<sup>4</sup> The framework of transition assists in tracing the characteristics of the resistance back to the legacy of structures of pre-invasion Iraq.

Scholars of democracy carefully studied transitions experienced in Latin America and Europe in the post-World War II era.<sup>5</sup> These studies put forth a set of expectations regarding the process of transition and the pre-existence of factors that portend a successful outcome of transition. These expectations fit well with the earlier western cases of transition. Some of their observations about the likely role of regime hard-liners, security institutions, and societal structures are salient in the Iraqi case of transition. The different circumstances of transition, the complex legacy of Saddam's patrimonial rule, and the different state and societal structures extant in the Middle East and much of the developing world demand a modified set of theoretical assumptions and expectations.

O'Donnell and Schmitter expect regime hard-liners to be a key center of rejectionist sentiment.<sup>6</sup> Military and security officials are also expected to be dangerous if not isolated from rejectionist politicians looking for muscle.<sup>7</sup> Authoritarian rule is expected to reshape societal structures, thrusting them into a new role in relation to the state that is not easily forgone during the transition.<sup>8</sup> These expectations have proven relevant to the Iraqi case, however, the theorized role of civil society, rational state institutions, and regime soft-liners (expected to be critical in the creation of political

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<sup>4</sup> *Inter alia* Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead, eds. *Transitions From Authoritarian Rule: Prospects for Democracy*, (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986). This literature will be reviewed below.

<sup>5</sup> O'Donnell, Schmitter, and Whitehead, as well as many others, focus on these transitions.

<sup>6</sup> O'Donnell and Schmitter, 16.

<sup>7</sup> O'Donnell and Schmitter, 32.

<sup>8</sup> Gretchen Casper, *Fragile Democracies: The Legacies of Authoritarian Rule* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995), 3-4.

opening and a successful, democratic outcome) is not observed in Iraq. Here, critical modifications to the basic transition theories are required.

The prevalence of neo-patrimonial regimes in the developing world<sup>9</sup> and the robust patrimonial coercive apparatus common in regimes in the Middle East<sup>10</sup> make it unlikely that a concerted or pacted transition will be initiated from within most states. Neo-patrimonial regimes and their patron-client relationships yield a personalistic, rather than rational-legal institutional rule. Regime elites tenaciously hold on to political power and personal spoils. Transition is unlikely to occur until a severe crisis or collapse occurs. Societal cohesiveness is expected to be poor, nothing like the strong civil society that has helped the public mobilize in earlier cases.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, regimes' desire to maintain a hold on power and spoils is aided by robust patrimonial coercive services, funded by oil and strategic rents in the Middle East. These security institutions are seen as a major impediment to transition in the region<sup>12</sup> and they figure prominently in Iraq.

Iraq lacks the civil society and institutions guided by rule of law that have aided the process of democratic transition in previous cases. At the same time, Iraq was plagued by a strong patrimonial-coercive regime, as well as traditional institutions of primary identity that exacerbate the chaos of an ethnically and religiously divided country undergoing transition. Linking the latent institutions and motivations that were a legacy of Saddam's rule to the current phenomenon of resistance will demonstrate the difficulty of effecting democratic transition in the face of challenges presented in the developing world.

Numerous works examine the structures of the former regime and their effect on society. Baram has written a number of works that address Hussein's survival strategies

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<sup>9</sup> Michael Bratton and Nicolas Van de Walle, "Neopatrimonial Regimes and Political Transitions in Africa," *World Politics* 46, no. 4 (July 1994): 457-460. Christopher S. Clapham, *Third World Politics: An Introduction*, (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 48-49.

<sup>10</sup> Eva Bellin, "The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Exceptionalism in Comparative Perspective," *Comparative Politics* 36, no. 2 (January 2004).

<sup>11</sup> Bratton and Van de Walle, 460-464.

<sup>12</sup> Bellin, "The Robustness of Authoritarianism," 145-150.

of building layered security structures,<sup>13</sup> as well as the extension of control mechanisms into social structures.<sup>14</sup> Numerous sources detail the structure of regime military and security organizations and their effect on Iraq.<sup>15</sup> Kanan Makiya and others have examined the effect of regime oppression and economic hardship on the Iraqi society and culture.<sup>16</sup> The state of religiosity in Iraq and the use of Islam for regime legitimation have been briefly addressed by Thaler<sup>17</sup> and Post and Baram,<sup>18</sup> along with numerous journalistic accounts.

Together, these works depict a weakened state with layered security services and an extensive and corrupt patrimonial support structure. Security structures were a heavily patronized and redundant web of power centers that struck fear into society. The security state reshaped tribal and familial structures, as well as social norms. Furthermore, the massive security sector yielded a large number of military-trained Sunnis and a profusion of arms cached in state depots and distributed to loyal tribal and local militias. These facts bear significantly on the resistance.

These works have informed the recent literature on the resistance; however, there has been no methodical attempt to explicitly link pre-invasion structures to the shape of the resistance in occupied Iraq. Several scholars warn that patterns of conflict, division, and patronage have characterized Iraq since World War I and that these patterns are likely to remain an important force which must be reckoned with in post-Saddam Iraq,<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Amatzia Baram, *Building Toward Crisis: Saddam Husayn's Strategy for Survival*, (Washington DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1998). Amatzia Baram, "Saddam's World: Political Discourse in Iraq," *The American Political Science Review* 95, no. 2 (2001): 491.

<sup>14</sup> Amatzia Baram, "Neo-Tribalism in Iraq: Saddam Hussein's Tribal Policies 1991-1996," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 29, no. 1 (1997): 1.

<sup>15</sup> *Inter alia*, Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002). Ahmed S. Hashim, "Military Power and State Formation in Modern Iraq," *Middle East Policy* 10, no. 4 (2003): 29.

<sup>16</sup> Shereen T. Ismael, "Dismantling the Iraqi Social Fabric: From Dictatorship through Sanctions to Occupation," *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 35, no.2 (2004): 333. Kanan Makiya, *Republic of Fear: The Politics of Modern Iraq*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1989). Qais N. al-Nouri, "The Impact of the Embargo on Iraqi Families: Re-Structuring of Tribes, Socio-Economic Classes and Households," *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 28, no. 2 (1997): 99.

<sup>17</sup> David Thaler, "The Middle East: The Cradle of the Muslim World," in *The Muslim World After 9/11*, ed. Angel M. Rabasa, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2004), 118.

<sup>18</sup> Jerrold M. Post and Amatzia Baram, "Saddam Is Iraq: Iraq is Saddam," *The Counterproliferation Papers Future Warfare Series* 17, (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Air University, 2002), 50.

<sup>19</sup>*Inter alia* Toby Dodge, *Inventing Iraq*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 169-170. Charles Tripp, "After Saddam," *Survival* 44, no. 4 (October 1, 2002).

yet this theme has not been fully elucidated in examinations of the resistance. Many works since the fall of the regime are primarily descriptive of the resistance.<sup>20</sup> Other works address structural issues behind the fractured resistance such as sectarianism and nationalism.<sup>21</sup> Hoffman's description of the resistance as a network of actors rather than a singular entity<sup>22</sup> fits well with the varied structures and long-term goals arising from the fractured pre-invasion structures. These works discuss factors in pre-invasion Iraq that weigh on current issues, but there has been no effort to capture the essence of transition: the chaos of old legacies confronting new realities.

Analysis of the available, open-source information on the resistance, as will be described and documented below, yields several observations. First, the resistance does not have a unified, long-term political goal, strategic vision, or leadership. The goals of former members of the regime, Sunni nationalists, and Islamic extremists are often mutually exclusive. Thus, the resistance is not a single, unified insurgency, nor is it likely to be in the foreseeable future.

Second, these disparate groups share an interest in instability and ejection of coalition troops as short-term goals. They all reject the current trajectory of the transition. To pursue short-term goals, some groups are able to set aside their long-term differences and come together to carry out specific operations. Understanding the potential of the Iraqi resistance to operate successfully in a networked fashion is critical to developing a means for combating the phenomenon.

Third, the majority of the resistance consists of Iraqi Sunnis.<sup>23</sup> Over ninety percent of detainees and the overwhelming majority of resisters killed have been Sunni.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> *Inter alia*, Ahmed S. Hashim, "The Insurgency in Iraq," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 14, no. 3 (2003): 29. Steven Metz, "The Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in Iraq," *The Washington Quarterly* 27, no. 1 (2003): 25.

<sup>21</sup> Ahmed Hashim, "Iraq's Chaos: Why the Insurgency Won't Go Away," *Boston Review* (October 2004) <http://www.bostonreview.net/BR29.5/hashim.html> (accessed October 27, 2005). Andrew Terrill, *Nationalism, Sectarianism, and the Future of the U.S. Presence in Post-Saddam Iraq*, (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2003).

<sup>22</sup> Bruce Hoffman, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq*, (Santa Monica, CA: Rand National Security Research Division, 2004).

<sup>23</sup> *Inter alia* Hashim, "The Insurgency in Iraq." Peter Maass, "The Way of the Commandos," *The New York Times Magazine*, May 1, 2005. Steven Metz, "Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq," 28.

Shi'ites have not figured significantly<sup>25</sup> and the foreign component is overshadowed by the largely Iraqi Sunni face of the resistance. Only 370 of 14,000 detainees held by U.S. forces by June 2005 were foreign<sup>26</sup> and experts estimate that 4 to 10 percent of the fighters at large are foreign.<sup>27</sup>

The Sunni resistance consists of two main elements: parochial Sunni nationalists and Sunni Islamists.<sup>28</sup> Parochial Sunnis can be further dissembled into Saddamists, ex-Ba'athists (not necessarily supporting of Saddam), nationalists, and tribal elements.<sup>29</sup> These elements, their form, and their agenda can all be traced back to foundations in the social conditions and the web of power centers in pre-invasion Iraq. None of them wish to see Sunni power lost in a new Iraq, but many of them have different ideas as to what form that Sunni power should take.

Only by examining the resistance as a set of actors shaped by patrimonial coercive rule and the survival strategies of a weakening state, can the situation in Iraq be fully understood. Emphasis on guerilla warfare and insurgency models has resulted in efforts to describe who is fighting and how they are fighting. Examining the resistance as a case of transition helps to illuminate the equally important questions of where the resistance actors arose from and how their structures and motivations fit into the changing Iraqi state and society. Pursuing this analytical framework has significance both for the study of Iraq and for the study of the phenomenon of transition in general. Defining the Iraqi resistance as part of a case of transition also has significant strategic implications. It implies that the problem is largely one of politics and, therefore, the

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<sup>24</sup> Anthony Cordesman, "Iraq's Evolving Insurgency," working paper, (Washington DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, August 5, 2005), [http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/050805\\_iraqi\\_insurgency.pdf](http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/050805_iraqi_insurgency.pdf) (accessed November 2, 2005) 41.

<sup>25</sup> Cordesman, "Iraq's Evolving Insurgency," 37.

<sup>26</sup> John F. Burns, "Iraq's Ho Chi Minh Trail," *New York Times*, June 5, 2005.

<sup>27</sup> Dan Murphy, "Iraq's Foreign Fighters: Few But Deadly," *Christian Science Monitor*, (September 27, 2005).

<sup>28</sup> Ian Beckett, *Insurgency in Iraq* (Carlisle PA: US Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, 2005) 4.

<sup>29</sup> Amatzia Baram, "Who Are the Insurgents? Sunni Rebels in Iraq," *United States Institute of Peace Special Report* 134 (April 2005), <http://www.usip.org/pubs/specialreports/sr134.html> (accessed November 2005) 3-9.

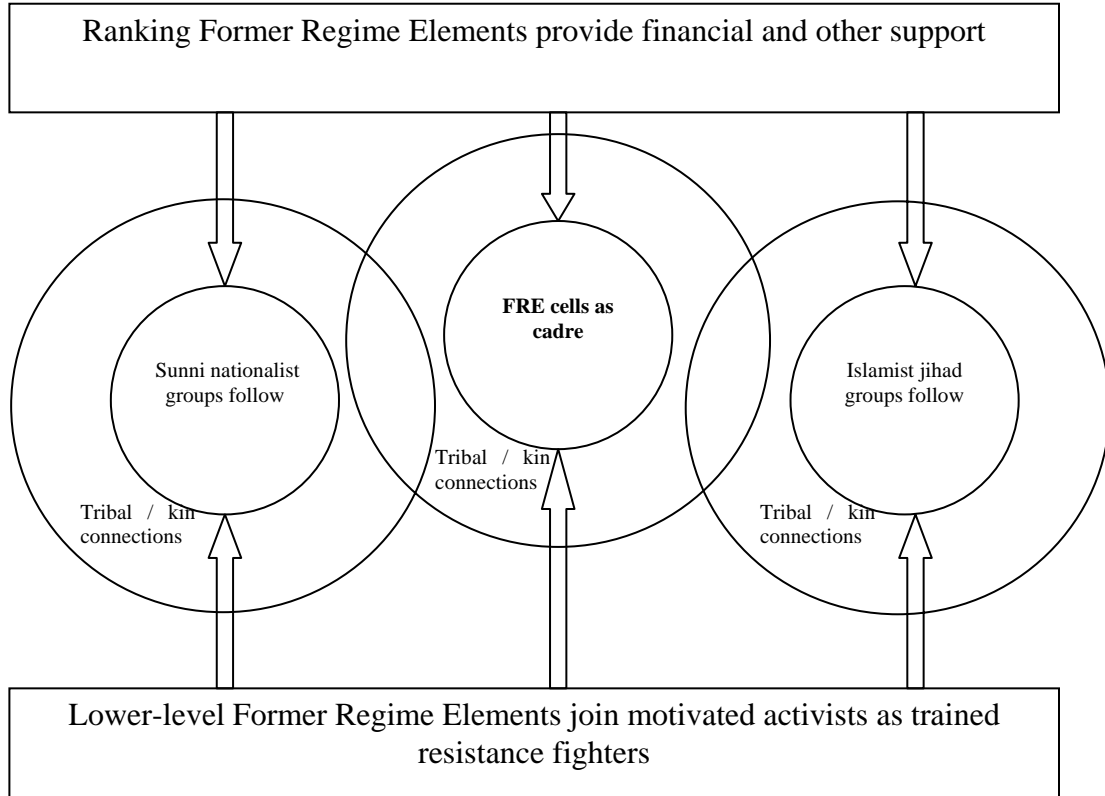
solutions must be a balance of military and political initiatives to provide security and an acceptable way forward for a consensual political system in Iraq.

Under the old order, the various elements now fomenting resistance enjoyed relative autonomy and usurped state power in their own ways. The regime used elements of Sunni society to support its rule and in turn granted perks and patronage to cement loyalty. The beneficiaries of this system constituted a power structure that lay beneath the official regime. As the power of the state weakened due to wars and sanctions, Saddam increasingly relied on ruthless and personally-profiting security officials, powerful tribes, organized criminals, and religious leaders to ensure stability and loyalty in key areas. These powerful individuals and groups in society were relatively free to carve out a domain of power and relative comfort as long as it did not jeopardize Saddam's position. The legacy of Saddam's rule is the network of sub-state and former state elements that mobilized to resist their loss of power in a new Iraq.

The resistance is not a carefully crafted Ba'athist plan, but it is a result of the former regime's manipulation of Iraq for its own ends. The elements of Iraq's sub-state power structure, despite their very different outlooks, have been able to mobilize against the new order and operate in a networked manner, the actions of each serving to reinforce the overall instability. A hard core of former regime elements was among the first to take up arms against the occupation. Radicalized Islamists and Sunni nationalists soon followed. Ranking members of the regime have provided funding and support to many resistance groups. Lower-level security and military members have provided fighters to the range of resistance cells. Tribal and kinship ties have expanded the range of potential supporters of these groups and inactive individuals have at times been prompted to take up arms in vengeance for the death of kin. The resistance is thus a complex web of groups and motivations (see Figure 1) that can be best explained in the context of the old order in Iraq. The existence of latent motivations and organizational structures underneath the lid of Saddam's rule that would resist a new order in Iraq has important implications for strategies of regime change. Examination of the case of Iraqi transition will demonstrate that legacies of the old order must be addressed promptly in order to safeguard transition toward a better form of rule.



Figure 1. The Interconnected Nature of Iraqi Resistance.



The following pages will lay out the roots of the resistance in the political and social structures of Saddam Hussein's Iraq. These roots shape the structure and preferences of the resistance actors, resulting in rejection of the current path of Iraq's transition from repressive rule. Viewing the Iraqi problem in the context of other cases of transition from authoritarian and totalitarian rule will help to develop this argument.

## B. PUTTING THE IRAQI PROBLEM IN CONTEXT

The resistance in Iraq is different than many of the classic cases of insurgency because it has arisen in the context of an externally influenced transition. It is not the product of a deliberate process of internal mobilization against the sitting regime, nor is it a unified group that has started a campaign to lead to political transition. The Iraqi resistance is a reaction that formed rapidly in the ongoing chaos of transition; therefore, understanding the nature of transition is important to the Iraqi situation.

Iraq forms an atypical and important case within the literature on transition from authoritarian or totalitarian rule. An influential framework for the study of transitions was put forward by Rustow, who placed “countries where a major impetus came from abroad” as outliers that should not be included in a systematic examination of transition,<sup>30</sup> yet “externally monitored installation”<sup>31</sup> has been cited as the method of transition most likely to result in democracy.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, this important type of transition is underrepresented in transition literature.

Due to the fact that externally-monitored transitions are rare cases, methodologically excluded from much of the literature; the case of Iraq provides an important addition. Regardless of the outcome, Iraq also provides the first look at attempted transition in the Arab Islamic world. It provides many unique insights from this perspective. Other Arab states with some similar structures are likely to undergo some form of transition in the future and insights gained here may assist in predicting and planning for problems in their transition. Furthermore, examination of the effect of the regime on Islamic structures and motivations in Iraq may provide insight into specific factors which exacerbate Islamic extremism, rather than rehashing the discussion of Islam’s inherent compatibility or incompatibility with democracy.

The externally-monitored transition in Iraq is not without comparative cases, but it is much different than its precedents. The most frequently cited examples of this category, West Germany and Japan, are not widely representative for a number of reasons. Bellin points out that strong state institutions, relatively high economic development, ethnic homogeneity, historical experience of democratic processes, and unifying elite leadership distinguish the cases of Japan and West Germany from the

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<sup>30</sup> Dankwart A. Rustow, “Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model,” *Comparative Politics* 2, no. 3 (April 1970): 346.

<sup>31</sup> Alfred Stepan, “Paths Toward Redemocratization: Theoretical and Comparative Considerations,” in “Part III: Comparative Perspectives,” *Transitions From Authoritarian Rule: Prospects for Democracy*, ed. Guillermo O’Donnell, Philippe Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 65.

<sup>32</sup> Gretchen Casper and Michelle Taylor, *Negotiating Democracy: Transitions from Authoritarian Rule* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996), 18.

situation in Iraq.<sup>33</sup> The central position of these countries in the worldwide capitalist system also defies comparison to transitions farther from the center.<sup>34</sup>

Faleh Jabar lists three factors that help to situate the specific case of Iraqi transition within the larger body of literature. First, Iraq has been conditioned by totalitarianism. In this manner, transitions of states like Germany and the former Soviet Union may hold some parallels. Second, Iraq is an oil rentier state. This fact has shaped Iraq's political economy, its bureaucratic structure, and its patronage networks. There are no solid comparisons of oil rentier state transitions in the literature. Third, "Iraq is a case of a failed state in a multiethnic and multi-cultural setting, with social groups structured in modern, traditional, and hybrid forms of social organization."<sup>35</sup> While there are numerous cases of transition in somewhat similar circumstances, the salient cases of externally-monitored installation most often cited (Germany and Japan) are vastly different. These three factors interact significantly to create a contentious legacy for transition. The pitfalls in Iraq are numerous and have created a violent resistance that must be understood in the context of its socio-political roots, rather than its tactics.

In order to understand the roots of the resistance, the literature on pre-invasion Iraq will be reviewed to demonstrate the effect of Saddam's rule on state and society. This review will emphasize the empowerment of sub-state structures and the reshaping of Iraqi society in order to create a support base for Saddam's continued rule. Transition literature will be used as a guide in the review of pre-invasion Iraq to point out important features predicted to prove contentious. The review will then be linked to the current resistance in Iraq to demonstrate how the legacy of Saddam's rule has played out in the chaotic arena of political transition. Academic accounts will be used to some extent to describe the resistance, but weight will be given to first-hand accounts and interviews of Iraqis and insurgents themselves to describe the state of resistance in Iraq.

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<sup>33</sup> Eva Bellin, "The Iraqi Intervention and Democracy in Comparative Historical Perspective," *Political Science Quarterly* 119, no. 4 (Winter 2004-2005): 601.

<sup>34</sup> Stepan, "Paths Toward Redemocratization: Theoretical and Comparative Considerations," 71.

<sup>35</sup> Faleh A. Jabar, "Postconflict Iraq: A Race for Stability, Reconstruction, and Legitimacy," *United States Institute of Peace Special Report* 120 (May 2004), <http://www.usip.org/pubs/specialreports/sr120.pdf> (accessed October 26, 2005), 3.

### C. SIGNIFICANCE OF IRAQ AS A CASE OF TRANSITION

It is important to situate Iraq within the literature on transition for two reasons. First, as mentioned above, Iraq is an important addition to the body of cases on transition due to its position as an outlier. Second, examining the case of Iraqi resistance within this framework provides a basis for comparison to other cases of transition and provides some insight as to how the conclusions drawn may be used to inform policy. This approach implies that the outcome in Iraq will depend more on political than military factors. Finally, the legacies of the previous regime and their effect on latent institutions in Iraq point to a need for revisiting the assumptions of transition scholarship.

In a traditional military encounter, war has been considered “a continuation of political intercourse, with the addition of other means.”<sup>36</sup> The linkage of military operations to political ends has been traditionally considered only at the highest levels of command in a hierarchical military. Lower commanders, executing the plans of senior officers, considered operational and tactical factors that were primarily military in nature. In a conflict such as the one in Iraq, the adversary has little or no hierarchy to effect the division of labor that separates tactical considerations from political considerations. In most cases, cells and insurgents become militarily active for political (or religious-political) reasons and engage in operations that are believed to serve this political vision. In a decentralized campaign, like the one in Iraq, the political considerations are even more prominent as each cell is less encumbered by a centralized ideology and doctrine. Therefore, the socio-political background to the war in Iraq is critical to creating a balanced set of political and military implications that can guide policies that successfully affect the trajectory of the transition process.

Within the literature on transition, there are two views of the trajectory of transition processes and how that trajectory may be affected. Structure-based approaches emphasize the burden of history on the outcome of the transition process. Thus, path dependency and institutional legacy are highly limiting factors on design of post-transition institutions. On the other hand, agency-centered theorists believe that correct policy choices can facilitate a break with the past, allowing the state to forge ahead with

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<sup>36</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, “Book Eight: War Plans,” *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 605.

new institutions.<sup>37</sup> These categories have been bridged with a framework of “path contingency” in which policy choices are the independent variable, institutional outcomes are the dependent variable, and state capacity and institutional legacy are intervening variables.<sup>38</sup> In this framework, understanding the legacy of the previous regime is crucial to informing properly timed and implemented policy aimed at the political and military aspects of the resistance.

The sub-state power structure that was a legacy of the previous regime calls into question the feasibility of a “plug and play” version of regime change. The surgical removal of a regime, followed by the rapid emplacement of a new government, will not produce instant stability. Many layers of state and society beneath the pinnacle of the regime have been reshaped by the old order. The sub-state power structure must be addressed in the policy of transition in order to heighten the chances that actors will buy in to a new political system. Such a system is likely to be a second-best solution for all, requiring careful cultivation for success. Furthermore, the process of adjustment to the new order is likely to be long and chaotic. Finally, the establishment of a new political system does not guarantee stability if major elements of society do not participate in the system and accept the trajectory that such a system takes.

At the bottom line, policy-guidance for transition situations must start with a pragmatic assessment of the legacy of the former regime on the institutions and servants of the state, the societal structures within the state, and the individuals of that society. Potentially rejectionist sentiments should be looked for in those who stand to lose power enjoyed under the old order. Even in the most repressive regimes, there must be some base of support in the state and society. Coercive apparatuses must be staffed, societal structures and leaders must be co-opted, and the rest of society must be cowed into obedience. These are not legacies that can be erased overnight.

Aggregation of sub-state actors into blocs that support differing trajectories for the new order should be anticipated. The negotiation of these blocs should be expected to be chaotic and probably violent to some extent. Participation in politics is not a sign of

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<sup>37</sup> Juliet Johnson, “Path Contingency in Postcommunist Transformations,” *Comparative Politics* 33, no. 3 (April 2001): 254.

<sup>38</sup>Johnson, 255.

success, but only a hopeful beginning. The blocs must negotiate a compromise. This will often be a second-best solution, reached only when the actors see that their preferred outcomes are unobtainable. Only when such a compromise is agreed upon and enacted, can the consolidation of transition begin to tread on more stable ground.

In Iraq, this means that Sunni participation in the vote on the constitution is a start, but it does not portend an end to the violence. A vote against the constitution, against the trajectory of the new order, is not an agreement to that new order. Only if Sunnis turn out to vote for members of parliament and only if they feel that their interests are safe in parliamentary procedure will Iraq's future begin to look more promising. At such a point, many Sunnis may begin to realize that they can acquiesce to a second-best solution of democratic engagement in Iraq. The issues of Iraqi politics are complex, but the bottom line is that Sunnis will continue to resist violently until they feel that they can attain an acceptable status in democratic politics. Thus, a solution to the violence in Iraq is likely to be largely political and only partly military.

Viewing Iraq as a case of transition explains the political motives behind actors' resistance to the new order. Linking the legacy of pre-invasion Iraq to current events also helps to illustrate the mechanisms by which the resistance regenerates itself. The linkages between the resistance fighters and the Sunni Iraqi society at large as well as the political nature of rejection of the new order suggest that military tactics such as large sweep and clear operations designed to inflict maximum casualties on the enemy are unlikely to succeed without accompanying political success that isolates the resisters from their societal support bases. Military means alone will not precipitate a peaceful political solution. Conversely, a political solution will not convince all of the fanatics in the resistance to lay down their arms. Military means will be needed to target these die-hards once they are isolated from a Sunni population willing to accept a peaceful political solution. Military and political strategies must be well crafted and mutually supporting for any hope of success.

#### **D. OVERVIEW OF THE CASE**

The situation in Iraq will be analyzed with reference to the contextual framework of transition. In Chapter II, transition literature will guide an exploration of the effect of Saddam's rule on Iraq. It was in this time period that Saddam's legacy was built in the form of layered security institutions and a sub-state power structure of societal actors was cultivated to secure Ba'ath rule. The resistance that arose from this legacy to reject the transition will be explored in Chapter III. The implications of the structure of the resistance will be examined in Chapter IV to determine implications for a successful balanced policy in Iraq. Finally, Chapter V will provide some conclusions about the lessons of transition in Iraq as they bear on the future of that state and indicate some areas for consideration in future cases of transition. A more sophisticated approach to transition is required, starting with reevaluation of basic assumptions derived from the European and Latin American cases and culminating in a more nuanced typology of regime attributes that impact the transition process and actors.

## **II. A CRUSHING LEGACY: THE EFFECT OF SADDAM'S RULE ON IRAQ**

Saddam Hussein's rule over Iraq left a lasting legacy that has resulted in the chaos facing Iraq today. Saddam manipulated the institutions of state and society in order to support his rule. This manipulation produced long-lasting effects on state institutions, societal structures, and individuals in Iraq. Many Sunni Iraqis became part of a significant patrimonial network of security services and traditional structures that secured Saddam's rule. Saddam carefully doled out patronage and state power to centers that were meticulously cultivated to be loyal, or at least not threatening, to his continued rule. When the regime fell and a new order confronted the ruling minority, the legacy of sub-state power structures that lay within the Sunni community produced both motivation and organizational advantages that a hard core of Sunnis used to resist the transition. Saddam's removal of any alternative leaders in Sunni society virtually ensured that no coherent voice would be able to unify the Sunnis politically to shape the transition. Thus, a dispersed network of violent Sunni cells became the only audible Sunni voice in a period of transition where the legacy of old structures confronts the trajectory toward a new order. Iraq is not a clean slate, but is haunted by the crushing rule of Saddam Hussein and the Ba'ath Party. These legacies are in open confrontation with new political forces in Iraq. This is the essence of transition.

### **A. LESSONS OF PREVIOUS TRANSITIONS**

Rustow's work and the case studies that followed provide some salient points for investigation and comparison in Iraq. O'Donnell and Schmitter stress the uncertainty of the transition process, largely rising from the unpredictability of the "'standard' actors" in the transition process. These actors are "likely to be divided and hesitant about their interests and ideals and, hence, incapable of coherent collective action."<sup>39</sup>

The active restructuring of social institutions by authoritarian regimes is a major factor in this uncertainty. Religious, military, and other social institutions are thrust into an "active political role" that is not easily forgone during or after a transition. As a result,

<sup>39</sup> O'Donnell and Schmitter, 3-4.



“institutions and groups cannot revert back to their preauthoritarian behavior or structures.”<sup>40</sup> Through the reshaping of existing institutions and rules and the creation of new ones, “the legacy of authoritarianism is a radical restructuring of the political arena.”<sup>41</sup>

In this restructured political arena, several key rejectionist sectors are likely to arise. The “main core” of regime “hard-liners” is likely to resist a transition away from the order which empowered it.<sup>42</sup> Likewise, the military and security institutions are strong centers of rejectionist potential.<sup>43</sup> These likely suspects operate widely in the case of Iraqi transition. Examples of totalitarian transition suggest that this class of security officials cannot be easily uprooted by regime change.<sup>44</sup> The rejectionist tendency extends beyond this core, however.

Saddam’s regime was like many other regimes that “systematically seek to alter the traditional roles of important social institutions.”<sup>45</sup> The Ba’ath regime destroyed traditional social institutions and reformed them in service of the state.<sup>46</sup> The tribes and Islamic structures were reconstructed to some degree as legitimating and controlling influences for the state. The roles of these institutions as sub-state power centers in pre-invasion Iraq produced a legacy of activity that set them up as another potentially rejectionist sector in the aftermath of regime change. The expansion of resistance from a cadre of regime “dead-enders” to other Iraqi nationalists and Islamists was aided in some cases by ties of identity and in others by Islamic ideology of resistance. This not to say that Islamists and Iraqi nationalists are supporters of the Ba’ath, but violent resistance spread to these sectors rapidly, aided by the reshaped and radicalized tribal and religious structures.

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<sup>40</sup> Casper, 3-4.

<sup>41</sup> O’Donnell and Schmitter, 7.

<sup>42</sup> O’Donnell and Schmitter, 16.

<sup>43</sup> O’Donnell and Schmitter, 32.

<sup>44</sup> Vladimir Bukovsky, “Totalitarianism in Crisis: Is There a Smooth Transition to Democracy?” in *Totalitarianism at the Crossroads*, ed. Ellen Frankel Paul (London: Transaction Books, 1990), 15.

<sup>45</sup> Casper, 3-4.

<sup>46</sup> Makiya, 128.

These legacies weigh heavily on the preferences of the actors and the structure of their interactions. Many actors have become accustomed to a degree of power and autonomy that cooperation with the former regime afforded them. Other actors see the opening as their chance to take up arms for a radically new future. The various actors operating in the chaos of post-invasion Iraq are in the process of negotiating, peacefully or violently, for their vision of the best-case future. This vision is shaped by the legacies of the past.

Rustow observed that “conflict and reconciliation are essential to democracy.”<sup>47</sup> Actors in a transition are likely to become polarized around different visions of the future, testing the sense of national unity to its limits. A state divided regionally is likely to experience secession, while a state divided along other lines of distinction may experience “wholesale expulsion or genocide.”<sup>48</sup> Iraq is divided along regional, sectarian, and ethnic lines, adding to the difficulties of transition. If the polar conflict does not degenerate into absolute ends, the negotiated solution may result in democracy. Such a negotiated compromise will be “second-best to all major parties involved.”<sup>49</sup> The ability of the parties to successfully negotiate a solution will be heavily influenced by the legacy of the previous regime.

If the visions of fractionalized actors spawned by transition are not compatible, violent conflict will ensue. The Iraqi resistance is a manifestation of Sunni rejection of the trajectory of transition. The resistance is likely to continue until a critical mass of Sunnis believe that their fate is better left to political engagement and acceptance of a second-best solution than violent resistance. Once a majority of Sunnis believe they have a political future in Iraq and that violence is jeopardizing that future, the resistance will truly become the last gasp of a few dead-enders. In order to determine what the end state might be, the roots of the Sunni actors must be examined.

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<sup>47</sup> Rustow, 338.

<sup>48</sup> Rustow, 354.

<sup>49</sup> Rustow, 357.

## **B. THE HARD CORE: STRUCTURES OF SECURITY AND ADMINISTRATION**

Violence has been a central part of Iraqi politics since the time of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>50</sup> The rule of Saddam Hussein was the pinnacle of this trend. Under his rule, a hard core of regime security servants penetrated society with surveillance structures and used a high level of coercive violence. The legacy of this violent security state is a cadre of former regime members who have motive to resist transition and access to structures and tools that assist them in this resistance.

An important group of actors in transition is the “main core of the hard-liners” of the former regime. These individuals are expected to be the source of dogged resistance during the transition.<sup>51</sup> Saddam created a loyal and well-trained hard core of Ba’ath party hacks and security servants in Iraq. In many cases, this hard core identified personally with the fate of the regime. Understanding the motivations and structures of this hard core yields insight into their power as a cadre for resistance.

While a dictator can be easily removed, “a totalitarian regime creates a whole class of rulers” that defy such removal attempts. The regime replaces existing political and social structures with its own institutions and a class of “professional organizers, supervisors, and rulers.” This class of regime collaborators cannot be removed as can a dictator or junta and they will fight for their lives if the regime is upended.<sup>52</sup> A large number of complicit members of the former regime are now fighting for their lives and for what they perceive as their Iraq.

Bellin cites the “robust and politically tenacious coercive apparatus” of regimes in the Middle East as a key factor in securing states against the opening of democratic transition. In the patrimonial regimes of the Middle East, flush with oil rents, the security services are not rule-bound. “Staffing decisions are ruled by cronyism; the distinction between public and private mission is blurred, leading to widespread corruption and abuse of power; and discipline is maintained through the exploitation of primordial cleavage, often relying on balanced rivalry between different ethnic/sectarian groups.”

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<sup>50</sup> Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 6.

<sup>51</sup> Casper, 16.

<sup>52</sup> Bukovsky, 15.

Security officials often abuse their public role for profit and power, leading to a “personal identification with the regime and the regime’s longevity.” Under such conditions, “political reform represents the prospect of ruin for the elite of the coercive apparatus.”<sup>53</sup> In contrast, a “rule-governed, predictable, and meritocratic” coercive apparatus is more likely to be willing to “disengage from power and allow political reform to proceed.”<sup>54</sup> Members of a patrimonial coercive apparatus, like the one in Iraq, are likely to reject a transition that removes them from their position of power.

The security services in Iraq fit well into the model of a patrimonial coercive apparatus. The Sunni Arabs picked to man the security services were tied by family, clan, and tribe to the ruling elites. As the reign of Saddam continued, those in positions of power maintained their place only by personal allegiance to the ruler and demonstrated complicity in regime coercion. Those who remained in service gained impressive status and perquisites.<sup>55</sup> Thus, service in Iraqi security institutions became a personal venture as much as a public one, solidifying the individual’s identification with the status quo and increasing the perceived costs of change immensely. As predicted by transition scholarship, Iraqi security elites faced personal ruin in the political reforms. Their membership within a well-armed, violent, and penetrating network of state security offered the attractive alternative of violent resistance to these reforms.

This potentially rejectionist sector is large in Iraq. The average country in the Middle East employs 16.2 men per thousand in the security sector, compared to 6.31 in France or 3.92 in Brazil. Iraq employed 20.94 men per thousand in the security services in 2000.<sup>56</sup> The highly patrimonial and personalized rule of Saddam created a huge sector of well-trained, well-armed, and well-connected Iraqis who stood to lose considerably under a new order in Iraq.

These potential rejectionists were parceled into numerous security structures and often distributed in offices throughout Iraq. This kept them from forming a bloc capable

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<sup>53</sup> Bellin, “The Robustness of Authoritarianism,” 145, 149.

<sup>54</sup> Bellin, “The Robustness of Authoritarianism,” 145, 149.

<sup>55</sup> Amatzia Baram, “Between Impediment and Advantage: Saddam’s Iraq,” *United States Institute of Peace Special Report* 34, (June 1998), <http://www.usip.org/pubs/specialreports/early/baram/Baram.html>, (accessed August 22, 2005).

<sup>56</sup> Bellin, “The Robustness of Authoritarianism,” 147-148.

of action against the regime, but also made their remnants cellular and difficult to root out after collapse. Furthermore, the size and pervasiveness of this sector is important to understanding its place in the effects of Saddam's rule on the Iraqi society and individual. On their own, these hard-liners may, in fact, be "dead-enders." The power of such hard-liners is greatly enhanced by their ability to act as a cadre that other actors in society may follow.

The military and security institutions, even outside the hard core, form a potentially rejectionist sector if not rehabilitated, provided with an honorable role in the transition, and insulated from politicians who may use them to consolidate power. The degree to which the military was separated from acts of regime repression in past cases directly impacted the military's stance toward democratization. In cases where repression was "less brutal and extensive," a "policy of clemency would seem most viable and least dangerous for democratization."<sup>57</sup>

In the case of Iraq, the hard core was obviously unredeemable, but the degree of military involvement in day-to-day repression was certainly far less than that of the state security instruments. Most security officials never re-emerged publicly, but average soldiers and officers were not afraid to demonstrate for pay in the aftermath of the invasion. These soldiers were dismissed to fend for themselves by the Coalition Provisional Authority. Some of these soldiers were ripe for the picking by elements willing to pay for the use of their military skills in the resistance. In the areas of leadership and finance, the hard-liners were able to act as a cadre, drawing disenfranchised soldiers into the resistance. These soldiers resist for different motives than those of the hard core. They resist in order to make a living, to avenge the humiliation of unemployment, or to support a vision of nationalism. They do not resist in die-hard support of the Ba'ath or due to their personal complicity in or identification with the regime.

### **1. Creating a Hard Core: Staffing the Regime Center**

The Ba'ath regime used a number of methods to produce security servants who identified with the regime on personal, ideological, and primary identity bases. Inculcation of loyalty to the regime was a long process that started with programs for

<sup>57</sup> O'Donnell and Schmitter, 28-32.

school age children and culminated in the portfolio of incentives and threats that maintained compliant security servants. The lifelong process of indoctrination produced a hard core of supporters of the status quo that were likely to reject a new order that disabused them of their power.

The indoctrination of selected Iraqis into the Ba'ath apparatus began in primary school with an organization called the Pioneers. Youths could join the Vanguard ( *tala'i'* ) at 10 and the Youth Organization ( *futuwwa* ) at 15.<sup>58</sup> These organizations promised a bright future and fed into a party structure that conferred many perks to eager young men. Aspiring members received fast-track promotions and preferred jobs in the public sector in return for new recruits and information on “disloyal” Iraqis, but the most ambitious and adventurous Sunni Iraqis were often drawn to the security services.<sup>59</sup> State security officers had tremendous power, wielding unmitigated control over Iraqis they surveilled, detained, and often tortured. They were regarded with fear and deference, a fact which set them up for many perks such as protection money and elite treatment.<sup>60</sup> Such power cannot be easy to give up, especially when one faces the possibility of retribution for egregious acts. The security services were used to “perform sufficient atrocities... as to ensure that they have nowhere else to go.”<sup>61</sup> For these reasons, the hard core of the regime is faced with the highest costs in a new regime.

Leaders within the security services were further conditioned through a combination of patronage and coercion. Perks and bonuses were at times lavished on bosses throughout the structure,<sup>62</sup> but could just as easily be revoked. This was accompanied by the fear of being the subject of an informant’s revelation of some transgression, real or imagined. In this “system of spying on spies” no one was immune from the grips of fear.<sup>63</sup> The effect was a dependence on the regime for continued personal success and survival.

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<sup>58</sup> Makiya, 76-77.

<sup>59</sup> Braude, 46-47, 61.

<sup>60</sup> Braude, 48-49.

<sup>61</sup> Baram, “Between Impediment and Advantage: Saddam’s Iraq.”

<sup>62</sup> Baram, “Between Impediment and Advantage: Saddam’s Iraq.”

<sup>63</sup> Makiya, 16.

Some responded to the environment of fear and invasion of privacy by identifying wholly with the regime and the party. Psychologically, some individuals sought to become complicit in the activities of the regime as a way of liquidating “their personality and selves into the oppressor ‘group’ and its values.”<sup>64</sup> In a similar observation, an expert on gang behavior noted that once individuals joined a gang, they were able to increase the “intensity and scope of violence” without personal remorse because they felt that the direction of gang leadership absolved their personal responsibility in the act.<sup>65</sup> For many reasons, the individuals in Iraq’s violent organizations were likely to identify with the group and become complicit in the violence.

In many Sunni areas, regime employment was the predominate way of life. In one town, Dhulu’iyya, the local police commander explained that “just about every family had someone working in security or the army or some government job... it was normal to join the Ba’th party – it was like a rule.”<sup>66</sup> In the same town, a 57-year old former regime security officer struggled to understand how the job that he had once been so proud of now caused him to be treated poorly. “Was serving the country some sort of crime? ... We were on top of the system. We had dreams. ... Now we are the losers. We lost our positions, our status, the security of our families, stability. Curse on the Americans.”<sup>67</sup> These Sunnis lost the only way of life they knew. Whether complicit criminals or proud servants, many former regime employees reject the new order in Iraq.

Iraq’s security organizations were populated by willing servants who identified with the regime and personally gained from their positions. These Iraqis were part of a networked and layered security structure that ranged widely across Iraqi society and government. These individuals were well-trained, well-networked, and well-positioned to take up resistance when the time came.

## **2. Institutions of Iraqi Security**

The Iraqi security apparatus was vast. It consisted of multiple layers of organizations with overlapping missions and mutual suspicion and surveillance. These

<sup>64</sup> Makiya, 105.

<sup>65</sup> Martin Sanchez Jankowski, *Islands in the Street: Gangs in American Urban Society*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 170-171.

<sup>66</sup> Quoted in Baram, “Who Are the Insurgents?” 5.

<sup>67</sup> Quoted in Baram, “Who are the Insurgents?” 5.

institutions were carefully balanced to ensure that no service or cell gained the power to threaten the regime itself. All elements of this apparatus reported directly to Saddam, further emphasizing the theme of personal fealty to the leader and not the state.<sup>68</sup> Most of the security and intelligence services maintained regional offices throughout Iraq,<sup>69</sup> spreading the reach of the regime and the breadth of the security network. When the central element of the regime was removed from the picture, these security organizations melted away, leaving a network of small cells in key locations throughout Iraq that continued to resist.

The central organ in Saddam's security decision-making apparatus was the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), consisting of Saddam and his closest associates. In this body rested control of the state, the Ba'ath Party, and the military.<sup>70</sup> All of the individuals in the RCC were personally invested in Ba'ath rule. The lines of patrimonial distribution and control often went from Saddam, through RCC members, to networks in the security structure and society. Therefore, RCC members held considerable access to funding, societal support, and portions of the security services. It is not surprising that several members of the RCC have been implicated as key figures in the resistance, especially in funding and coordinating activities.<sup>71</sup> The numerous security organizations that existed below the RCC provided a network of cells of well-trained and loyal Iraqis that RCC members could fund to resist the new order in Iraq.

The Ba'ath Party also provided a structure consisting of a number of compartmentalized and secretive cells. These cells provided an excellent structure for the networking of resistance. The basic element of Ba'ath Party organization was the cell; a unit consisting of three to seven men. Two to seven cells constituted a division, two to five divisions made up a section, two sections fell into a branch, and the branches all fell

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<sup>68</sup> Ibrahim al-Marashi, "Iraq's Security and Intelligence Network: A Guide and Analysis," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 6, no. 3 (electronic version September 2002), <http://www.ciaonet.org> (accessed October 7, 2005): 1-2.

<sup>69</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, *Iraq: Foreign Intelligence and Security Services* (August 1985), electronic version, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB167/05.pdf>, (accessed October 20, 2005).

<sup>70</sup> Anthony Cordesman and Ahmed Hashim, *Iraq: Sanctions and Beyond*, (Boulder CO: Westview Press, 1997), 36-37.

<sup>71</sup> Ned Parker, "Iraq Battling More Than 200,000 Insurgents: Intelligence Chief," *Agence-France Presse North American Service* (January 3, 2005), <http://www.fbis.gov>.



under the regional command.<sup>72</sup> This cellular organization is very similar to that of insurgent forces such as the Algerian *Front de Liberation Nationale*,<sup>73</sup> underlining the potential utility of such a structure for those wishing to resist occupation.

*a. Security Services*

The Special Security Organization (SSO, *Amn al-Khass*) was the most powerful arm of the security services. Agents for the SSO were hand-picked from other agencies for their loyalty. The approximately 5,000 members of the SSO were largely drawn from Tikrit, Huwayja, and Samarra and received better compensation than the members of other services. This core security service was responsible for presidential security, monitoring other security services and government agencies, gathering information on officials and relatives of Saddam, and numerous other critical functions. The SSO also controlled the Republican Guard and Special Republican Guard of the Iraqi military.<sup>74</sup> This arm appears to have been the lead agency in wide-ranging cooperation with the Soviet KGB for intelligence training and technology transfer.<sup>75</sup> Members of this service had access to information on most influential Iraqis, as well as ties to elites in government and the military. The SSO contained “educated and highly intelligent men” whose loyalty to the former regime was “iron clad.”<sup>76</sup> Therefore, the SSO may provide the hardest of the hard core resistance, with connections to funding, military might, and influential Iraqis through cells of well-connected, well-trained and well-armed agents.

The General Security Service (*Al-Amn al-'Amm*) was charged with monitoring for economic and political crimes. It held extensive files on average Iraqis and had access to informers across the country. With units in every police station,<sup>77</sup> the General Security Service had the potential to provide local cells of rejectionist individuals

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<sup>72</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, *Political and Personality Handbook of Iraq*, (January 1991), electronic version, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB167/06.pdf>, (accessed October 19, 2005), 9.

<sup>73</sup> For Algerian resistance structures see Alf Andrew Heggoy, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Algeria*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1972), 122-127.

<sup>74</sup> Al-Marashi, 2-3.

<sup>75</sup> Makiya, 12.

<sup>76</sup> Amatzia Baram, “The Iraqi Political Scene Eleven Years After the Gulf War,” in *The Future of Iraq Conference Proceedings*, ed. Lyle Goldstein and Ahmed Hashim, (Newport, RI: Center for Naval Warfare Studies, United States Naval War College, December 2002), 22.

<sup>77</sup> Al-Marashi, 4-5.

across Iraq. The pervasive nature of this service likely yielded a large number of enemies in society. Thus, regime change is a personal threat to some officers of the General Security Service.

The General Intelligence Service (GIS, *Al-Mukhabarat al-Amma*), or Iraqi Intelligence Service (IIS, *Jihaz al-Mukhabarat al-Iraqi*), was the security and intelligence arm of the Ba'ath Party. It had the missions of conducting “sabotage, subversion, and terrorist operations against neighboring countries such as Syria and Iran,” and funding opposition groups.<sup>78</sup> Foreign operations also included assassinations and coercion of Iraqi dissidents abroad. The GIS went so far as to open offices in several foreign states. At home, the service was used to monitor grass-roots organizations, Shi'a, Kurds, potential opposition groups, and foreigners.<sup>79</sup> Its members were chosen primarily for political loyalty, rather than for any job skills. This loyal cadre was also used to oversee the other security, military, and bureaucratic services and ensure their fealty to the regime.<sup>80</sup> Due to their previous duties monitoring opposition groups within Iraq and neighboring countries, some officers may have had contacts to Islamic extremist groups that were useful once resistance began.<sup>81</sup> GIS represents yet another group of loyal cells with training in clandestine activities and access both in Iraq and abroad.

The Iraqi services abroad sought out support for the regime in neighboring countries. These operations may have some impact on foreign involvement in the resistance because they activated Arab and Islamist support for the Iraqi people in the 1990s. Operatives worked in student unions and professional venues to garner support. A major focus of their efforts was Jordan where there were numerous graduates of Iraqi universities, many involved in organizing unions and rallies in “solidarity with the Iraqi people.”<sup>82</sup> These efforts may have been assisted by parallel Islamist activism, as will be discussed below.

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<sup>78</sup> Cordesman and Hashim, 46.

<sup>79</sup> Al-Marashi, 6.

<sup>80</sup> Makiya, 14-16.

<sup>81</sup> Alexis Debat, “Visisecting the Jihad,” *The National Interest* 76 (Summer 2004): 22.

<sup>82</sup> Braude, 51-52.

The *Fedayeen* were a paramilitary force created on October 7, 1994.<sup>83</sup> It consisted of young Tikritis, trained by the Republican Guard.<sup>84</sup> This force was considerably strengthened in 1996 and may have consisted of up to 100,000 men.<sup>85</sup> The *Fedayeen* were involved in guerilla fighting during the initial invasion of Iraq. Former *Fedayeen* fighters are mentioned often in accounts of the resistance, as many members of this large force seem to have continued their unconventional battle as trained.<sup>86</sup>

**b. The Military**

The leadership ranks of the Iraqi armed forces were conditioned to assist in Saddam's control of Iraq, making the military the largest tool for internal security. The Iraqi Army has had a long history as an "agent for internal repression," but state control was refined under Saddam. A series of purges removed potentially threatening leaders and the ranks were peppered with politically indoctrinated Ba'ath cadres who would not carry out critical orders without party approval. Additionally, military officers were indoctrinated to identify with the Ba'ath party specifically, rather than with the nation. These measures mitigated the military's propensity to interfere in politics in the interest of guarding the nation at large.<sup>87</sup>

The Directorate of Political Guidance (*Mudiriyat al-tawjih al-siyasi*) controlled political commissars down to the platoon level, and sought to enforce discipline and politically indoctrinate the armed forces. The security services and well-placed informants maintained close watch over the military, leading to frequent turnover of key officials through rotation, retirement, or execution. Such turnover prevented any figure from gaining enough power and popularity to pose a threat to Saddam's rule.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Amatzia Baram, *Building Toward Crisis: Saddam Husayn's Strategy for Survival*, (Washington DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1998), 50.

<sup>84</sup> Cordesman and Hashim, 47-48.

<sup>85</sup> Kenneth A. Pollock, *The Threatening Storm: The Case for Invading Iraq*, (New York: Random House, 2002), 123.

<sup>86</sup> "Saddam Ordered Training of Al-Qa'ida Members," *Al-Yawm Al-Akher* (Iraq: October 16, 2003), trans. by Middle East Media Research Institute, <http://memri.org/bin/opener.cgi?Page=archives&ID=SP59203> (accessed May 19, 2005). Mohammad Bazzi, "A Promise to Fight On: A Leader in Iraqi Militia Group Tells of Plans for Extended Guerrilla War," *New York Newsday*, (July 10, 2003), <http://nynewsday.com/news/nationworld/world/ny-3365886.0,1468490,print.story> (accessed May 26, 2005).

<sup>87</sup> Makiya, 21, 25-27.

<sup>88</sup> Cordesman and Hashim, 50-56.

Military Intelligence (*Al-Estikbarat al-Askariyya*) was tasked with ensuring the loyalty of the Iraqi Army, as well as conducting unconventional operations during war and against foreign and domestic opponents.<sup>89</sup> This organization reported directly to Saddam, rather than to the Ministry of Defense. *Estikbarat* recruited informants in Iraq and abroad and ran a network of operatives in Jordan, Israel, the Occupied Territories, the Gulf states, Egypt, Syria, Sudan, Turkey, Yemen, and Iran.<sup>90</sup> Operatives took part in a number of operations abroad, including assassinations, intelligence gathering, and protection operations that reportedly took place in Beirut, Paris, London, Sweden, and possibly even Detroit.<sup>91</sup> The network of support that was required to conduct such operations may still provide support to former members of the regime resisting occupation.

The Special Republican Guard (*Al-Haris al-Jamhuri al-Khas*) was the elite core of the military. This unit consisted of 12,000 to 15,000 active duty troops and a similar number of reserve troops.<sup>92</sup> The main function of this unit was to protect the regime in and around Baghdad.<sup>93</sup> These were the most loyal, well-trained, and well-equipped military units and therefore the most likely to resist regime change.

The Special Republican Guard was networked with many of the security services when it came to defense of the capital. For example, a building in the Hayy ‘Amil district of Baghdad housed a communications center where Special Intelligence, Special Security, and the Special Republican Guard coordinated operations. Interestingly, this center was responsible for security of the Airport Highway from the Republican Palace to the airport. The center was also located next to the Umm al-Tubul Mosque.<sup>94</sup> Both the Airport Highway and the Umm al-Tubul Mosque (renamed Ibn Taymiya) have become hotbeds of resistance activity. Security service members’ intimate knowledge of the Airport Highway undoubtedly helped any who desired to

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<sup>89</sup> Cordesman and Hashim, 46-47.

<sup>90</sup> Al-Marashi, 7.

<sup>91</sup> Makiya, 13-14.

<sup>92</sup> Braude, 89.

<sup>93</sup> Al-Marashi, 10.

<sup>94</sup> Iraqi National Congress, “Structure of Special Republican Guard,” (FBIS transcript of website, May 14, 1998), <http://www.fbis.gov>.

target coalition convoys on this road in the aftermath. The close proximity of a security hub and a radical Islamist mosque also may have provided linkages between former regime members and Islamic extremists wishing to collaborate on resistance operations after the fall of the regime.

Due to the politicization and conditioning of the military as a loyal tool of the regime, it was likely to “see any civil political movement as a rival and any civil movement that is Shi’ite or Kurdish dominated as a group of ‘traitors.’”<sup>95</sup> The legacy of Ba’ath rule produced many military members that rejected the occupation and reshaping of Iraq. Any proclivities toward Sunni nationalism and disdain for the occupation troops were well augmented by conditioned mistrust of the Shi’a and Kurds who became a dominant force in the new Iraq.

The well-armed cadres of the dissolved security and military services “are people who know each other, have combat skills, understand discipline, have experienced commanders and share the same provenance.”<sup>96</sup> These fighters present a fertile recruiting ground for any political elements requiring muscle in the transition.<sup>97</sup> Experience from earlier cases of transition suggests that military and security institutions should be provided with an honorable role in the transition and insulated from elites that may attempt to use them to vie for power.<sup>98</sup> The Iraqi military and security services were disbanded in the aftermath of the invasion and any efforts to insulate them from politics failed. Many FREs have become the muscle behind various resistance factions as financiers, facilitators, leaders, trainers, or foot soldiers. FRE links into the Iraqi society and economy have assisted in the networking of resistance groups.

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<sup>95</sup> Cordesman and Hashim, 56.

<sup>96</sup> Amatzia Baram, “Saddam’s Power Structure: The Tikritis Before, During, and After the War,” in *Iraq at the Crossroads: State and Society in the Shadow of Regime Change*, International Institute for Strategic Studies Adelphi Paper No. 354, ed. Toby Dodge and Steven Simon, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 109.

<sup>97</sup> Isam al-Khafaji, “A Few Days After: State and Society in Post-Saddam Iraq,” in *Iraq at the Crossroads: State and Society in the Shadow of Regime Change*, International Institute for Strategic Studies Adelphi Paper No. 354, ed. Toby Dodge and Steven Simon, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 84.

<sup>98</sup> O’Donnell and Schmitter, 32.

### **C. THE EFFECT OF THE REGIME ON ECONOMY, SOCIETY, AND INDIVIDUAL**

The reign of the Ba'ath regime produced long lasting effects in Iraqi society. Saddam's security state struck fear into individuals and erased virtually all civil society. The traditional structures that remained were actively reshaped to support the rule of the regime. The economy was devastated by the cost of wars, sanctions, and the maintenance of a security state, further damaging the society and the individual.

Scholars predict extensive damage to the state from totalitarian rule. "Unlike a dictatorship, totalitarianism leaves behind a mutilated, deformed society, a ruined economy, exhausted resources, and general degradation."<sup>99</sup> The Ba'ath regime succeeded in ruining the Iraqi economy, atomizing Iraqi society, and erasing most forms of autonomous organization. The social structures it could not completely remove, primarily Islamic venues and tribal structures, it attempted to reshape in support of the regime. This created peripheral regime supporting structures and in some cases radicalized Islamist and tribal figures. These structures and individuals are important to the trajectory of the transition.

Long or severe oppressive rule breaks down independent institutions and civil society almost completely.<sup>100</sup> The regime aims to depoliticize and atomize society, forcing individuals to focus on private matters rather than activities that might threaten the continued rule of the regime. No "self-organized and autonomously defined political spaces" remain and only "the most highly motivated individuals" act outside of the bounds defined by the regime.<sup>101</sup> There were no institutions of civil society remaining in Iraq. The only structures immediately available were those of the former regime and traditional elements such as tribes and Islamic structures that had been greatly affected by Saddam's rule.

As state capacity waned in the 1990s due to wars and sanctions, the regime ceded state powers to supportive societal structures such as co-opted tribes and religious institutions. Rampant organized crime and regime corruption also provided a shadow

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<sup>99</sup> Bukovsky, 16-17.

<sup>100</sup> O'Donnell and Schmitter, 22.

<sup>101</sup> O'Donnell and Schmitter, 48.

economy that helped the regime maintain stability. These structures were allowed to thrive in the later years of Saddam's rule. The state ceded powers to these structures that, in turn, assisted in maintaining control and stability. The tribes were given jurisdiction over their areas and were allowed to exercise legitimate use of force with weapons provided by the regime. Islamic institutions were used to legitimate the regime and enforce Islamic law. Organized crime and corruption were allowed by the regime as a means to evade international sanctions and to keep the networks of patronage flowing. The diffusion of state powers helped Saddam to maintain his rule, but it reinforced sub-state power structures, especially in Sunni areas. These sub-state actors came to covet these powers that must be returned to state government in a new Iraq. The sub-state power structures have motive to resist the new order and are well-positioned to undertake such resistance. The roots of these structures can be elucidated by exploring the pre-invasion economic and social status of Iraq.

### **1. The Economy**

Like many cases of totalitarian transition that left a legacy of "a ruined economy,"<sup>102</sup> the Iraqi economy was heavily damaged by wars, sanctions, and the cost of Saddam's security state. Damage was compounded by regime corruption and poor economic incentives emanating from Baghdad. The restructuring of the Iraqi economy under embargo yielded a massive informal sector, endemic organized crime, and a destitute Iraqi society. These legacies weigh heavily on post-invasion Iraq.

Economic hardship was the norm for most Iraqis by the end of Saddam's reign. The crushing burden of two costly wars and thirteen years of sanctions fell almost completely on the shoulders of Iraq's people. The average per capita income stood at \$8,161 in 1979 and dropped to \$2,108 by 1989, largely due to Iraq's disastrous decision to go to war with Iran. The 1991 Gulf War and the ensuing UN sanctions that embargoed commerce with Iraq compounded the damage. Per capita income dropped to \$609 in 1992 and hovered around \$500 by 1995.<sup>103</sup> Gross domestic product stood at \$47.56 billion in 1980 and plummeted to an estimated \$15.35 billion by 1997 before settling at \$26.117 billion by 2002. At the same time, Iraq's population grew from 13 million in

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<sup>102</sup> Bukovsky, 15.

<sup>103</sup> Cordesman and Hashim, 124-127, 140.

1980 to 23.3 million in 2000.<sup>104</sup> The effect of Iraq's economic woes was far reaching; impacting social structures, norms, and individual well-being. The economic environment of sanctions and state corruption led to a huge informal economy and a growing sector of organized crime.

The public sector was a major source of income in the early 1990s. An estimated 822,000 Iraqis were on the state payroll in 1991, including civilian employees, members of the armed forces, and pensioners. Forty percent of Iraqi households were dependent on state paychecks.<sup>105</sup> This public sector shrank significantly in the 1990s, leaving many to "survive on their own wit and skill."<sup>106</sup> Those who did not lose their job often supplemented their paltry salary with income from corruption that served to feed their families.<sup>107</sup> Many Iraqis turned to the informal sector for employment. This "shadow economy" included some legitimate but unaccounted activities such as services, street vending, or begging, as well as the gamut of economic and organized crime that was rampant in the later years of Saddam's Iraq.<sup>108</sup>

It is estimated that the informal economy constituted approximately 30 percent of gross domestic product in 2000. Extrapolation from other data sets provides an estimate that the informal labor force constituted just under 70 percent of the total labor force; around 30 percent of the total population.<sup>109</sup> These figures point to the pervasive nature of unofficial employment in Iraq, which is a symptom of severe economic dysfunction.

The perverse incentives of Iraq's corrupt regime contributed significantly to this informal sector as well.<sup>110</sup> Corrupt officials and restrictive laws made it difficult for

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<sup>104</sup> World Bank, "World Bank Data Sheet for Iraq," (January 29, 2004), [http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/mna/mena.nsf/Attachments/Datasheet/\\$File/iraqprototype.pdf](http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/mna/mena.nsf/Attachments/Datasheet/$File/iraqprototype.pdf), (accessed October 31, 2005).

<sup>105</sup> Isam Al-Khafaji, "Repression, Conformity and Legitimacy: Prospects for an Iraqi Social Contract," in *The Future of Iraq*, ed. John Calabrese (Washington, DC: Middle East Institute, 1997), 21.

<sup>106</sup> Robert Looney, "Corruption's Reflection: Iraq's Shadow Economy," *Strategic Insights* 4, no. 3 (electronic journal, March 2005), <http://www.ccc.nps.navy.mil/si> (accessed October 27, 2005).

<sup>107</sup> Reinoud Leenders and Justin Alexander, "Case Study: Corrupting the New Iraq," in *Global Corruption Report 2005*, ed. Transparency International, (2005), <http://www.globalcorruptionreport.org/download.html>, (accessed November 1, 2005), 84.

<sup>108</sup> Looney, "Corruption's Reflection."

<sup>109</sup> Looney, "Corruption's Reflection."

<sup>110</sup> Looney, "Corruption's Reflection."



legitimate business to survive. Many business owners avoided registering their businesses for fear of shakedowns by predatory officials. Businessmen who kept a low profile might only have to bribe one or two officials who happened across their shop. In contrast, legitimate businesses had to bribe a series of officials to get their business registered. In addition, regular shakedowns from different ministerial officials could be expected once the business was officially listed.<sup>111</sup>

The corruption and criminalization of the Iraqi economy eroded state power. Corrupt officials, black marketeers, and organized criminals gained power at the expense of the state. “A muted anarchy came to underlie the thin veil of a tightly surveilled society” and organized crime became a fact of life<sup>112</sup> romanticized by a popular drama on Iraqi TV, “The Wolves of the Night” (*Dhi’ab al-Layl*).<sup>113</sup> Rampant organized crime and general lawlessness after the fall of Saddam have significant roots in the conditions of the informal and criminal economies of the 1990s. These sectors produced another set of Iraqis that would resist their loss of power under rule of law in a new Iraq. Economic difficulties and pervasive corruption also heavily impacted social norms and individual well-being.

## **2. The Society and the Individual**

The confluence of pervasive and violent security institutions, widespread corruption, and severe economic hardship had a profound effect on Iraqi society. The security state produced “an all-embracing atmosphere of fear.”<sup>114</sup> The “complicity of the masses” in informing and staffing the security institutions deepened the terror by making everyone a potential informer or tormentor.<sup>115</sup> Saddam’s rule also destroyed the institutions of civil society that serve as a buffer between the people and the government,<sup>116</sup> leaving the “shadow state” of patrimonial and coercive networks as the only means of controlling Iraq.<sup>117</sup> Due to this legacy, the norms that lubricate the rule of

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<sup>111</sup> Braude, 118.

<sup>112</sup> Braude, 118.

<sup>113</sup> Braude, 99.

<sup>114</sup> Makiya, 47.

<sup>115</sup> Makiya, 58.

<sup>116</sup> Makiya, 117.

<sup>117</sup> Makiya, 119.

law in many states, such as the idea of “public service,” meritocratic promotions, and citizens’ rights were notably absent from the former regime,<sup>118</sup> hampering the return to order and inflaming chaos and sectarian mistrust in the wake of regime change.

The regime’s “system of spying on spies” instilled a “permanent condition of fear and insecurity” throughout the state.<sup>119</sup> Saddam used a coterie of informers and supporters to manipulate the government.<sup>120</sup> In turn, the state maintained a vast network of informers throughout Iraq to control the society.<sup>121</sup> This network of paranoia and secrecy was a legacy that assisted the resistance in evading intelligence collection and terrorizing potential domestic informers.

Over 500,000 Iraqis were part-time informants for state security institutions.<sup>122</sup> Some of these were enthusiastic participants, but informing was largely coerced. One teacher explained that he resented having to inform, but those who “were too obvious” in their activities had to be sacrificed in order to staunch the pressures to produce information.<sup>123</sup> The broad net cast by state-run informers shut down the natural discussions and “storytelling” of the people, allowing the regime to replace these stories with “fantastic lies” that went unassailed by the normal skepticism and criticism of society.<sup>124</sup> The logic of such stories is a difficult legacy to overcome as paranoia and conspiracy theories are often better received than facts.

The security state affected family discussions as well. The natural openness of children in front of their teachers sometimes led to an admission of parents’ frank talk and resulted in detention of the parents. Therefore, even non-Ba’athist parents “put on a show of support for the regime” and often encouraged their children to join Ba’ath organizations to protect them from suspicion. Furthermore, Hussein emphasized the

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<sup>118</sup> Makiya, 43-44.

<sup>119</sup> Makiya, 16.

<sup>120</sup> Cordesman and Hashim, 57.

<sup>121</sup> Makiya, 117.

<sup>122</sup> Braude, 48.

<sup>123</sup> Quoted in Braude, xix.

<sup>124</sup> Makiya, 61.

importance of inculcating Iraqi youth with a deep distrust of foreigners.<sup>125</sup> The result was a generation of children who were thoroughly indoctrinated with Saddam's propaganda, reinforced by parents' feigned loyalty. On the day of the regime's fall, a 12-year old lamented, "I'm sad. The Americans have stolen freedom." Her father explained, "Until now, I haven't been able to speak my feelings about him."<sup>126</sup>

Saddam openly stated that the Ba'ath were interested in using the children as a vanguard against the "backwardness" of their parents. He asserted that any conflict "between the unity of the family and these mores" of the Ba'ath party "must be resolved in favour of the new mores."<sup>127</sup> These indoctrinated and radicalized youth provide a pool of Iraqis predisposed to resist foreigners and the new order in Iraq.

The quality of these youths' education also declined in the later years of the old regime. Many teachers, unable to make ends meet, left their jobs or spent significant time working menial second jobs. Children were also occupied in supplementing family income and unable to focus on their education.<sup>128</sup> As a result, literacy rates among 15-24 year olds were lower than those of 25-34 year olds in 2004. The U.N. Development Programme points to these statistics as evidence of a decline in educational standards over the last decade.<sup>129</sup>

At the same time, the 1990s saw a precipitous decline in the "social and moral mores" of Iraqi society, leading to a rise in crime and a willingness to excuse bad behavior as a product of "hard circumstances."<sup>130</sup> Widows and other women without anyone to support them turned to prostitution to survive.<sup>131</sup> Crime became endemic in the later years of Saddam's rule, during which criminals were involved in "oil smuggling

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<sup>125</sup> Makiya, 77-78.

<sup>126</sup> Anthony Shadid, *Night Draws Near: Iraq's People in the Shadow of America's War*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2005), 120.

<sup>127</sup> Saddam Hussein quoted in Makiya, 78.

<sup>128</sup> Braude, 171-172.

<sup>129</sup> United Nations Development Programme and Iraqi Ministry of Planning and Development Cooperation, "Volume II: Analytical Report," *Iraq Living Conditions Survey 2004*, (Baghdad, Iraq: 2005), <http://www.iq.undp.org/ILCS/PDF/Analytical%20Report%20-%20English.pdf>, (accessed November 1, 2005).

<sup>130</sup> Cordesman and Hashim, 15. Al-Nouri, 99.

<sup>131</sup> Braude, 114.

and other enterprises” through a “widespread, globally networked criminal operation.”<sup>132</sup> Even among normal citizens, tensions were high. One Baghdadi related that his city had become “an angry place” due to the stress of severe economic hardship. So many people are on edge, and can easily break into a fight at any moment.”<sup>133</sup> One can see how this highly-charged atmosphere could give way to chaos. It also fed into the rising religiosity of many Iraqis described below.

The kingpins of smuggling and organized crime during the 1990s were known to Iraqis as “the cats of the embargo” (*Qitat al-Hisar*). These newly rich entrepreneurs made fortunes off smuggled goods.<sup>134</sup> One Iraqi observed that under embargo, the rich could do virtually anything except “say bad things about Saddam or compete with his family... In Baghdad there is no law. You can kill, steal, do whatever you want.”<sup>135</sup> Furthermore, endemic smuggling perpetrated by organized criminals and tribal gangs created well-established smuggling routes through the Al-Qaim, Al-Rutbah, and Qusaybah areas that have proven particularly useful for infiltrating foreign fighters.<sup>136</sup> Crime and corruption are a legacy that eroded Iraqi social norms and produced individuals resistant to the new order. Some of these criminals have simply continued their criminal enterprises, while others have actively aided or engaged in resistance.

Economic hardship due to the embargo also greatly altered the social networks of Iraq. Sanctions devastated the middle class, forcing up to 63 percent of professionals to find employment as laborers.<sup>137</sup> The damaged class structure in Iraq is yet another handicap against national unity. Many of the new rich do not have the traditional skills and education held by the former middle class of Iraq that are needed to successfully run a country and reconstruct civil society.<sup>138</sup> Professionals, such as doctors or engineers, were often unable to make ends meet, while manual labor or even criminal activity

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<sup>132</sup> Robert Tomes, “Schlock and Blah: Counter-insurgency Realities in a Rapid Dominance Era,” *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 16, no. 1 (March 2005): 45.

<sup>133</sup> Quoted in Braude, 114.

<sup>134</sup> Braude, 120.

<sup>135</sup> Iraqi merchant quoted in Braude, 121.

<sup>136</sup> Debat, 20.

<sup>137</sup> Toby Dodge, “Prepared Testimony for Senate Committee on Foreign Relations,” (April 20, 2004), <http://foreign.senate.gov/testimony/2004/DodgeTestimony040420.pdf> (accessed July 10, 2005).

<sup>138</sup> Al-Nouri, 104-111.

became comparatively much more profitable. These facts, along with an impoverished educational system, threaten to create a generation without a strong middle class.<sup>139</sup> The disruption of the class structure contributes the instability in Iraq and serves the resistance.

Within Iraq, numerous sectors had become accustomed to the power they attained by operating on the margins of the weakened state. These included personally-profiting state officials, criminals, and ruthless profiteers. Members of traditional structures also gained significant power in Saddam's search for supporters in the later days of Iraq.

#### **D. REINTRODUCING TRADITIONAL STRUCTURES IN SUPPORT OF THE REGIME**

Years of oppressive rule and harsh conditions fragmented Iraqi society into a "set of equally weighted" individuals, uprooted from their traditional identity. These individuals were reconstructed into a new, state-centric network.<sup>140</sup> In this "new society," identity was primarily defined by each individual "being held in check by the same kind of personal loyalty [to the state], however constructed (conviction, complicity, self-interest, fear)."<sup>141</sup> Those who identified with the state out of conviction, complicity, or self-interest present the largest problems for the transition. As Saddam's ability to control Iraq waned, traditional elements were re-emphasized to extend the reach of the regime center, creating another sector that coveted its power under the old regime.

Saddam appeared to have an iron grip on Iraq, but his survival required constant manipulation. The crises of the 1980s and 1990s eroded Saddam's legitimacy significantly. Saddam bolstered his failing base of support by turning to traditional institutions, specifically the tribes and Islam, as the power of the Ba'ath Party and its ideology waned.<sup>142</sup> The regime's manipulation of these traditional structures produced a

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<sup>139</sup> Sarah Graham-Brown, "War and Sanctions: Cost to Society and Toll on Development," in *The Future of Iraq*, ed. John Calabrese, (Washington, DC: The Middle East Institute, 1997), 37.

<sup>140</sup> Makiya, 128.

<sup>141</sup> Makiya, 88.

<sup>142</sup> Adeed Dawisha, "Iraqi Politics: The Past and Present as Context for the Future," in *The Future of Iraq*, ed. John Calabrese, (Washington, DC: Middle East Institute, 1997), 12.

legacy of activism, power, and autonomy that would not be readily ceded to the centralized rule of law in a new Iraq. These societal structures also provided latent networks for resistance activity.

The regime was unable to completely eradicate structures in the “private and social domain” such as family, kin, and religion.<sup>143</sup> Traditional, identity-based social groups provided a refuge from state-induced fear.<sup>144</sup> Religion provided “frightened and atomized individuals” with an identity apart from Saddam’s “new society.”<sup>145</sup> Tribal structures provided more visceral protection in the uncertain environment of Iraq in the form of armed protection and dispute mediation. These structures were the subject of regime patronage and co-optation in the decade before the coalition invasion.

The reconstruction of tribal and Islamic institutions is particularly important because these institutions emerged from regime change largely intact. These institutions were radicalized to some degree, leading to their easy entry into violent resistance. Islam has provided potent advantages to resisters able to capitalize on ideological and organizational aspects existing in Iraq and tribes extend support structures around resistance groups through ties of identity.

### **1. The Tribes**

Tribes were important to the regime in several ways. First, key positions in the regime and in the military and security services have long been staffed from a Sunni tribal base that has provided societal support for Saddam and his henchmen. This mechanism of tribalism within the regime has been termed “etatist tribalism.”<sup>146</sup> Second, as the reach of Baghdad receded with the weakening of the state, the regime ceded state powers to the tribes, such as responsibility for maintaining order and ensuring loyalty to the regime in their areas. Administration and law enforcement by the tribes replaced state structures in what has been termed “social tribalism.”<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Makiya, 105.

<sup>144</sup> Makiya, 106.

<sup>145</sup> Makiya, 107.

<sup>146</sup> Faleh A. Jabar, “Sheikhs and Ideologues: Deconstruction and Reconstruction of Tribes under Patrimonial Totalitarianism in Iraq, 1968-1998,” in *Tribes and Power: Nationalism and Ethnicity in the Middle East*, ed. Faleh A. Jabar and Hosham Dawod, (London: Saqi Books, 2003), 71.

<sup>147</sup> Jabar, “Sheikhs and Ideologues,” 71.

Saddam's tribal policies have important implications for transition. First, tribalism within the regime caused a segment of Sunni society to link their identity with political power. Second, the rise of tribalism in the periphery created a social structure that holds and covets state powers. Finally, renewed emphasis on tribes and tribal honor produces an impetus for vengeance and a mechanism for enforcement against collaboration with the coalition.

*a. Tribalism within the Regime*

When the Ba'ath gained power by coup in 1968, the small group of Ba'ath elites set about securing their precarious position with zeal. A central part of this campaign was to mobilize clan solidarity within the regime's military and security services. Tribal ties extended the regime's base in society, provided loyal recruits for its coercive structures, and helped to create cohesion and trust amongst members of the regime center.<sup>148</sup>

Saddam's al-Bu Nasir tribe and their allies, approximately 50,000 in number, formed the core of regime patrimonial distribution networks.<sup>149</sup> The regime elites came largely from a smaller group, the Beijat subclans.<sup>150</sup> Members of supportive tribes were concentrated in the most influential security services.<sup>151</sup> Elements of tribes that supported the regime also benefited handsomely from the arrangement. Perks of regime patrimonialism included influential positions and lucrative government contracts.<sup>152</sup> The result was newly-rich and newly-powerful individuals within the tribal system that owed their position to the regime.

Spooked by coup plots, Saddam installed members of less important tribes in organizations like the Special Republican Guard, patronizing a wider base of tribes.<sup>153</sup> Lacking a strong social power base, these individuals were more reliant on the patronage of Saddam and therefore more likely to remain loyal. This strategy also served to deepen

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<sup>148</sup> Jabar, "Sheikhs and Ideologues," 81-82.

<sup>149</sup> Dodge, *Inventing Iraq*, 161.

<sup>150</sup> Jabar, "Sheikhs and Ideologues," 81.

<sup>151</sup> Cordesman and Hashim, 27.

<sup>152</sup> Jabar, "Sheikhs and Ideologues," 82-83.

<sup>153</sup> Cordesman and Hashim, 29.

the complexities of the power structures in Iraq. The linkage of primary identity to positions of political power in the old order leads some to feel cheated out of their rightful position in the new Iraq. Furthermore, the tribal support of the old regime widens the potential base of support and manpower for hard core resisters.

***b. Tribalism in the Periphery***

The regime used tribal control to extend the reach of the state in the face of waning capacity. The rising power of tribal structures was an indigenous phenomenon that the regime recognized and co-opted.<sup>154</sup> Since social tribalism was not a regime-induced phenomenon, but one that grew out of the social conditions of Iraq, these social institutions remain powerful in the wake of the invasion and bear significantly on the resistance.

The regime allowed tribal authorities to handle matters of local law and order and to mediate disputes within the tribe and between tribes. In some cases, multiple tribes entered into agreements that standardized “blood money” payments for assaults or murders. Mediation of such disputes, along with collection of taxes and fees, provided tribes with revenue and rising power within the state.<sup>155</sup>

The regime formalized its relationship with the tribes in 1996 when it basically revived the tribal laws of the mandatory period, installing tribal leaders as the intermediaries between the government and the people in tribal areas. The new functions of these tribal leaders included tax collection. Sheikhs were allowed to keep a share and send along the remainder as “tribute.” Tribal leaders were also given control of a portion of the development budget to spend on local initiatives in their domain.<sup>156</sup>

Tribal leaders were given a reduced military conscription quota to fill as they chose, rather than direct conscription of tribal members by the state.<sup>157</sup> Saddam armed neighborhood and tribal militias with small arms, rocket-propelled grenades, mortars, and even howitzers, as an extension of state control and a guard against “future

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<sup>154</sup> Jabar, “Sheikhs and Ideologues,” 89.

<sup>155</sup> Jabar, “Sheikhs and Ideologues,” 95.

<sup>156</sup> Amir Taheri, “Saddam Husayn Tries To Revive the Tribal System Following the Collapse of the Party Control System.” *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, (London: May 15, 1996), trans. FBIS, <http://www.fbis.gov>.

<sup>157</sup> Taheri.



problems.”<sup>158</sup> These tribal militias were activated to protect important locations in several cities in November and December 1998 due to heightened tensions with the U.S.,<sup>159</sup> demonstrating their role in support of the state. In sum, the regime ceded state powers to the tribes, which became autonomous entities in many areas with state license to use violence if necessary within their domain.

These new centers of power were difficult to manage. Tribal justice began to rival state justice as tribal authorities mediated disputes and crimes within their regions, including murder.<sup>160</sup> Bureaucrats without tribal affiliation complained of powerlessness and confrontation between state bureaucracies and tribes became increasingly common. This led, in some cases, to tribal assassination of regime functionaries such as policemen and judges that were adversely involved in tribal affairs.<sup>161</sup> Tribal organization also spawned gangs that undertook an alarming amount of criminal activity, including looting and kidnapping. This, in turn, led Iraqis without tribal protection to invent new tribes of their own or to attempt to integrate with an existing tribe.<sup>162</sup> As state control waned, the role of tribes in mediating and causing chaos was complex. The difficulties Saddam’s security state had with the tribes continued under the new management of Iraq.

The considerable powers attained by tribes near the end of Saddam’s rule would not be easily forsaken. Heavily armed tribes provided a fertile ground for some cells of resistance.<sup>163</sup> These tribal structures have provided insular organizational structures to some resistance members. One observer warned that Saddam’s policies promoting traditional structures “encouraged ethnic and sectarian sub-national tendencies that could erupt into violence were a prolonged power struggle to ensue after Saddam’s demise.”<sup>164</sup> These words, written in 1997, have proven dramatically prescient.

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<sup>158</sup> Terrill, 24. Baram, “Neo-Tribalism in Iraq,” 12-13.

<sup>159</sup> Jabar, “Sheikhs and Ideologues,” 96.

<sup>160</sup> Baram, “Neo-tribalism in Iraq,” 18, 21.

<sup>161</sup> Jabar, “Sheikhs and Ideologues,” 99.

<sup>162</sup> Jabar, “Sheikhs and Ideologues,” 97.

<sup>163</sup> Cordesman, “Iraq’s Evolving Insurgency,” 41.

<sup>164</sup> Dawisha, “Iraqi Politics: The Past and Present as Context for the Future,” 15.

## 2. Islam

The search for a refuge from Saddam's terror helped to promote a resurgent Islam and "a climate favorable to the emergence of fundamentalist political thinking."<sup>165</sup> The resurgent Islam during the last two decades of Saddam's rule was increasingly sectarian in outlook,<sup>166</sup> fueling political troubles in transition. The confluence of regime promotion of Islam, a regional context of politicized Islam, and an Iraqi population receptive to such messages provided a potent tool for resistance to occupation.

The involvement of Islamic structures in the resistance does not owe itself wholly to peculiarities of Islam, but rather to the position of religious institutions in repressive regimes. When public outlets of political participation are closed, the public often turns to religious institutions "to represent and protect its interests."<sup>167</sup> Furthermore, religious institutions are often a last bastion of assembly and sanctuary in repressive regimes, increasing their popularity. Sociological path dependency theorists argue that "conditions of uncertainty [like those experienced in crisis and transition] typically reinforce old networks and patterns as people turn back toward the familiar and the safe."<sup>168</sup> Iraqis increasingly turned to religion in the later years of Saddam's rule and after the occupation. Some found radicalizing influences in the powerful language of political Islam. Many of these Islamic radicals were also early activists in the resistance to foreign occupation due to religious motivations.

Islam became a tool for Saddam's regime in the 1980s and 90s when a policy of re-Islamization was adopted to provide stability in the society and legitimacy to the state.<sup>169</sup> As confrontation with the West grew, Saddam allowed political rhetoric in the sermons of Sunni clerics<sup>170</sup> and emphasized the image of a foreign assault on Islam.<sup>171</sup> Despite Saddam's shallow motivations, politicization of Islam found a receptive audience in some circles.

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<sup>165</sup> Makiya, 106.

<sup>166</sup> Makiya, 107.

<sup>167</sup> Casper, 13.

<sup>168</sup> Johnson, 254.

<sup>169</sup> Hashim and Post, 50.

<sup>170</sup> Ahmed S. Hashim, "Iraq's Chaos."

<sup>171</sup> Thaler, 125.

Hussein augmented rhetoric with Islamic programs in the 1990s. The regime distributed several million copies of the Koran, accompanied by mandatory religious courses,<sup>172</sup> and opened new mosques and the Saddam University for Islamic Studies.<sup>173</sup> *Huddud* punishments, such as amputations, were implemented starting in 1994, along with a crackdown on alcohol and prostitution.<sup>174</sup> The increased emphasis on an authoritarian form of Islam coincided with the population's rising religiosity.

Iraqis turned to religion in large numbers in the latter years of Saddam's rule because Islam provided solace from great hardship and mosques provided a venue for social interaction in a state permeated by security services. Attendance at mosques was said to have doubled in the five years before the 2003 war.<sup>175</sup> Many began to see Iraq's crises in religious terms.<sup>176</sup> In the words of one young Iraqi speaking in the summer of 2002, "We feel we need support, we need peace, so we pray."<sup>177</sup> Additionally, "the mosques were the only institution, apart from the tribes, relatively immune to regime and party control," providing a place of assembly for the increasing number of Iraqis not interested in the Ba'ath. As Ba'ath ideology waned, youths turned increasingly to the ideology of Islam.<sup>178</sup>

Ayyash al-Kubaysi, a representative of Iraq's Muslim Ulema Council, states that the Iraqi *mujahideen* were "reared in the mosque. The mosque embraced them." "The *ulema* and honest people" secretly educated the youth under the former regime. "The fruits of this secret education were seen once the lid was removed" by the 2003 invasion.<sup>179</sup> Iraqi Islamist activity operated in a larger regional context. Regional Islamist influences penetrated Iraq's borders, defying Saddam's crackdown on Iraqi Islamists. Outside Iraq, the plight of Iraq's populations under sanctions was a cause

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<sup>172</sup> Hashim and Post, 51.

<sup>173</sup> Kim Ghattas, "Religion – Iraq: Saddam Embraces Islam in Time of Crisis," *Global Information Network* (July 3, 2002): 1, accessed through ProQuest.

<sup>174</sup> Hashim and Post, 51.

<sup>175</sup> Shadid, 36. Ghattas.

<sup>176</sup> Al-Nouri, 110.

<sup>177</sup> Ghattas.

<sup>178</sup> Baram, "Who Are the Insurgents?" 10.

<sup>179</sup> Interview by Muhammad al-Baqali, "Iraq's Muslim Ulema Council Aide: Every US Soldier is Legitimate Target," *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, (London: April 23, 2004), trans. by FBIS, <http://www.fbis.gov>.

around which regional Islamists mobilized. Some of these Islamic networks included radical *mujahideen* that would see Iraq as a new cause célèbre.

Despite regime censorship, Iraqis were not completely isolated from Islamist influences coming in from the rest of the region. Islamist publications and audio tapes were smuggled in across porous borders. These influences did not motivate Iraqis to resist Saddam's government, a campaign almost certain to fail,<sup>180</sup> but they were probably instrumental in preparing some Iraqis for Islamist resistance to occupation. Iraqi Islamist Muhammad Ahmad al-Rashid's books were among those smuggled in from Egypt to a receptive audience. His readers were introduced to the theories of *jihad* but were warned to wait for the proper time of action. Similar messages were available in smuggled Islamist videos and cassettes.<sup>181</sup>

Several themes of regional Sunni Islamism resonated with the situation inside Iraq. Sunni identity and anti-Shi'a violence were "a constituent part" of Sunni Islamic militancy across the region.<sup>182</sup> This message was well-received by Sunnis facing domination by their historical subjects, the Shi'a. In this context, Sunni militants may see the U.S. intervention as "proof of 'sinister' U.S. intentions toward Islam," fueling anti-American violence as well.<sup>183</sup>

Iraq was a focus of regional Islamist activism during the sanctions of the 1990s. The impact of sanctions on the Iraqi people was well publicized in the region, emphasizing the suffering of fellow Arabs. The campaign to alleviate Iraqi suffering fit in with Islamist themes of "American hegemonic aspirations; double standards; hostility to Arabs and Islam; [and] support of Israel." Islamist mosques, especially in Jordan, were centers of charitable activism for Iraq.<sup>184</sup> Such activism provided a venue through which regional Islamists were drawn into the Iraqi cause. It is possible that some radicals

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<sup>180</sup> Baram, "Who are the Insurgents?" 10-11.

<sup>181</sup> Baram, "Who are the Insurgents?" 10-11.

<sup>182</sup> Vali Nasr, "Regional Implications of Shi'a Revival in Iraq," *The Washington Quarterly* 27, no. 3 (Summer 2004): 7-8.

<sup>183</sup> Nasr, 18-20.

<sup>184</sup> Marc Lynch, "Beyond the Arab Street: Iraq and the Arab Public Sphere," *Politics and Society* 31, no. 1 (March 2003): 67-82.

activated by this topic were well positioned to make the transition to resistance in 2003. Furthermore, Iraqi recipients of Islamist charity were probably more open to regional Islamist activism as well.

Regional Islamists also came to Jordanian towns on the Iraqi border to buy inexpensive weapons smuggled by Iraqi cab drivers. Many weapons ended up in Saudi Arabia or Palestine, or were stockpiled in Jordan.<sup>185</sup> These transactions likely created a network of contacts between Iraqis and Islamist militants in Jordan. Such contacts may have facilitated movement of ideology, funds and Islamist recruits into Iraq after the fall of the regime.

A more narrowly-interpreted regional influence that has shaped the most extreme resistance groups is the *Salafi* movement. This influential movement follows a strict adherence to the Koran and the example of the Prophet Muhammad. The oneness of God (*tawhid*) is central to their beliefs, as is the rejection of any role for “human reason, logic, and desire.” The resultant interpretation rejects any possibility of Islamic pluralism. A militant segment of this group, the *jihadi* faction, arose from the war against the Soviets in Afghanistan.<sup>186</sup> The uncompromising nature of the *Salafi* beliefs and the militancy of the *jihadi* faction are important to understanding the polar and unyielding nature of the most radical Islamist groups in Iraq today.

## **E. CONCLUSION**

The removal of the central point of leadership for the institutions of regime security and the patronized societal structures created a number of cells of former regime elements, tribal groups, Islamic strongholds, and the like (see Figure 2). These elements were connected through personal and professional ties to allow them to coordinate as a loose network. Without the central power and guidance of the regime, these elements were free to pursue their own interests in a very chaotic and fragmented environment. Many of them chose to resist the transition imposed by foreign military presence. In the words of Andreas Wimmer, the “sub-national power structure that was hitherto hidden

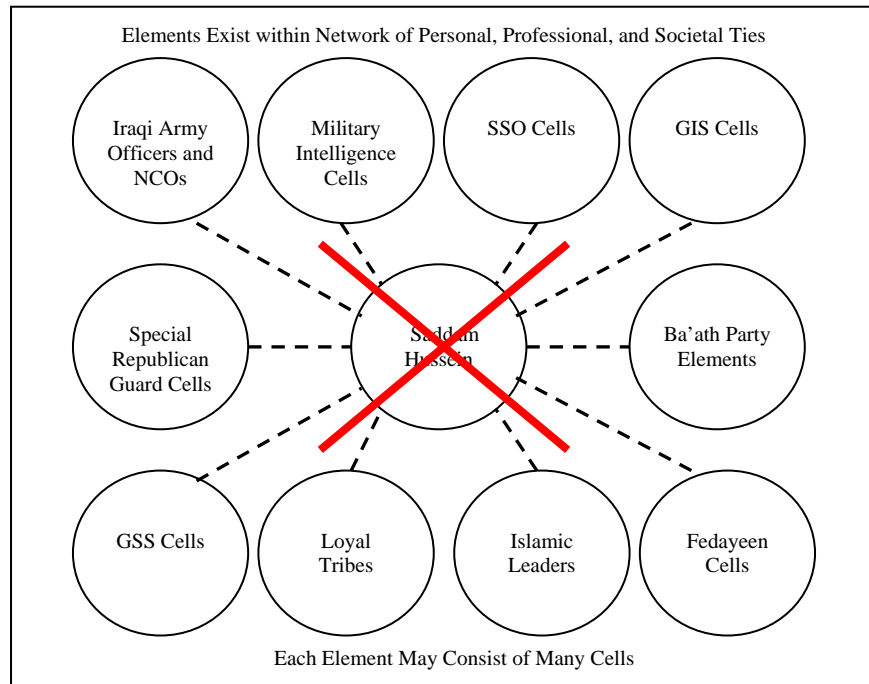
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<sup>185</sup> Braude, 54.

<sup>186</sup> Quintan Wiktorowicz, “Anatomy of the Salafi Movement,” (unpublished, December 2004), 1, 17.

under the centralized military, party, and security apparatus has become visible.” This structure lacks “trans-ethnic networks of civil society organizations” that could provide some unifying voice across Iraq.<sup>187</sup> Thus, the chaos that ensued was a product of what lay underneath Saddam’s central power. This sub-national power structure was undeniably a legacy of Saddam’s active manipulation of state and society, even if all of the outcomes were not specifically what Saddam would have desired.

Figure 2. The Dissolution of Regime-Centric Elements into a Network of Cells



<sup>187</sup> Andreas Wimmer, “Democracy and Ethno-Religious Conflict in Iraq,” *Survival* 45, no. 4 (Winter 2003): 119.

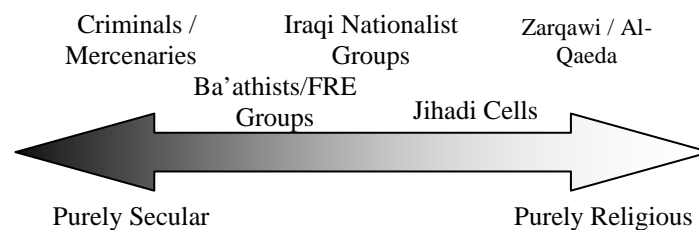
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### III. THE VIOLENT SUNNI REJECTION OF TRANSITION IN IRAQ

The U.S.-led invasion of Iraq never faced the fanatical defensive tactics many feared. Pitched fighting occurred in some areas, but the rapid U.S. advance largely overwhelmed the Iraqi Army. Liberation gave way to chaos as police and security services disappeared and widespread looting occurred. In this environment, some pockets of motivated Iraqis carried on the fight against the coalition. Resistance was present in April and “it was well underway and serious” by November 2003.<sup>188</sup>

What was initially characterized as the die-hard fanaticism of a few “dead-enders” was actually a vanguard that was soon followed by others, blossoming into a tenacious resistance. The resistance has proven to be predominately Sunni Iraqi. The ideologies and motivations behind Sunni resistance groups defy polar categorization, but rather form a continuum with purely secular calculations, often based on power and economics, on one end; and rabid devotion to extremist Islamic positions on the other (see Figure 3). In the middle, many groups contain a mix of parochial political ideologies with Islamic rhetoric. It is not uncommon to find “a mix between Saddamism and Islam” in many regions.<sup>189</sup>

Figure 3. Resistance Group Motivations.



The mix of motivations for Sunni resistance provides a potent mix of parochial and religious ideologies. This mix has enabled an opportunistic group of violent resisters

<sup>188</sup> Jeffrey White quoted in Ivan Eland *et al.*, “Occupied Iraq: One Country, Many Wars,” *Middle East Policy* 12, no. 3 (Fall 2005): 10.

<sup>189</sup> Amatzia Baram, “Who Are the Insurgents?” 2.



to collaborate and network through the structures and ties provided by the legacy of Saddam's rule in Sunni society. In this manner, the violent Sunni rejection of the trajectory of transition in Iraq is motivated and enabled by the legacies of totalitarian rule in Iraqi society and sub-state power structures.

Parochial Sunni resisters are driven primarily by concerns of identity, power, and nationalism without a commitment to an Islamic state outcome. These groups have been labeled by some as "secular," but this term is misleading because Islam is important to many of these groups. The potency of religious motivations has fanned the spread of resistance from an early FRE vanguard to other groups in Iraq.

Islamic institutions have been a powerful influence on the resistance. Most resistance groups utilize at least some Islamic rhetoric in their program. The Islamic extremist minority groups lie nearest the religious end of the spectrum, although their religious motives and goals are intertwined with politics. Groups that many define as "secular," such as Iraqi nationalists and Ba'athists, also find motivation, legitimation, and solace in Islamic ideologies regarding *jihad* and the foreign imposition of a new order in an Islamic region. They are also aided by the attributes of some Islamic institutions. These groups are all able to harness the power of religion as shaped by the Iraqi and regional context prior to the 2003 U.S. invasion.

Despite the power of religion, radical Islamist militants are estimated to constitute only 5 to 15 percent of the resistance.<sup>190</sup> Some may attribute the rise of Islamic rhetoric and violence to insidious hostility of Islam to the West; however, there are several concrete factors stemming from the ideological and organizational advantages of religion, as well as Iraqi and regional influences prior to the invasion, that set the stage for the use of Islam by both Islamist radicals and Iraqi nationalists in the resulting resistance.

Once the regime fell, a compelling resistance motivation for Iraqis outside the hard core of the regime was couched in terms of religious legitimacy and duty. Rising religiosity in Iraq gave potent ideological and organizational advantages to these resisters. Religiosity and religious institutions were resurgent in pre-invasion Iraq for two reasons, discussed in Chapter II. First, Saddam used Islam as a tool of control and legitimation in

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<sup>190</sup> Opiel. Cordesman, "Iraq's Evolving Insurgency," 47.

the latter years of his rule,<sup>191</sup> politicizing and increasing the prominence of religion within the state. Second, religion was increasingly attractive to Iraqis facing the hardship of wars and sanctions.<sup>192</sup> Regional influences also bear on the resistance. Regional Islamist ideology entered Iraq through porous borders<sup>193</sup> and the issue of Iraqi suffering due to war and sanctions served as a focal point of regional Islamist mobilization.<sup>194</sup> For these reasons, Islamic ideology was a pre-existing and potent influence that directly shaped an Islamic resistance consisting of an Iraqi majority and an influential, transnational *jihadi* minority. This Islamic resistance was a significant factor in the spread of violence beyond the former regime cadre.

The trend of rising Iraqi religiosity increased with the chaos of regime collapse. “Islamic norms in dress and public decorum” were more prominent<sup>195</sup> and religion exerted a growing influence amid the upheaval in Iraq. A Baghdad merchant explained, “During the U.S. invasion, I saw so much chaos and death that I turned to God. Now there is so much corruption and violence that we need an Islamic government according to *sharia*. That would stop a lot of the suffering we have now.”<sup>196</sup>

A journalist well-positioned to observe the changes in Iraq saw “the first signs of a resurgent religion” amongst Sunnis in summer of 2003, often taking the form of “religious absolutism” that helped to provide “direction and meaning” and to demarcate “the borders of a community that notions of being Sunni, Arab, and Iraqi could all fall within.”<sup>197</sup> In post-Saddam Iraq, Islam is a primary venue for “people looking for guidance and identity.”<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> Hashim and Post, 50.

<sup>192</sup> Ghattas. Shadid, 36.

<sup>193</sup> Baram, “Who Are the Insurgents?” 10-11.

<sup>194</sup> Lynch, 67.

<sup>195</sup> Fuller, 13.

<sup>196</sup> Quoted in Dan Murphy, “Radical Islam Grows Among Iraq’s Sunnis,” *Christian Science Monitor*, (July 28, 2004).

<sup>197</sup> Shadid, 232.

<sup>198</sup> Baram, “Who Are the Insurgents?” 12.

Beyond ideological solace, religious institutions were able to provide stability in cities where chaos reigned after the fall of Baghdad.<sup>199</sup> The ability of Islamic leaders to stem unrest in the aftermath of the invasion in 2003 put Islamic networks in a position of power and prestige in Iraq, offering potential resisters powerful advantages in the linkage of resistance to religion.

Religion plays into the larger legacy of Ba'ath rule. Due to the lack of any cross-cutting, national ties, the new political structure of Iraq put Sunnis at odds with Shi'a and Kurds, creating the perception of a zero-sum game where power gained by the others was power lost by the Sunnis. Moderate Sunnis had little experience in organization and had no unified voice to engage in dialogue with the Shi'a and the Kurds, or to deter armed resistance. The groups that had organizational and motivational structures to build on (regime structures, tribes, and Islamic institutions) were largely radicalized and militarized by the rule of Saddam. These elements constituted a sub-state power structure in pre-invasion Iraq. This power structure was well-situated to resist its loss of prominence in a new Iraq. The rapid rise of resistance groups owes itself to this legacy of Saddam's rule.

#### **A. SUNNI STRUCTURES AND MOTIVATIONS FOR RESISTANCE**

Sunni elites have a number of concrete reasons for resisting a new order in Iraq. One scholar explains, they “lost power, they lost position, they lost influence, and no jobs program or provision of electricity can compensate for that.”<sup>200</sup> The new order is unlikely to provide many Sunnis with the power and autonomy to which they are accustomed. The high personal cost of reform on some Sunni Iraqis provides a basic motive for dogged resistance.

A long “list of revenge-seeking enemies” is created by a minority ruling elite's use of forceful repression. The prospect of revenge raises the “expected costs of reform” to the rulers.<sup>201</sup> The Sunni elites realize that the bill for their oppressive rule is coming

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<sup>199</sup> Toby Dodge, “Prepared Testimony for the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.”

<sup>200</sup> Jeffrey White quoted in Ivan Eland *et al.*, 9.

<sup>201</sup> Daniel Brumberg, “The Trap of Liberalized Autocracy,” *Journal of Democracy* 13, no. 4 (October 2002): 58-59.

due. Individuals complicit in such repression are those faced with the highest costs from regime change and also those with the greatest access to the weapons, training, and support required to resist occupation.

Other Sunni Iraqis are accustomed to power and autonomy enjoyed under Sunni rule and reject the new order which takes their status away. Members of the regime and its societal support networks see their personal fate tied to the fate of Sunni power in Iraq. Regardless of any loyalty to Saddam, these individuals have an interest in the restoration of some form of Sunni power. The high expected costs of reform for many Sunnis have led to a willingness to use desperate methods of violent resistance to transition in Iraq.

Many individuals do not desire a return to Ba'athist rule. In the words of one Baghdadi who hoped for a better outcome, "The thing that really pisses me off- we've been under sanctions for thirteen years, everything we underwent for thirteen years... For nothing. For nothing. It was all a big joke."<sup>202</sup> These Sunnis desire an outcome that validates their suffering. They are looking for a best-case result of a new Iraq that retains Sunni power and they believe that the coalition is standing in the way of their ambitions. Saddam and the former regime were the direct cause of much suffering, yet many Iraqis "see the West equally as culpable as Saddam for the misery of the country."<sup>203</sup>

Sunnis have enjoyed supremacy since the formation of Iraq in the wake of World War I.<sup>204</sup> They held this power at the expense of the Shi'ite majority now empowered by a representative system. The Iraqi patriotism of some Sunni resisters "may be construed as self-serving" in that it legitimates their struggle to avoid marginalization,<sup>205</sup> but this serves to strengthen nationalistic sentiments. Iraqi nationalism also resonates with a long-standing disdain toward foreign, especially non-Muslim, occupation in the Arab world,<sup>206</sup> and this disdain for the West was promoted by Saddam during his rule. The

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<sup>202</sup> Quoted in Shadid, 324.

<sup>203</sup> Hashim, "The Insurgency in Iraq," 12.

<sup>204</sup> Baram, "Who Are the Insurgents?" 3.

<sup>205</sup> Baram, "Who Are the Insurgents?" 4. See also Adeed Dawisha, "The New Iraq: Democratic Institutions and Performance," *Journal of Democracy* 16, no. 3 (July 2005): 43.

<sup>206</sup> Metz, "Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq," 28.

confluence of nationalism with self-preservation, self-interest, and rejection of the outsider provides a potent and mutually-reinforcing mix of resistance motivations.

The resistance began as a cadre with the motivation and means to resist, often elements of the former regime. This cadre expanded as events motivated more Sunnis to join the resistance. Some resisters are average Sunnis with little connection to the former regime, but military or security training of many Sunnis has been useful to resistance groups across the spectrum of ideologies.

### **1. Regime Preparation for Resistance**

While much of the resistance grew from concrete motives, there was some regime preparation prior to the invasion. Observers point to the quick emergence of resistance as evidence of a prepared “stay-behind operation” to resist occupation.<sup>207</sup> U.S. military commanders believe that caches of weapons and money that fuel the resistance were pre-planned as well. They describe the planning as “a concept of operations” to be implemented under decentralized control, rather than a centralized campaign plan.<sup>208</sup> These preparations are not an indication of a regime-centric insurgency campaign, but are additional advantages conferred on former regime elements in the resistance.

Numerous sources indicate that Saddam Hussein planned for former regime elements to take part in a guerrilla campaign after the fall of the regime. According to a U.S. military intelligence report, Saddam sent 1,000 to 1,200 officers for two months of guerrilla training at Salman Pak and Bismayah in fall of 2002. These officers were selected from several intelligence services and “were told to prepare themselves for recontact following the collapse of the regime.”<sup>209</sup> A senior officer from the Presidential Palace also reportedly ordered the training of a group of 100 Saudis, Afghans, and other

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<sup>207</sup> W. Patrick Lang quoted in Ivan Eland *et al.*, 13.

<sup>208</sup> Defense officials quoted in Douglas Jehl, “Plan for Guerilla Action May Have Predated War,” *New York Times* (November 15, 2003).

<sup>209</sup> Edward T. Pound, “Seeds of Chaos; The Baghdad Files: A Trove of Secret Intelligence Reports Shows How Saddam Hussein Planned the Current Insurgency in Iraq Long Before the Invasion that Toppled the Regime Was Even Launched,” *US News and World Report* 137, no. 22, (December 20, 2004): 20.

foreigners under supervision of senior *Fedayeen* officers at Al-Nahrawan and Salman Pak. These individuals were subsequently dispersed to fight against U.S. forces.<sup>210</sup>

A former Iraqi intelligence operative who became a leader in the *Fedayeen* in Fallujah supported these claims. “We have been preparing for this kind of guerrilla war for a long time. We know each other and we have ways of communicating with one another. The Americans made a big mistake by thinking that we all disappeared after the war.” He stated that the network of resistance groups operates in five to six-man cells<sup>211</sup> as directed by a contemporaneous Ba’ath Party memo.<sup>212</sup> A resistance leader in Baghdad known as “Abu Omar,” reportedly an Iraqi general prior to the occupation, said, “Six months before the occupation, we started training and exercising resisting the American army in small groups.”<sup>213</sup> The power of preparation prior to the fall of the regime allowed FREs to organize quickly and use their military skills in a devastating manner before any other coherent Sunni voice could assemble.

Some experts also believe that the regime distributed and cached weapons around the country to enable resistance in the wake of regime collapse.<sup>214</sup> Resistance members have less conspiratorial explanations. “The Americans... almost gave us the weapons,” explains Mohammed, a resistance member from Fallujah. “They thought we were thieves... They thought we were destroying the Iraqi army.”<sup>215</sup> In reality, some of the looters were stockpiling weapons for resistance. Tribal groups also stockpiled weapons they are now willing to sell to the resistance (for example SA-7 Strelas sell at \$325 each).<sup>216</sup> FREs were not the only Iraqis with access to weapons, however. Iraqis

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<sup>210</sup> “Incriminating Evidence Shows that Saddam Ordered the Training of Al-Qa’ida Elements Two Months Prior to the Bombings of the Twin Towers in New York on 11 September,” *Al-Yawm al-Akhar* (Iraq: October 16, 2003), trans. by FBIS, <http://www.fbis.gov>.

<sup>211</sup> Mohammad Bazzi, “A Promise to Fight On: A Leader in Iraqi Militia Group Tells of Plans for Extended Guerrilla War,” *New York Newsday*, (July 10, 2003), <http://nynewsday.com/news/nationworld/world/ny-3365886.0,1468490.print.story>, (accessed October 31, 2005).

<sup>212</sup> Pound, “Seeds of Chaos,” 20.

<sup>213</sup> Quoted in Henry Schuster, “Iraq Insurgency 101,” (October 12, 2005), <http://www.cnn.com/2005/WORLD/meast/10/12/schuster.column/index.html>, (accessed October 12, 2005).

<sup>214</sup> W. Patrick Lang quoted in Eland *et al.*, 13.

<sup>215</sup> Quoted in Graham, “Beyond Fallujah,” 43.

<sup>216</sup> Graham, “Beyond Fallujah,” 43. Robert E. Looney, “The Business of Insurgency: The Expansion of Iraq’s Shadow Economy,” *The National Interest* 81 (Fall 2005): 67.

stockpiled guns and ammunition from Baghdad gun stores in the days just before the war. Many of these purchases were motivated by the fear of anarchy in the event of regime collapse.<sup>217</sup> Regardless of how the resistance acquires them, Iraqi sources assert that the “huge amounts of weapons” left behind by the regime “are undoubtedly one of the main sources for arming” resistance groups.<sup>218</sup>

A former Republican Guard officer was an early resister who claims that Saddam provided active assistance. The officer and some of his friends conducted ambushes on U.S. convoys in the early days of the occupation. Two weeks after the collapse of the regime, a messenger from Saddam asked the officer what he needed for resistance. Saddam provided cash and weapons shortly thereafter, along with the instructions, “Widen your network; go around the country and find others who will fight.” The officer has since provided assistance to numerous resistance groups, as well as assisting in the establishment of *Jaish Mohammed*, a FRE resistance group.<sup>219</sup> The influence of Saddam after regime collapse is not evidence of a centrally commanded and controlled insurgency. Rather, Saddam’s voice provided motivation to some of the many cells of Sunni rejectionists. Regime preparation ensured that a cadre of violent resisters would be well-positioned to take up arms in the wake of invasion. The expansion of resistance past this cadre owes itself to a number of motivations.

## **2. Motivations for Resistance in the Wake of Saddam’s Fall**

Many Sunni Iraqis were very receptive to narratives that motivated resistance in the aftermath of invasion. The Sunni loss of power, position, and influence were strong motives for rejection of transition that were exacerbated by a number of incidents in the aftermath of invasion, helping the resistance to take root in many areas.

Sunnis were heavily reliant on state employment. Shortly after the 1991 Gulf War, a United Nations survey found 822,000 Iraqis employed by the state. This constituted around 21 percent of the work force, making 40 percent of households

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<sup>217</sup> Shadid, 22.

<sup>218</sup> Samir Haddad and Mazin Ghazi, “Who Kills Hostages in Iraq?” *Al-Zawra* (Iraq: September 19, 2004), trans. by FBIS, <http://www.fbis.gov>.

<sup>219</sup> Aparisim Ghosh, “Professor of Death,” *Time* 166, no. 17 (October 24, 2005), <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1118370,00.html>, (accessed October 17, 2005).

dependant on government salaries.<sup>220</sup> In some Sunni regions, as many as 90 percent were members of the Ba'ath party and around 25 percent of workers were employed by the government.<sup>221</sup> When the regime fell and these government salaries went away, a huge sector of Iraqis became instantly unemployed.

The security services and armed forces, in particular, seemed to melt away after the fall of Baghdad. Some of this was by coalition design, however. Psychological operations prior to the invasion promoted desertion of the armed forces.<sup>222</sup> Despite the request for Iraqi desertion, the status of the Iraqi armed forces was not addressed by the Office for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Aid (ORHA) until Iraqi soldiers demonstrated for back-pay in front of ORHA headquarters in mid-May 2003. The Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), in one of its earliest moves on May 23, 2003, dissolved the Iraqi armed forces and security services<sup>223</sup> leaving 500,000 men with military training jobless.<sup>224</sup> Troubles with former members of the military continued in June when Iraqi soldiers again protested, this time because a promised monthly stipend had not been delivered. In the resulting tensions, two former Iraqi soldiers were killed. Efforts of senior regime loyalists to draw unemployed soldiers into the fight against the Americans found increasing sympathy as patience wore thin due to broken promises and the shooting of two of their number.<sup>225</sup> Both a former Iraqi general, now a resistance

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<sup>220</sup> Isam Al-Khafaji, "Repression, Conformity and Legitimacy: Prospects for an Iraqi Social Contract," 17.

<sup>221</sup> Shadid, 224.

<sup>222</sup> Rajiv Chandrasekaran, "Iraq: The Way Forward, Session 3 - A View from the Newsroom," transcript of panel discussion, (October 24, 2005), <http://www.cfr.org/publication/9097/iraq.html>, (accessed October 31, 2005). See leaflet directing surrender, Fig. 12 in Jennifer Gabrys, "Leaflet Drop: The Paper Landscapes of War," *Invisible Culture: An Electronic Journal for Visual Culture* 7 (Spring 2004) [http://www.rochester.edu/in\\_visible\\_culture/Issue\\_7/Gabrys/gabrys.html](http://www.rochester.edu/in_visible_culture/Issue_7/Gabrys/gabrys.html), (accessed October 31, 2005).

<sup>223</sup> Coalition Provisional Authority, *Coalition Provisional Authority Order Number 2: Dissolution of Entities*, (May 23, 2003), [http://www.cpa-iraq.org/regulations/20030823\\_CPAORD\\_2\\_Dissolution\\_of\\_Entities\\_with\\_Annex\\_A.pdf](http://www.cpa-iraq.org/regulations/20030823_CPAORD_2_Dissolution_of_Entities_with_Annex_A.pdf), (accessed October 31, 2005).

<sup>224</sup> Ahmed Hashim, "Military Power and State Formation in Modern Iraq," 38.

<sup>225</sup> Kareem Fahim, "Playing With Soldiers: Is the Cost Rising on CPA Bungling?" *The Village Voice*, (New York: July 2-8, 2003), <http://www.villagevoice.com/news/0327.fahim.45232.1.html>, (accessed October 31, 2005).



leader, and U.S. Major General James Marks, head of intelligence for ground forces at the time, believe that the decision to disband the Iraqi army was a significant factor in the propagation of the resistance.<sup>226</sup>

Another motive for resistance, which became a self-fulfilling prophecy, was the perception that coalition forces were at “war against the Sunnis themselves.”<sup>227</sup> This impression was probably created in the early days of the occupation, when “clumsy but accidental killings of civilians” by U.S. troops in the Sunni towns of Fallujah, Hit, Tikrit, and Samarra led to Sunni ambushes in reprisal.<sup>228</sup> This started a cycle of mutually-reinforcing violence. As coalition forces seek out resisters in Sunni areas, a by-product is the impression that Sunnis are being targeted, creating stronger motives for Sunni resistance and reinforcing the cycle of attack and counterattack (see Figure 4). This cycle is exacerbated by the tribal custom of revenge killings. For these reasons “the cycle, once started, was almost impossible to stop.”<sup>229</sup>

In one example, a road near the village of some wealthy Sunni farmers provided a good ambush site for resistance members to lay in wait for coalition convoys. Resistance cells came from many areas to take advantage of the good terrain in this area. During an ensuing firefight, a U.S. tank round seriously damaged a house in the village. One villager stated, “Before and now we hate Americans. And then they do this and we hate them more.”<sup>230</sup> The animosity was already present, but the cycle of violence is fed by each attack.

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<sup>226</sup> Schuster, “Iraq Insurgency 101.”

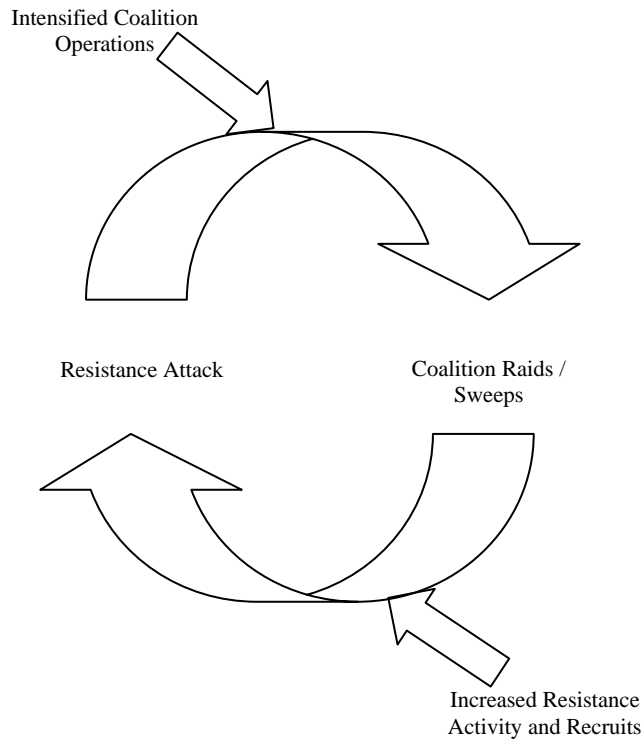
<sup>227</sup> White quoted in Eland *et al.*, 9.

<sup>228</sup> Hashim, “The Insurgency in Iraq,” 4.

<sup>229</sup> Graham, “Beyond Fallujah,” 42.

<sup>230</sup> Quoted in Graham, “Beyond Fallujah,” 45.

Figure 4. The Cycle of Violence



Disenfranchisement of Sunni Iraqis can take on a more insidious character as lack of respect for Iraqis on the part of some coalition troops creates serious consequences. One U.S. soldier in an advisory role with Iraqi security forces summed up his feelings by saying, “I don’t build bonds. I don’t build friendships. I don’t have contacts, with none of them.” In turn, his Iraqi counterpart observed, “We are the police and they don’t respect us. How is it possible for them to respect the Iraqi people?” This frustrated Iraqi officer quit his post.<sup>231</sup> A more general complaint of Sunnis is a perception of “cultural ignorance and disdain for the Iraqis” on the part of U.S. troops.<sup>232</sup> Many Iraqis frustrated by lack of respect and lack of equipment and faced with a very dangerous job have given

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<sup>231</sup> Shadid, 208-210.

<sup>232</sup> Hashim, “Iraq’s Chaos.”

up cooperation with the coalition. Some of these armed security veterans turn to the other side with their valuable knowledge of coalition and Iraqi positions and tactics.<sup>233</sup>

Tribal power and norms fuel the resistance and expand its ranks. Tribes resist the dilution of their considerable powers under a new, centralized government in Iraq. Some tribes also resent the impact of coalition border policing on their lucrative smuggling endeavors.<sup>234</sup> Norms of revenge may be the most damaging aspect of tribes in Iraq. The killing of tribal members necessitates revenge or the payment of “blood money.”<sup>235</sup> This practice, emphasized in the later years of Saddam’s rule, may have a role in escalating the violence in some regions as tribal militias seek revenge by attacking coalition troops, drawing further military attention to the area.

Tribal structures also provide an enforcing mechanism against collaboration and a social support network for resisters. Informants sometimes cause conflict between tribes when their collaboration results in the death of a tribe member. In one such case, the threat of tribal vendetta led to the execution of the informer. The execution was carried out not by masked insurgents, but by the informant’s father and brother because the threat of further bloodshed necessitated the man’s death.<sup>236</sup> Similarly, concepts of tribal and village solidarity cast local Iraqi police working with coalition troops as traitors to their own town.<sup>237</sup> Finally, tribal allegiances cut across the various resistance ideologies,<sup>238</sup> providing channels for networking and coordination between many groups that have “strong tribal affiliations or cells.”<sup>239</sup> Tribal powers cultivated in the later years of Saddam’s rule and have proven to be potent obstacles to a new order in Iraq.

As instability in Iraq drags on, the themes of disempowerment, unemployment, Sunni identity, and family ties are reinforced as resistance motivations. The confluence of motivations for Sunni resistance is well expressed by General Mohamed Abdullah

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<sup>233</sup> Colonel Jerry Durant USMC, (lecture, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, January 24, 2005).

<sup>234</sup> Baram, “Who Are the Insurgents?” 6.

<sup>235</sup> Baram, “Who Are the Insurgents?” 7.

<sup>236</sup> Shadid, 241-243.

<sup>237</sup> Shadid, 228.

<sup>238</sup> Cordesman, “Iraq’s Evolving Insurgency,” 26.

<sup>239</sup> Cordesman, “Iraq’s Evolving Insurgency,” 41.

Shahwani, the Iraqi national intelligence chief. "People are fed up after two years, without improvement. People are fed up with no security, no electricity, people feel they have to do something. The army was hundreds of thousands. You'd expect some veterans would join with their relatives, each one has sons and brothers." <sup>240</sup>

The non-Islamist Sunni resistance is generally fighting to reject Shi'a dominance and Sunni marginalization. Some desire a return to a Ba'ath-like state, while others simply want what they deem to be a "fair share" of power in the new Iraq.<sup>241</sup> The return to Sunni dominance in Iraq is at best a far-flung hope, but it is increasingly clear that the only possible path to that goal is violence. Only the realization that the era of Sunni supremacy is gone will induce some resisters to seek political accommodation along more reasonable lines.<sup>242</sup> The mix of religious motivations with these parochial issues further embeds resistance in Sunni society.

### **3. The Power of Religion**

Islam is a powerful influence on both parochial and Islamic extremist resisters. Religion confers two powerful advantages to the resistance. First, religion can provide a latent motivating and legitimating framework for resistance activity. Islamic activists in cases outside Iraq have been able to successfully mobilize participation in high-risk activism by framing their actions as religious duty,<sup>243</sup> and this mechanism can be found in Iraq as well.

Second, the institutions surrounding religious activity can provide latent organizational structures to new movements. These structures include trained leadership, financial networks, fertile recruitment networks, communications channels, shared identity, political legitimacy, and "open space" in civil society.<sup>244</sup> These factors are salient in the organization of Iraqi resistance.

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<sup>240</sup> Quoted in Parker, "Iraq Battling More Than 200,000 Insurgents: Intelligence Chief."

<sup>241</sup> Anthony Cordesman, "New Patterns in the Iraqi Insurgency: The War for a Civil War in Iraq," working draft, (September 27, 2005), [http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/050927\\_civilwar.pdf](http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/050927_civilwar.pdf), (accessed October 31, 2005), 1.

<sup>242</sup> Dawisha, "The New Iraq," 44.

<sup>243</sup> Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, *Mobilizing Islam: Religion, Activism, and Political Change in Egypt*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 15.

<sup>244</sup> Christian Smith, "Correcting a Curious Neglect, or Bringing Religion Back In," in *Disruptive Religion: The Force of Faith in Social Movement Activism*, ed. Christian Smith (New York: Routledge, 1996), 13-21.

Religion can be seen as a type of “cultural meaning-system” that is “rooted in realities that are believed to exist above and beyond the temporal, mundane, material world.”<sup>245</sup> This “sacred transcendence” yields an unparalleled motivational tool. The alignment of a movement’s cause with God’s will or eternal truth can sustain “activism in the face of great adversity”<sup>246</sup> and provide “an expanded sense of the possible.”<sup>247</sup> Ayyash al-Kubaysi, a representative of Iraq’s Muslim Ulema Council, demonstrates the logic that provides solace to resisters in Iraq. “God is greater than the United States. God is with us. We are therefore stronger than the United States.”<sup>248</sup> The expanded sense of the possible is one factor that aids resisters to rationalize their high-risk activities.

When activists engage in military resistance or other high-risk activism, a robust motivation system is required.<sup>249</sup> Religious movements have been able to overcome this problem by couching activism in non-negotiable terms of “divine compulsion.”<sup>250</sup> For example, Islamic activists in Egypt have been able to successfully mobilize participation by framing high-risk actions as religious duty.<sup>251</sup> Similar mechanisms are evident in the resistance in Iraq.

Numerous clerics have invoked the concept of duty in promoting *jihad* against U.S. forces. Respected leaders provide legitimacy to the resistance groups’ actions and recruiting efforts. Muhammad Sayyed Tantawi, Sheikh of Al-Azhar University in Cairo, stated in a Friday sermon that the U.S. invasion was against Islamic law, making *jihad* an “obligation for every Muslim.”<sup>252</sup> Similar statements have been made by other

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<sup>245</sup> Smith, 5-6.

<sup>246</sup> Smith, 9-10.

<sup>247</sup> Ron Aminzade and Elizabeth J. Perry, “The Sacred, Religious, and Secular in Contentious Politics: Blurring Boundaries,” in *Silence and Voice in the Study of Contentious Politics*, ed. Ron Aminzade, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 162.

<sup>248</sup> Interview by Muhammad al-Baqali, “Iraq’s Muslim Ulema Council Aide: Every US Solider is Legitimate Target,” *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, (London: April 23, 2004), trans. by FBIS, <http://www.fbis.gov>.

<sup>249</sup> Wickham, 15.

<sup>250</sup> Smith, 9-10.

<sup>251</sup> Wickham, 15, 120.

<sup>252</sup> April 5, 2003 sermon at Al-Azhar quoted in Steven Stalinsky, “Leading Egyptian Islamic Clerics on Jihad Against U.S. Troops in Iraq: March – April 2003,” *MEMRI Inquiry and Analysis Series* No. 145, (August 14, 2003), <http://memri.org/bin/opener.cgi?Page=archives&ID=IA14503>, (accessed October 31, 2005).

influential figures such as Dr. Ahmad Yusuf Sulaiman, a professor of Islamic law,<sup>253</sup> and Sheikh Yousef Al-Qaradhawi, an influential Islamist in Dubai.<sup>254</sup>

These Islamic leaders frame *jihad* as an individual duty (*fard 'ayn*) required of all Muslims. Traditionally, *jihad* has been considered a collective duty (*fard kifaya*), meaning that the group under threat must take up *jihad* but as long as sufficient numbers are mustered, *jihad* is not required of every Muslim.<sup>255</sup> Thus, some Islamic leaders undertake a sort of innovation (*bid'a*)<sup>256</sup> that creates a frame for mobilization of resistance.

Interviews of captured resisters suggest that these statements of duty carry a powerful influence. *Mujahideen* from Saudi Arabia<sup>257</sup> and Iraq<sup>258</sup> mention *fatwa* as major influences in their recruitment and in legitimizing their activities. Others follow the preaching of regional radicals and local imams requiring *jihad*.<sup>259</sup> The statements of Islamic resistance leaders, such as Zarqawi, are also laden with references to the “right path” and “missions of *da'wa*”<sup>260</sup> that can be seen as religious duty.

Religion is critical in providing an impetus for self-sacrifice. Willingness to sacrifice oneself for a higher cause is important in creating “a critical mass of participants early on, even when the cause is idealistic, unrewarding, and unpromising.”<sup>261</sup> Religion provides the motivation to lead the charge by framing actions as duty, by expanding the

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<sup>253</sup> Quote from Islam Online Fatwa Page in Stalinsky.

<sup>254</sup> Quoted in Stalinsky.

<sup>255</sup> Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 178, 254.

<sup>256</sup> Roy, 179, 257

<sup>257</sup> “Saudi Terrorist: I Waged Jihad in Iraq because of the Communique of the 26 Clerics and Because of Dr. Yousuf al-Qaradhawi’s Fatwa that Any American in Iraq Should be Killed,” Transcript of interrogation on *Al-Iraqiya TV* (Iraq: March 31, 2005), trans. by MEMRI, <http://www.memritv.org/Transcript.asp?P1=629>, (accessed October 31, 2005).

<sup>258</sup> “Iraqi Terrorist Talal Ra’ad Sleiman Yasin: Saudi-Sanctioned Fatwa Permits Killing Iraqi Security Personnel,” *Al-Iraqiya TV* (Iraq: February 9, 2005), trans. by MEMRI, <http://www.memritv.org/Transcript.asp?P1=602>, (accessed October 31, 2005). “Terrorist Confessions Aired on Al-Iraqiyah TV.” FBIS Feature (June 10, 2005), <http://www.fbis.gov>.

<sup>259</sup> Shahid, 291-292, 303.

<sup>260</sup> Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, “Message to the Fighters of Jihad in Iraq on September 11, 2004,” trans. by MEMRI, <http://memri.org/bin/opener.cgi?Page=archives&ID=SP78504>, (accessed October 31, 2005).

<sup>261</sup> Smith, 12.

notion of what is possible, and by emphasizing the idea of self-sacrifice for the highest cause: that of God. For some radicals, *jihad* becomes a sacred ritual that is an end in itself. Seeing the religious act of *jihad* as sacred in and of itself may be one factor in rationalizing missions of self-sacrifice.<sup>262</sup>

Martyrdom can also serve as an example to motivate others, as evidenced by the statement of one group.<sup>263</sup> The concepts surrounding martyrdom in Islam also help to motivate and rationalize high-risk activity by transforming the grim reality of death. A resister described the bodies of martyrs (*shaheed*) in idyllic terms. “When they become *shaheed*, it is a beautiful smell and their color stays fresh. And friends see this and they want to die.”<sup>264</sup> These ideological messages are conveyed through religious organizational structures that are a second major advantage for religious resistance.

Religious institutions provide numerous organizational advantages that have been important to the Iraqi resistance. Provision of trained leaders<sup>265</sup> and organizational space for new movements is especially important in regimes where religious space may be the last bastion of society that is not thoroughly controlled by the government.<sup>266</sup> In Iraq, mosques were the only space not fully controlled by the various security organs.<sup>267</sup> Religious leaders were increasingly important in the society as well,<sup>268</sup> due to their prominent social position and their distance from corruption that surrounded the regime.<sup>269</sup>

Religious institutions provide “ready-made opportunities for network- and bloc-recruitment” of new members.<sup>270</sup> Ideology predisposes individuals for high-risk activism, and sustains their involvement in such activities. A prior history of lower-level activism and “integration into supportive networks” pull the potential recruit toward

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<sup>262</sup> Roy, 247-248.

<sup>263</sup> Shahid, 288-289.

<sup>264</sup> Quoted in Graham, “Beyond Fallujah,” 47.

<sup>265</sup> Smith, 13.

<sup>266</sup> Smith, 21.

<sup>267</sup> Baram, “Who Are the Insurgents?” 10.

<sup>268</sup> Shadid, 36.

<sup>269</sup> Braude, 79.

<sup>270</sup> Smith, 15-16.

“mak[ing] good on ... strongly held beliefs.”<sup>271</sup> Gradual recruitment to high-risk forms of activism often requires previous involvement in lower-risk activity.<sup>272</sup> Involvement of individuals in religious activity and integration into networks of similarly-minded individuals provide a powerful venue for recruitment.

Mosques have provided recruiting venues for regional Islamists<sup>273</sup> as well as Iraqis.<sup>274</sup> The mosque is a venue where potential resisters can talk to like-minded Muslims and sometimes join in a bloc. The scattered nature of recruitment through prolific Islamic venues defies state security efforts and is not isolated to one state in the region.

The account of a young French citizen who was inducted into Islamic activism is particularly instructive. After an injury disqualified Peter Cherif from his dream of serving in the French Marines, he was drawn into the Rue de Tanger mosque. Cherif gradually became more radical in his beliefs and went to Damascus to study. Cherif’s mother could sense that he was slipping into a more tightly-controlled environment before she lost contact with her son in July 2004. Several months later in December, Cherif was detained as a resister in Fallujah.<sup>275</sup> This example shows the power of religious networks to pull motivated individuals into high-risk activity, even across significant international distances.

The example of Peter Cherif also demonstrates how religion provides a shared identity that eases mobilization. Religion provides common ground that allows strangers to “work together with relative ease in common purpose” and provides a framework that “can greatly expedite the process of coming to a shared ‘definition of the situation.’”

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<sup>271</sup> Doug McAdam, “Recruitment to High-Risk Activism: The Case of Freedom Summer,” *American Journal of Sociology* 92, no. 1 (July 1986): 64.

<sup>272</sup> McAdam, 70.

<sup>273</sup> “Saudi Terrorist: I Waged Jihad in Iraq.”

<sup>274</sup> “Amjad Uraibi, A Terrorist Captured in Iraq, Tells of Massacres and His Training.” “Top Iraqi Terrorist Shihab al-Sab’awi Tells of His Training in Syria and Activity in Iraq,” trans. by MEMRI, <http://www.memritv.org/Transcript.asp?P1=573>, (accessed October 31, 2005). Numerous transcripts and summaries of interviews from the *Al-Iraqiya* TV show “Terrorism in the Hands of Justice” are available at <http://www.fbis.gov> and <http://www.memritv.org>. Also see Shahid, 287-292 for an account of a cell that aggregated partially through a local mosque.

<sup>275</sup> Francois Labrouillere and Olivier O’Mahony, “A Mother’s Angry Cry: ‘The Islamists Stole My Son’s Soul!’” *Match* (Paris: February 17, 2005), trans. by FBIS, <http://www.fbis.gov>.



Religion also provides a basis for transnational cooperation between “otherwise quite different groups of people.”<sup>276</sup> Iraqis, Saudis, even European citizens, can interoperate under the shared context of Islam.

Mosques also provide a funding conduit for resistance. Donations through mosques have been implicated in resistance financing. Mosques also play a role in funneling money from outside Iraq into the hands of resisters.<sup>277</sup> The existing role of mosques in alms-giving and other charitable networks provides resisters with access to local and external funding channels.

One mosque in Iraq that appears to figure prominently in the *Salafi* resistance is the Ibn Taymiyah Mosque in Baghdad.<sup>278</sup> Prior to the invasion, the former Umm-al-Tubul Mosque<sup>279</sup> and a popular cleric, Madhi al-Soumaydai, built up a following of clandestine *Wahhabi* extremists who would become active members of the resistance.<sup>280</sup> Captured resisters have implicated al-Soumaydai in paying for the kidnapping and killing of foreigners in Baghdad,<sup>281</sup> demonstrating the complex position of Islamic leaders and networks in the resistance

Together, these advantages of religious ideology and organization provide a powerful mechanism for resistance. Saddam’s politicization of religious structures for his own legitimation, the rising religiosity of Iraqis in the face of great hardship, and the regional context of Islamism discussed in Chapter II shaped Islamic institutions in Iraq to a great extent. The Islamic structures in Iraq provided ideologies, organizational structures, and individuals well-prepared to capitalize on the power of religion to resist the new order in Iraq.

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<sup>276</sup> Smith, 17-18.

<sup>277</sup> Caleb Temple, Defense Intelligence Agency, Testimony Before the House Financial Services Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations and the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Terrorism, (July 28, 2005), <http://financialservices.house.gov/media/pdf/072805ct.pdf>, (accessed October 12, 2005).

<sup>278</sup> Debat, 21.

<sup>279</sup> “Baghdad: Imam of Ibn-Taymiyah Mosque Accuses the US Forces of Persecuting the Muslims. He Maintains that the Sunnis Are Targeted by the Occupation Forces and the Sectarian Groups,” *Quds Press*, internet edition, (London: January 9, 2004), trans. by FBIS, <http://www.fbis.gov>.

<sup>280</sup> Debat, 21.

<sup>281</sup> “Iraqi Terrorist: We Took Pills Before Operations; Money Came from Sheik Mahdi Al-Sumayda’I,” *Al-Iraqiya TV* (Iraq: March 9, 2005), trans. by MEMRI, <http://www.memritv.org/Transcript.asp?P1=601>, (accessed November 2, 2005).

## B. THE STRUCTURE OF THE RESISTANCE

The resistance that rose out of this background was flexible and opportunistic. Resisters create “alliances of convenience and informal networks with other groups to attack” the coalition and the Iraqi government. “Movements ‘franchise’ to create individual cells and independent units, creating diverse mixes of enemies that are difficult to attack.”<sup>282</sup> Many groups consist of small cells of 2-3 men, while others are dispersed formations that can combine in groups as large as 30-50 for specific operations.<sup>283</sup> Criminals can also be exploited to make attacks on infrastructure and to provide funds for the resistance.<sup>284</sup>

### 1. Insurgency or Resistance?

It is important to address the question of how the violence in Iraq should be labeled. The CIA *Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency* defines insurgency as

a protracted political-military activity directed toward completely or partially controlling the resources of a country through the use of irregular military forces and illegal political organizations... The common denominator of most insurgent groups is their desire to control a particular area. This objective differentiates insurgent groups from purely terrorist organizations, whose objectives do not include the creation of an alternative government capable of controlling a given area or country.<sup>285</sup>

Metz adds that insurgency is designed to allow a militarily weak group to attain a political goal.<sup>286</sup> Under these definitions, an insurgency is a singular actor that aims to control territory and set up an alternate administration or government.

Examples of classic insurgencies are the Viet Cong in South Vietnam, the *Front de Liberation Nationale* in Algeria, and Mao’s Communist guerrilla forces. In all of these cases, a central leadership provided direction to subordinate units or cells. When this leadership broke down due to targeting, a unifying ideology and a singular political

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<sup>282</sup> Cordesman, “Iraq’s Evolving Insurgency,” 12.

<sup>283</sup> Cordesman, “Iraq’s Evolving Insurgency,” 41.

<sup>284</sup> Cordesman, “Iraq’s Evolving Insurgency,” 45.

<sup>285</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, *Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency*, (Washington D.C.: Central Intelligence Agency, 1986), 2.

<sup>286</sup> Steven Metz, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in the 21st Century: Reconceptualizing Threat and Response*, (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, November 2004), 2.

goal acted as a framework for insurgent action. Where factions acted alone or engaged in internal power struggles, the desired end state of the insurgents did not differ significantly from one group to the next.

In contrast to these classic insurgencies, the resistance in Iraq consists of a web of groups with different and often mutually exclusive goals; therefore any grand strategy aimed at countering *an insurgency* is likely to fail. Furthermore, the resistance in Iraq has not yet yielded a central figure or group with the power, ideological program, and goal of establishing administrative structures. In contrast to classic insurgent forces such as the North Vietnamese-supported Viet Cong, the Iraqi resistance consists of “small, scattered, disparate groups” without “an explicit set of war aims.”<sup>287</sup> The only common aim of the resistance is rejection of the occupying force and their Iraqi collaborators.

## **2. Hierarchies, Networks, and Netwar**

The lack of a central leadership authority makes concerted action difficult, but also provides an adaptive and survivable structure. The resistance in Iraq is a network of cells. Networked cells have been a common feature of many insurgencies, but the network in Iraq has proven capable of bringing disparate actors together to collaborate on operations despite severe ideological differences. This collaboration can best be explained through the concepts of networks and netwar.

A horizontal network is a structure of multiple cells that are roughly equal in power. These cells are connected by various channels to create a network. This concept can best be understood in contrast to a traditional hierarchical structure, in which structures are linked in a clear chain of superior-subordinate power relationships. A traditional hierarchical adversary has clearly defined nodes of leadership and control. The removal of such nodes breaks the structure of a hierarchical organization. This removes the unity of purpose of the adversary and fragments the unit into smaller, isolated cells which can be targeted.

In a networked structure, the removal of any leader or node may create a hole in the web, but it does not significantly degrade the network due to the multiple power centers and means of contact between the nodes. The only way to combat the network as

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<sup>287</sup> Jeffrey Record and W. Andrew Terrill, *Iraq and Vietnam: Differences, Similarities, and Insights*, (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, May 2004), 2.

a whole is to find and remove common sources of support or coordination, or to find ways of cleaving large numbers of nodes from the network. Network actors are difficult to combat.

The concept of netwar has been developed by Arquilla and Ronfeldt, who posit that non-state actors can easily “organize into sprawling multiorganizational networks” consisting of “of dispersed small groups who communicate, coordinate, and conduct their campaigns in an internetted manner, without a precise central command.” The strength of this mode of organization is its flexibility and survivability, yet it may not be able to coordinate operations over time if the nodes do not share a common ideology or goal.<sup>288</sup> Hoffman has asserted that the resistance in Iraq is possibly the best case to date for the concept of netwar.<sup>289</sup>

The lack of a hierarchical command and control mechanism in such networks may provide for a “leaderless nexus” between disparate cells. In terrorist and criminal networks, lower-level cell leaders have fewer reservations about opportunistic cooperation between formerly “off-limits” entities. While a high-level leader may prohibit some activities as harmful to the long-term goals of the organization, lower-level leaders are more likely to focus on short-term cooperation to accomplish their goals. For example, without a Don Corleone, there is no one to tell *Mafiosi* cells not to cooperate with drug dealers to make short-term profit.<sup>290</sup> In Iraq, networked cells are able to combine opportunistically despite long-term ideological differences. In some cases, criminal cells and resistance cells are also able to cooperate.

The resistance in Iraq is made up of numerous cells of varying size, largely lacking any central leadership or hierarchical structure. These “leaderless” cells are free to craft their campaign and ideology from the various themes discussed above. The nexus between these cells is a willingness to collaborate despite these varied campaigns and ideologies. The major arms of the resistance are parochial and Islamist, but the

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<sup>288</sup> John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, “The Advent of Netwar: Analytic Background,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 22, no. 3 (1999): 193-195, 197.

<sup>289</sup> Bruce Hoffman, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq*, (Santa Monica, CA: Rand National Security Research Division, 2004), 17.

<sup>290</sup> Chris Dishman, “The Leaderless Nexus: When Crime and Terror Converge,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 28 (2005): 237-252.

distinctions between these arms are blurred. Examination of each of these arms will provide insight into their background, characteristics, and strengths.

### **C. THE PAROCHIAL SUNNI RESISTANCE**

A U.S. military estimate of the resistance in the fall of 2004 pinned its strength at 11,000 to 20,000 members. Of this number, 2,200 to 3,300 are “hard core” FREs, with another 6,100 to 10,200 “part time” supporters.<sup>291</sup> Former regime elements and their parochial supporters are undoubtedly the most significant portion of the resistance numerically.

Numbers point to the weight of former regime elements, but training, financing, and other support also plays a significant factor in the perpetuation of the resistance. A Defense Intelligence Agency report from late 2003 acknowledges that “FREs’ prewar operating and support structure, access to resources, and training and capabilities make them the greatest threat of all anti-coalition groups in the near term.”<sup>292</sup> These attributes include access to rockets, mortars, and man-portable surface-to-air missiles.<sup>293</sup> Former regime members also have precise knowledge regarding infrastructure that is critical to pinpoint attacks against targets such as Baghdad’s oil supply lines, where the portions of infrastructure targeted are those that are most difficult to repair.<sup>294</sup> Unemployment left Iraqis with such skills ripe for recruitment into the resistance by regime loyalists.

Key elements of the Ba’ath Party escaped to Syria, but still wield significant influence. Some analysts believe that a key Saddam aide, Izzat Ibrahim al-Duri, along with four others, held a meeting in a car in Baghdad in May 2003 where they decided to support the resistance.<sup>295</sup> Al-Duri was former vice president and member of the Revolutionary Command Council, as well as commander of the Ba’ath Party Regional Command under the Hussein regime. He is number 6 on the coalition’s list of 55 most

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<sup>291</sup> Richard A. Oppel Jr., “In Northern Iraq, the Insurgency has Two Faces, Secular and Jihad, but a Common Goal,” *New York Times*, (December 19, 2004).

<sup>292</sup> Quoted in Pound.

<sup>293</sup> Pound.

<sup>294</sup> James Glanz, “Insurgents Wage Precise Attacks on Baghdad Fuel,” *New York Times*, (February 21, 2005).

<sup>295</sup> Schuster, “Iraq Insurgency 101.”

wanted men in Iraq.<sup>296</sup> Al-Duri's name has been associated with resistance financing and direction from Syria since that meeting. General George W. Casey, the U.S. commander in Iraq, stated that these former Ba'athists, now the New Regional Command, operate "out of Syria with impunity... providing direction and financing for the insurgency."<sup>297</sup> The Ba'ath Party also regained strength as a result of a summit held in Al Hasaka, Syria in spring of 2004 where those had been tainted by contact with the coalition or the Iraqi Governing Council were purged. After this reorganization, Ba'ath activity resurged.<sup>298</sup>

Ba'ath Party meetings have quietly returned to numerous Iraqi cities. Mid-level FRE officials chair meetings aimed at collecting funds for the resistance. There is a disturbing trend of current governmental employees frequenting such meetings as part of an effort to infiltrate the new government. After the exodus of higher level FRE officials to Jordan and Syria, more anonymous mid-level officials are now returning to enact the plan.<sup>299</sup>

General Mohamed Abdullah Shahwani, the Iraqi national intelligence chief, believes the resurgent Ba'ath Party is a key factor in the strength of the resistance. Key Ba'ath officials including Saddam's half-brother Sabawi Ibrahim al-Hassan and former aide Mohamed Yunis al-Ahmed are thought to be financiers of resistance, operating through connections to former military officials in Mosul, Samarra, Baquba, Kirkuk and Tikrit. Shahwani also implicates al-Duri in resistance coordination and funding.<sup>300</sup>

A captured resistance cell leader provided another, similar account of the leadership of the Ba'ath Party. He states that 'Izzat Ibrahim al-Duri is the current leader of the party, with Fadhi Al-Mashhadani responsible for the local organizations within Iraq and Muhammad Yunis Al-Ahmad, currently in Syria organizing efforts outside of

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<sup>296</sup> Multi-National Force-Iraq, "Iraq's 55 Most Wanted," <http://www.mnf-iraq.com/most%20wanted.htm>, (accessed October 31, 2005).

<sup>297</sup> Quoted in Thomas E. Ricks, "General: Iraqi Insurgents Directed from Syria," *Washington Post*, (December 17, 2004).

<sup>298</sup> Annia Ciezadlo, "Fragmented Leadership of the Iraqi Insurgency," *Christian Science Monitor*, (December 21, 2004).

<sup>299</sup> Sa'id al-Qaysi, "'Reform' is New Name for Ba'ath Party's Political Wing, Armed Resistance is Military Wing," *Al-Bayyinah* (Iraq: October 17, 2004), trans. by FBIS, <http://www.fbis.gov>.

<sup>300</sup> Parker, "Iraq Battling More Than 200,000 Insurgents: Intelligence Chief."

Iraq.<sup>301</sup> A December 2003 raid on a Samarra safe house associated with al-Duri netted \$1.94 million in cash. Ahmad and Duri reportedly provided funding and instructions to *fedayeen* and FREs in the Mosul area shortly after the invasion.<sup>302</sup> The other men mentioned have also been tapped for arrest by the office of the Iraqi Prime Minister as of March 2005. Other wanted Ba'athists include Rashid Ta'an Kazim, Aham Hasan Kaka al-Ubaydi (now associated with the *jihadi* group *Ansar al-Sunnah*), and Abd al-Baqi Abd al-Karim al-Abdallah al-Sa'adun (formerly Diyala Region Central Ba'ath Party Regional Chairman).<sup>303</sup> These officials are drawn from the various power centers of pre-invasion Iraq and represent one means for networking the vast number of unemployed former regime elements and the numerous resistance groups they belong to.

Accounting for the different Sunni groups taking part in the resistance is difficult. As many as 35 different Sunni Iraqi groups have made public announcements.<sup>304</sup> An analysis from the Baghdad weekly *Al-Zawra* states that many of the cells "do not know their leadership, the sources of their financing, or who provides them with weapons." This report lists three main Sunni resistance groups: the 1920 Revolution Brigades, The National Front for the Liberation of Iraq, and The Iraqi Resistance Islamic Front.<sup>305</sup> A U.S. government report lists the Islamic Army of Iraq, Muhammad's Army, the Secret Republican Army, the 1920 Revolution Brigades, and the Iraqi Resistance Islamic Front.<sup>306</sup> It is difficult to assess the true nature of these groups.

Several groups appear to have large FRE contingents. Of these groups, the Army of Muhammad has garnered the most press. Colonel Muayed Yassin 'Aziz 'Abd Al-Razaq Al-Nasseri confessed to being commander of this group and noted that it was

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<sup>301</sup> "Commander of Saddam Hussein's 'The Army of Muhammad' Confesses: We Received Aid in Money and Arms from Syria and Iran," *Al-Fayhaa TV* (UAE: Jan 14, 2005), transcript translated by MEMRI, <http://www.memritv.org/Transcript.asp?PI=492>, (accessed October 31, 2005).

<sup>302</sup> Pound, 20.

<sup>303</sup> Cordesman, "Iraq's Evolving Insurgency," 44.

<sup>304</sup> Cordesman, "Iraq's Evolving Insurgency," 41.

<sup>305</sup> Samir Haddad and Mazin Ghazi, "Who Kills Hostages in Iraq?" *Al-Zawra* (Iraq: September 19, 2004), trans. by FBIS, <http://www.fbis.gov>.

<sup>306</sup> Kenneth Katzman, *Iraq: U.S. Regime Change Efforts and Post-Saddam Governance*, (Washington DC: Congressional Research Service, March 4, 2005), 28.

“founded by Saddam Hussein after the fall of the regime on April 9, 2003.”<sup>307</sup> U.S. intelligence reports corroborate that Saddam created this group, along with other resistance organizations<sup>308</sup> and another account has a resistance leader in possession of leaflets from the Army of Muhammad on July 9, 2003.<sup>309</sup> The Army of Muhammad, according to Nasser, has 800 fighters and has collaborated with the Ba’ath Party since April of 2004. He reports that the leaders of the Army have been Yasser Al-Shab’awi (captured in July 2003), Sa’d Hammad Hisham until December 2003, then Nasser. Nasser described the group as “a military armed one, which operated according to a principle of non-centralized command.” The networked nature of support for resistance groups is evidenced by connections including the Ba’ath Party, the Syrian Ba’ath Party, and Fawzi al-Rawi, a financier that also has connections to other resistance factions.<sup>310</sup>

Other reports corroborate that the Army of Muhammad is “a Ba’athist group composed of former intelligence, security, and police officers in Saddam’s regime.” The group “uses cash bonuses” and even goes as far as providing health and death benefits to attract fighters. These reports point to Sayf al-Din Fulayyih Hasan [al-Rawi] as the leader of the Army of Muhammad.<sup>311</sup> Hasan was chief of staff of the Republican Guard and remains at large as number 14 on the coalition’s most wanted list.<sup>312</sup>

Some officials see the resistance beginning to organize regionally, with coordination between regions, but no national organization as of yet.<sup>313</sup> Connections between parochial Sunni and Islamist groups are also tentative. Many of the connections between groups appear to exist in the area of financing and some joint attacks and statements.

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<sup>307</sup> “Commander of Saddam Hussein’s ‘The Army of Muhammad’ Confesses.” See also Ghosh, “Professor of Death.”

<sup>308</sup> Pound, “Seeds of Chaos,” 20.

<sup>309</sup> Bazzi.

<sup>310</sup> “Commander of Saddam Hussein’s ‘The Army of Muhammad’ Confesses.”

<sup>311</sup> Pound, 20.

<sup>312</sup> Multi-National Force-Iraq, “Iraq’s 55 Most Wanted.”

<sup>313</sup> Schmitt and Shanker.



## D. ISLAMIC ASPECTS OF SUNNI RESISTANCE

Islamic structures were left in a prominent position by the fall of the regime. Politicized and increasingly important Islamic clerics were the most influential Iraqi leaders left in many areas after the regime fell. Iraqis turning to religion to make sense of the chaos were attuned to Islamic ideology and organization as the resistance began to form. Religion also fit the Iraqi struggle into a regional context. These factors yield a resistance that is able to fit a wide range of motivations and goals into a context of Islamic legitimacy and duty.

Radical Islamist groups present a small but virulent facet of the resistance,<sup>314</sup> with potential access to transnational Islamist networks, and the ability to motivate foreign *mujahideen* through religious images. On the other hand, even groups with a more secular ideology are able to harness the power of Islam. Former regime elements, Ba'athists, and Iraqi nationalists can find Islamic ideology and organizational assistance very attractive. The power of religion operates for these groups, as well; to frame their actions as duty, to legitimate their fight, to provide an expanded notion of the possible, and to provide solace for impending martyrs and their companions.

### 1. Radical Islamist Resistance Groups

Radical *Salafi* groups are a minority contributor to the violence in Iraq, but have made a “disproportionate impact” due to “the strategic and symbolic nature of their attacks, combined with effective Information Operations.”<sup>315</sup> These important actors constitute one pole of the Islamic aspect of Iraqi resistance.

Foreign fighters appear to be most prevalent in the Islamic resistance groups, owing to the power of Islamist networks and the call to *jihad*, but the size of this element should not be overstated. For example, the swell of Arab support for the Afghan *jihad* is legendary, but the Arab contribution in terms of combatants was quite small. Milton Bearden, CIA station chief in Pakistan during the 1980s, states that up to 25,000 Arabs

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<sup>314</sup> Oppel, 30.

<sup>315</sup> Vice Admiral Lowell E. Jacoby, Director, Defense Intelligence Agency, “Current and Projected National Security Threats to the United States,” Statement for the Record, Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, (February 16, 2005), [http://www.dia.mil/publicaffairs/Testimonies/DIA\\_DR\\_WWT\\_20050216U.pdf](http://www.dia.mil/publicaffairs/Testimonies/DIA_DR_WWT_20050216U.pdf), (accessed October 31, 2005), 8.

passed through Pakistan and Afghanistan over the ten years of the war.<sup>316</sup> In contrast, between 150,000 and 250,000 Afghan *mujahideen* were active *at a given time*. Some sources assert that a total of only a few hundred Arabs engaged in combat operations. The vast majority of Arab support was in the form of finance, organization, and other support activities, largely in Pakistan.<sup>317</sup> Similarly, the bulk of the resisters in Iraq are Iraqis.

Foreign fighters are estimated to constitute 4 to 15 percent of combatants in Iraq. The foreigners create effects disproportionate to their number because they use tactics of extreme violence calculated to provoke civil war in Iraq.<sup>318</sup> American military sources state that foreigners constitute 90% of suicide bombers in Iraq.<sup>319</sup> One Iraqi handler of suicide bombers explains, “Iraqis are fighting for their country’s future, so they have something to live for” while foreign volunteers “come a long way from their countries... They don’t want to gradually earn their entry to paradise by participating in operations against the Americans. They want martyrdom immediately.”<sup>320</sup>

The foreign element may be growing in Iraq, but it is still small. Between April and October 2005, 312 foreign fighters were captured in Iraq. The fighters came from 27, mostly Arab, countries. Seventy-eight of the fighters were Egyptian, 66 Syrian, 41 Sudanese, and 32 Saudi. The foreign fighters also included an American, two Britons, and an Israeli, all of Arab descent.<sup>321</sup> These foreign fighters are unable to operate in Iraq without Iraqi support. Outsiders (even Arabs) stand out to native Iraqis and “can only be successful if [they] are provided with resources, protection, concealment, and the necessary means to undertake their missions.”<sup>322</sup> This point is made clear by the complaints of Abu Anas al-Shami, a lieutenant of Zarqawi. “After one year of *jihad*...

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<sup>316</sup> Milton Bearden, “Afghanistan, Graveyard of Empires,” *Foreign Affairs* 80, no. 6 (November/December 2001), electronic version from ProQuest.

<sup>317</sup> Burke, 60-61.

<sup>318</sup> Dan Murphy, “Iraq’s Foreign Fighters: Few but Deadly,” *Christian Science Monitor*, (September 27, 2005).

<sup>319</sup> Dexter Filkins, “Foreign Fighters Captured In Iraq Come From 27, Mostly Arab, Lands,” *New York Times* (October 21, 2005).

<sup>320</sup> Ghosh.

<sup>321</sup> Filkins, “Foreign Fighters.”

<sup>322</sup> Hashim, “Iraq’s Chaos.”

none of us could find a piece of land to use as a shelter or a place to retire to safety amongst some members of [his] group... We would hide at day light and sneak like a cat at night.”<sup>323</sup> These foreigners were ultimately able to find Iraqis conditioned by the regional Islamic context and willing to harbor them in Fallujah.

Umar Husayn Hadid was an active Iraqi *Salafi* in Fallujah well prior to the invasion. Forced to flee a death sentence from the Ba’ath regime, he resurfaced after the invasion to organize a militia in Fallujah. As a native of the city, Hadid helped to shield Zarqawi from ejection or betrayal by the people of Fallujah for the \$25 million bounty on his head.<sup>324</sup> *Mujahideen* commanders in Fallujah were each linked to a mosque in the city,<sup>325</sup> demonstrating the power of religious institutions for the resistance. The regional *Salafi* influence and the power of local religious organizations laid the groundwork for the brutal rule of the Islamic Republic of Fallujah.

Regional Islamists found other parts of Iraq attractive as well. Many gained entry to the Iraqi resistance through the autonomous Kurdish north, a significant outpost for Islamists in Iraq prior to 2003. In the 1990s, two new Islamist groups, Kurdish HAMAS and *Tawhid*, were set up by former Afghan *mujahideen*. These groups’ *Salafi* ideology reached Kurdistan through returning *mujahideen* and Saudi funding. In September 2001, the groups united as *Jund al-Islam* and soon came under the control of Najmeddin Faraj Ahmad (Mullah Krekar) as *Ansar al-Islam* (AI).<sup>326</sup>

*Ansar*-controlled territories around Hallabja were a stronghold where Kurdish Islamism met the “Arab Afghans.” These Arab Afghans were Arab *mujahideen* that

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<sup>323</sup> Nimrod Raphaeli, “The Sheikh of the Slaughterers’: Abu Mus’ab Al-Zarqawi and the Al-Qa’ida Connection,” *MEMRI Inquiry and Analysis Series* No. 231, (July 1, 2005), <http://memri.org/bin/opener.cgi?Page=archives&ID=IA23105>, (accessed October 31, 2005).

<sup>324</sup> Hashim, “Who Are the Insurgents?” 13.

<sup>325</sup> Adrien Jaulmes, “The Americans vs. the Rebel Abscess of Al-Falluja,” *Le Figaro* internet version (Paris: September 23, 2004), trans. by FBIS, <http://www.fbis.gov>.

<sup>326</sup> International Crisis Group, “Radical Islam in Iraqi Kurdistan: The Mouse That Roared?” *International Crisis Group Middle East Briefing* (February 7, 2003), [http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/report\\_archive/A400885\\_07022003.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/report_archive/A400885_07022003.pdf), (accessed October 31, 2005), 3-5.

inhabited the training camps of Afghanistan. They fled to Kurdistan after the U.S. assault on their camps and turned to training AI members. One of these Arab Afghans is thought to have been Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.<sup>327</sup>

Abu Musab al-Zarqawi has been a major Islamist leader in Iraq.<sup>328</sup> A Jordanian Palestinian, Zarqawi formally established his resistance group in April 2004, but was active well prior to this date. His group is currently known as *Tanzim Qa'idat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn* (QJBR). Early major attacks attributed to Zarqawi's followers include the bombing of the Jordanian Embassy in Baghdad and the catastrophic attack on the U.N. Headquarters in Baghdad, both in August 2003.<sup>329</sup>

Zarqawi's background is emblematic of regional extremism. Zarqawi was born in 1966 as Ahmad Fadhil Nazzal al-Khalayla in a poor section of Al-Zarqaa, Jordan. As part of a transition from "extreme depravity to extreme Islamism," he traveled to Afghanistan in 1989, arriving too late to take part in the *jihad*. Zarqawi, along with several other *mujahideen*, then returned to agitate a *Salafi* movement in al-Zarqaa.<sup>330</sup> Zarqawi was jailed in the Jordanian Al-Sawwaqa prison from 1994 to 1999, where his life as a street tough helped him gain a sizable following. Upon his release, Zarqawi led many of his followers to Peshawar, Pakistan and on to a camp in Herat, Afghanistan<sup>331</sup> where he was reportedly wounded in 2002. He escaped through Iran to Iraq and was harbored by AI.<sup>332</sup>

Shortly after the occupation in 2003, Zarqawi split from AI to create *al-Tawhid wal Jihad* (Monotheism and Jihad), a rabidly anti-Shi'a and anti-American group. In October 2004, Zarqawi pledged his allegiance to Osama bin Laden and his group was renamed *Tanzim Qa'idat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidyin* (The al-Qaeda Jihad Organization in the Land of the Two Rivers, QJBR). Association with bin Laden elevates Zarqawi's

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<sup>327</sup> "Radical Islam in Iraqi Kurdistan," 3-6.

<sup>328</sup> Raphaeli, "Islamist Pressures in Iraq."

<sup>329</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Terrorism, 2004* (Washington DC: US Department of State, April 2005), <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/c14813.htm> (accessed November 2, 2005), 111.

<sup>330</sup> Raphaeli, "The Sheikh of the Slaughterers."

<sup>331</sup> Raphaeli, "The Sheikh of the Slaughterers."

<sup>332</sup> Matthew Levitt, "Untangling the Terror Web: Identifying and Counteracting the Phenomenon of Crossover Between Terrorist Groups," *SAIS Review* 24, no. 1 (Winter-Spring 2004): 40.

status *vis-à-vis* other resistance leaders in Iraq. The association also gives Zarqawi wider access to funding, recruits, and support, both regionally and world-wide.<sup>333</sup> More recently, Zarqawi has proven able to harness the power of religion to draw former military and security members into his group.<sup>334</sup> This may be an initial move in a deeper struggle between resistance groups to gain dominant religious legitimacy.

*Ansar al-Sunnah* (AS) is another key Islamic resistance organization. Originating from *Ansar al-Islam* (AI), AS appears to be a significant factor in northern Iraq. The group's establishment was announced in September 2003 and appears to be a combination of Kurdish *mujahideen* from AI with Iraqi Sunni Islamists.<sup>335</sup> The U.S. Department of State has linked AS to support from both Al-Qaeda and Zarqawi's cell, and thus to an international support network throughout Europe and most of the world.<sup>336</sup>

These groups present one pole of the resistance in Iraq. These examples demonstrate how ideology and organization of the radical Islamist resistance is a product of Iraqi and regional influences. The extreme *Salafi* nature of these groups is not shared by all resisters within Iraq, but other groups are able to capitalize on the power of Islam as well.

## **2. Use of Islam by Other Resistance Elements and “Secular”-Islamist Connections**

Islamic concepts regarding resistance found resonance outside the extreme world of those like Zarqawi. A blend of nationalism and Islamism has fueled a portion of the Sunni resistance,<sup>337</sup> partially owing to Saddam's reintroduction of politicized Islam as one of his strategies of control. In the Sunni areas of Iraq, “Islam served to unify and motivate a disparate array of factions and currents” into “a hybrid of religion and nationalism.”<sup>338</sup>

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<sup>333</sup> Raphaeli, “The Sheikh of the Slaughterers.”

<sup>334</sup> Greg Miller and Tyler Marshall, “More Iraqis Lured to Al Qaeda Group,” *Los Angeles Times*, (September 16, 2005).

<sup>335</sup> Cordesman, “Iraq's Evolving Insurgency,” 49.

<sup>336</sup> U.S. Department of State, 95.

<sup>337</sup> Hashim, “Iraq's Chaos.”

<sup>338</sup> Shadid, 287.

The fusion of Islam and Iraqi nationalism can be found in many of the more “secular” groups. It also serves as a motivation for small cells of disaffected Iraqi Sunnis. These cells are neither radical *Salafis*, nor former regime supporters. For “the most disenchanting and disillusioned Sunnis in Iraq,” the “simplicity of a struggle against the infidels, the veneration of death in sacred battle, and the empowerment that violence sometimes provides”<sup>339</sup> is a direct result of the power of religion.

Disaffected Iraqi Sunnis were among the most receptive audiences of clerics’ calls for *jihad* against the American occupation, readily available in local sermons and recordings of radical preachers from Syria and other states in the region. One cell of relatively poor Sunnis from Khaldiya united under this Islamic motivation. Congregating in a local mosque, these five men were neither former regime elements, nor well-organized Islamists. They organized a small attack on a U.S. convoy that was certain to result in their death. They left behind a message: “We call on you to join the *jihad*... not to stay still in silence in the face of this oppression and anarchy... We urge you to be joyful with us, we the ones who sacrificed ourselves for the sake of righteousness and Islam.”<sup>340</sup>

Small cells of Iraqis motivated by religious and nationalist sentiments may be seen as a middle ground between well-organized radical Islamist groups on one hand, and former regime elements on the other. They are not fighting in Iraq as part of a regional struggle, nor are they trying to reestablish the Ba’ath regime. They are motivated by a deep-rooted perception of the U.S. and a combination of religious and nationalist sentiments. A leaflet handed out at a Sunni mosque in late 2003 provides an example. “The goal of the infidels, after stealing our wealth, is to remove us from our religion by force and all other means, so that we become a lost nation without principle, making it easier for the Jews and Christians to humiliate us.”<sup>341</sup> In this case, the motivation is not a program for the installation of an Islamic state, but the defense of nation and religion.

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<sup>339</sup> Shadid, 288.

<sup>340</sup> Statement quoted in Shadid, 288-289.

<sup>341</sup> Quoted in Shadid, 312.

These themes resonate strongly in tribal areas. One observer called the resistance in Fallujah “a tribal uprising, controlled by religious leaders.”<sup>342</sup> Mohammed, a resister in the Sunni Triangle, explained that his motivations for involvement were a mix of revenge for civilian deaths caused by coalition troops, religious duty, and the fear of Shi’a hegemony and reprisals for the abuses of Sunni rule. They had nothing to do with Saddam. “The world must know that this is an honorable resistance and has nothing to do with the old regime,” he stated. “We take our power from our history, not from one person.”<sup>343</sup> Although the Sunni tradesmen and professionals of Mohammed’s group had no prior links and no loyalty to Saddam’s regime, their resistance had been enabled by the legacy of Saddam’s large security complex. Former Iraqi army officers provided the training for Mohammed’s cell.<sup>344</sup>

Motivations for former regime elements to join Islamically-motivated groups are difficult to categorize. Former members of the military and security services were reported to be joining the ranks of Sunni Islamist groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood and the Patriotic Front of Ahmad Kubaisi. Motivations for this move could be resistance to change, an attempt to influence the Islamist organizations, or an attempt to counter Shi’a organizations.<sup>345</sup> Some former regime members may be motivated by the combination of religion and nationalism as well. These trained individuals can be especially influential as leaders and instructors for cells of resisters who have heeded the call to *jihad*, but have no advanced military training.<sup>346</sup>

Former regime members may also be turning to religion due to their prolonged struggle against the coalition. One former rocket specialist of the *Fedayeen* stated in fall 2003 that he was hoping for a return of the Ba’ath regime. By summer 2004 he was fighting for an Islamic state.<sup>347</sup>

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<sup>342</sup> Graham, “Beyond Fallujah,” 38.

<sup>343</sup> Quoted in Graham, “Beyond Fallujah,” 41.

<sup>344</sup> Graham, “Beyond Fallujah,” 42.

<sup>345</sup> Faleh A. Jabar, “The Worldly Roots of Religiosity in Post-Saddam Iraq,” *Middle East Report* 227, (Summer 2003): 18.

<sup>346</sup> Hashim, “Iraq’s Chaos.”

<sup>347</sup> Michael Ware, “Meet the New Jihad,” *Time* 164 (July 5, 2004), electronic version accessed through ProQuest.

Religiosity may also be catalyzed by stints in coalition prisons in Iraq. According to interviews of resistance fighters, prisons like Abu Ghraib are venues where Islamic extremists meet and educate former regime resistance members. One former Iraqi military officer detained at Abu Ghraib relates, “We studied hard every day and often into the night” under the tutelage of *Salafi* detainees in cellblock “mini-madrasahs.”<sup>348</sup> A former Republican Guard officer, “Abu Qaqa al-Tamimi,” was arrested for resistance activities in November 2003. After his nine-month detention, a more religious al-Tamimi emerged and eventually became a handler of suicide bombers for several resistance groups including both Iraqi nationalists and Islamic extremists.<sup>349</sup> The role of detention centers in indoctrination of resisters is not new. For example, Israeli prisons played a role in the education and mixing of Palestinian fighters during the *Intifada*.<sup>350</sup> The release of “hundreds of detainees” in Iraq in the summer of 2004<sup>351</sup> may have similarly contributed to increased interoperability of resistance groups. Furthermore, Iraqi resisters are now more likely to cooperate with foreign extremists. In one instance, the Battalions of Islamic Holy War (*Kata’ib al-Jihad al-Islamiyah*), a FRE group, has become a part of the Zarqawi network. In turn, the Battalion has incorporated foreign fighters into its cells.<sup>352</sup> These incidents demonstrate the power of religion in blurring lines between groups.

Mowaffak Rubaie, Iraq’s national security advisor, elucidates this power. “There’s a tendency to religion-ize the insurgency. Religion is a strong motive. You’re not going to find someone who’s going to die for the Baathists. But Salafists have a very strong message. If you use the Koran selectively, it could be a weapon of mass destruction.”<sup>353</sup>

The blurred lines between the various groups of the resistance are further complicated by the various nexus that connect groups. The connection between cells and

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<sup>348</sup> Quoted in Ware.

<sup>349</sup> Ghosh.

<sup>350</sup> Rashid Khalidi, “The PLO and the Uprising,” *Middle East Report* 154, (September-October 1988): 21.

<sup>351</sup> Ware.

<sup>352</sup> Ware.

<sup>353</sup> Quoted in Miller and Marshall.



the existence of an economic and social support structure for Iraqi resistance cells are the greatest strengths of this opportunistic and resilient network. These connections and shared support mechanisms may also be key vulnerabilities for the Iraqi resistance.

#### **IV. THE NEXUS BETWEEN GROUPS: FROM NETWORK TO DEAD-END?**

The case of the Iraqi resistance is characterized by a linkage to legacies of Saddam Hussein's rule. The legacies of Ba'ath dominance over Iraq were a Sunni sub-state power structure, including religious and tribal elements, and a set of Sunni motivations to resist the trajectory of transition. These legacies provide fighters, structures, and support that serves to perpetuate the resistance despite intense coalition targeting. The networked structure of the resistance also contributes to its resilience because it does not offer targetable centers of leadership, command, and control whose removal can bring down the whole structure.

An understanding of the systemic connections, support mechanisms, and regenerating capabilities of the resistance is critical in developing policies that lead it from network to dead-end. The major common vulnerability of the various linkages that create these capabilities is the possibility of a significant portion of Sunni Iraqis realizing that their interests are better served through political engagement than violent resistance. If this realization is attained, many resistance groups will fight on, but the supporting connections between cells and from cells to the populace will dry up, leading the resistance from network to dead-end.

The resistance in Iraq does not appear to be abating as of late 2005. The weekly average of attacks has risen to around 600, nearly double the figure from early 2004.<sup>354</sup> August and October 2005 each saw 81 U.S. troops killed in hostile incidents, the third-highest monthly toll since the invasion.<sup>355</sup> Despite Sunni involvement in the referendum on the Iraqi constitution, the resisters encouraged voting against the draft and have openly

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<sup>354</sup> Elaine M. Grossman, "New Bush Strategy in Iraq Will Aim to Shield Public from Insurgents." *Inside the Pentagon*, (November 3, 2005).

<sup>355</sup> Brookings Institution. *Iraq Index* (November 7, 2005), <http://www.brookings.edu/fp/saban/iraq/index.pdf> (accessed November 10, 2005), 4.

stated that they will continue to fight the occupation, regardless of the political outcome of the referendum.<sup>356</sup> The resistance is tenacious and two years of concentrated military action has not yet led its demise.

A U.S. military official stated, "If someone would have told you that we would have killed 10,000, wounded 10,000 and imprisoned 32,000, you would have thought we would have won," however, the resistance lives on because it is "self-regenerating."<sup>357</sup> This self-regenerating capacity points to the fact that the resistance is not a collection of dead-enders, but a network with ties to support, expertise, and recruits. The regime die-hards have served as a cadre, around which a much wider resistance has formed from elements of Sunni society. The regime cadre is not a centralized leadership, but it is an enabler in the form of finance, support, knowledge, and military ability that has helped other groups join the fight. Themes of the resistance, including Sunni parochial motives and religious calls, assist in recruitment of fighters from the Sunni populace, allowing the resistance to regenerate cells operating within the web of support.

Because there is no central, targetable leadership for the whole resistance, a more systemic approach must be used. The nexus between groups must be evaluated and attacked. The channels that provide finance, support, and recruits to the resistance must be stemmed. Some of these tasks are functions of intelligence and military action; however, a systemic approach must be a balanced political and military strategy.

#### **A. CONNECTIONS BETWEEN GROUPS: FUNDING AND SUPPORT**

Support, in various forms, is the lifeblood of the resistance. Many insurgencies have been successful with only a small cadre of activists and the acquiescence of the general populace. The Iraqi populace has learned from Saddam's rule "that the best way to survive is to stay out of conflicts between the powerful."<sup>358</sup> This passivity tends to support the resistance, but there are more active modes of support within the Sunni population. The extension of resistance beyond a FRE hard core, the sustained support of

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<sup>356</sup> Ghaith Abdul-Ahad, "The New Sunni Jihad: 'A Time for Politics'; Tour With Iraqi Reveals Tactical Change," *Washington Post* (Oct. 27, 2005).

<sup>357</sup> Quoted in Schuster, "Iraq Insurgency 101."

<sup>358</sup> Metz, "Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq," 32.

the various groups, and the tentative links between groups are important phenomena. These aspects demand a re-evaluation of the “dead-ender” label given to the FRE loyalists in this case.

The connections between FRE and Islamic extremist groups are a division of labor with the FREs supplying funding, weapons, and logistics for the Islamists who provide motivated foot soldiers.<sup>359</sup> This cooperation, despite radically different long-term goals, is lubricated by the common short-term goal of ejecting the occupiers. The more secular forces need the fanatical fighters, especially suicide bombers, which the Islamist groups can provide. On the other hand, the Islamists need the funding, support, and expertise that nationalist groups have access to through the Ba’ath legacy.<sup>360</sup> Former military and security leaders also provide tactical knowledge and leadership to groups of newly radicalized recruits. The connection between the two groups is not representative of a unified front, but rather signifies the opportunistic collaboration of netwar actors.

### **1. Financial Support**

All resistance groups require funding. Many attacks are undertaken on a for-pay basis<sup>361</sup> and increasingly sophisticated attacks are costly.<sup>362</sup> The urban character of the resistance brings various requirements such as rent for safe-houses (for example, one handler has several in Baghdad and throughout the Sunni triangle),<sup>363</sup> payment of salaries, transportation costs, and the like.<sup>364</sup> There are three main sources of funding. Vast amounts of cash hidden or taken from the country by Ba’ath officials are controlled by FRE financiers in Syria and Iraq. Evidence suggests that these financiers are funding not only FREs, but also Sunni nationalists and Islamists.<sup>365</sup> Another source of funds is

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<sup>359</sup> Debat, 22.

<sup>360</sup> Jason Burke, *Al-Qaeda: The True Story of Radical Islam*, (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 269.

<sup>361</sup> Metz, “Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq,” 29.

<sup>362</sup> Anecdotal accounts from U.S. military officers stationed in Iraq.

<sup>363</sup> Ghosh, “Professor of Death.”

<sup>364</sup> Daniel Glaser, Acting Assistant Secretary, Office of Terrorist Financing and Financial Crimes, U.S. Department of the Treasury, Testimony Before the House Financial Services Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations and the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Terrorism, (July 28, 2005), <http://financialservices.house.gov/media/pdf/072805dg.pdf>, (accessed October 12, 2005).

<sup>365</sup> Schmitt and Shanker. Hashim, “Iraq’s Chaos.”

donations from rich sympathizers, both inside and outside Iraq.<sup>366</sup> Finally, crime provides income to fund many groups' activities.<sup>367</sup> Funding may yield a common vulnerability for these groups.

Many of the attacks in Iraq are undertaken on a for-pay basis. The bounty for successful attacks increased from around \$500 just after the occupation to \$3000-5000 by the end of 2003.<sup>368</sup> Payment for attacks is a powerful lure when unemployment is thought to be over 50%. One group of insurgents stated that they were paid around 100,000 dinars (around \$68) for two operations.<sup>369</sup> Several resisters mentioned that they earned the title "emir" and a \$1500 monthly salary by killing ten people.<sup>370</sup> Pay provides a powerful incentive for unemployed men offered \$100 to \$300 per roadside bomb.<sup>371</sup>

In contrast, few former government employees were able to find official employment. Some of those who did, largely technicians and doctors, received a monthly salary of around \$200 with the chance for a \$50 bonus.<sup>372</sup> CPA Order Number 30 set the lowest monthly salary for government employees at 69,000 dinars (around \$40). The highest salary under the normal scale was 920,000 dinars (around \$550).<sup>373</sup> Thus, payment for attacks is a strong lure, especially to former military and security men.

Funds are needed to keep the large number of "part time" resisters in the fight. Abu Ali, a resister from the Sunni triangle, took "some time off from the resistance to do contract work for the occupation" because he needed "money to take care of his son."

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<sup>366</sup> Hashim, "Iraq's Chaos." See also Glaser.

<sup>367</sup> Glaser.

<sup>368</sup> Hoffman, 12.

<sup>369</sup> "Terrorists Caught in Iraq Confess," *Al-Arabiya TV*, (UAE: January 10, 2005), trans. transcript by MEMRI, <http://www.memritv.org/Transcript.asp?P1=481>, (accessed October 31, 2005).

<sup>370</sup> "Iraqi Terrorist Talal Ra'ad Sleiman Yasin: Saudi-Sanctioned Fatwa Permits Killing Iraqi Security Personnel." *Al-Iraqiya TV* and "Amjad Uraibi, A Terrorist Captured in Iraq, Tells of Massacres and His Training," *Al-Iraqiya TV*.

<sup>371</sup> Schmitt and Shanker.

<sup>372</sup> Fahim, "Playing With Soldiers."

<sup>373</sup> Coalition Provisional Authority, *Coalition Provisional Authority Order Number 30: Reform of Salaries and Employment Conditions of State Employees*, (September 8, 2003), [http://www.cpa-iraq.org/regulations/20030908\\_CPAORD\\_30\\_Reform\\_of\\_Salaries\\_and\\_Employment\\_Conditions\\_of\\_State\\_Employees\\_with\\_Annex\\_A.pdf](http://www.cpa-iraq.org/regulations/20030908_CPAORD_30_Reform_of_Salaries_and_Employment_Conditions_of_State_Employees_with_Annex_A.pdf), (accessed October 31, 2005).

Although working for the occupation, Abu Ali continued to funnel part of his paycheck to his resistance cell.<sup>374</sup> This account demonstrates the opportunism and complexity of the many facets of the resistance.

American officials believe militant groups are funded by “unlimited money’ from an underground financial network run by former Ba’ath Party leaders and Saddam Hussein’s relatives.” \$500 million of Iraqi money in Syria remains unaccounted for. Contributions from outside sympathizers augment this windfall and appear to be flowing through Syria as well.<sup>375</sup> Most of the money coming in from outside Iraq appears to be carried by cash couriers on well-established smuggling routes that significantly predate the invasion.<sup>376</sup> The *hawala* system of informal money transfers is also prevalent in money smuggling and laundering, but it is difficult to crack down on due to the large numbers of legitimate people who depend on the system.<sup>377</sup> Domestic funding also comes from “rich families, especially those who are in the construction, contracting, and commercial sectors in Al Anbar province.”<sup>378</sup> Some of these wealthy Sunni businessmen are funding resistance groups for commercial reasons. New foreign-investment laws and the influx of foreign goods have destroyed Iraqi businesses. Increasing the violence reduces the competition from foreign businesses wary of investment and operation in an unstable Iraq.<sup>379</sup>

The Iraqis organizing the major financing of the resistance are a small group. One report pins the size at “about 20 people, mostly operating outside Iraq.” This group operates largely in Syria to collect and organize smuggling of funds, fighters, and weapons into Iraq.<sup>380</sup> Financiers also outfit cell leaders throughout the Sunni areas then cell leaders recruit and run local operations.<sup>381</sup>

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<sup>374</sup> Graham, “Beyond Fallujah,” 47.

<sup>375</sup> Schmitt and Shanker.

<sup>376</sup> Glaser.

<sup>377</sup> Looney, “The Business of Insurgency,” 71-72.

<sup>378</sup> Hashim, “Iraq’s Chaos.”

<sup>379</sup> Graham, “Beyond Fallujah,” 43.

<sup>380</sup> Schmitt and Shanker.

<sup>381</sup> Schmitt and Shanker.

The small group of financiers is drawn mostly from families with close ties to Saddam. The six sons of Saddam's half-brother, Sabawi Ibrahim Hasan Al-Tikriti, as well as Muhammad Yunis al-Ahmed, a former Ba'ath Party official and Saddam aide, have been implicated as financiers and supporters of the resistance by the U.S. government.<sup>382</sup> Sabawi Hasan al-Tikriti was handed over to Iraqi authorities in February 2005 by Syria.<sup>383</sup> Yasir Sabawi Ibrahim, a son of Sabawi labeled by one Iraqi authority as "the most dangerous man in the insurgency" for his financing activities, was arrested in Baghdad in October 2005 after Syrian authorities forced him to return to Iraq. Ibrahim was reportedly second-in-command to Muhammad Yunis al-Ahmed, operating financially in Syria, Jordan and Yemen and serving as a financial link between Ba'athist resisters and Zarqawi's group. Another al-Tikriti son, Ayman, was sentenced to life in prison by Iraqi authorities in September for his links to the resistance.<sup>384</sup> Al-Ahmed was listed as wanted for arrest by the Iraqi government in March 2005 for being a "financial facilitator and operational leader of the New Regional Command and New Ba'ath Party." Fadhi Ibrahim Mahmud Mashhadani is also wanted as a "top member of the New Ba'ath Party and a key financier of insurgent and terrorist activity."<sup>385</sup> Syrian General Zuhayr Shalish and Asif Shalish, along with the Syrian SES International Corporation have also been identified as facilitators of the FRE financing activities within Syria.<sup>386</sup>

Izz al-Din al-Majid, a key Zarqawi financier, was arrested in Fallujah in December 2004. Majid had over \$35 million in his bank accounts and reportedly had access to "\$2 to \$7 billion of former regime assets stolen from Iraqi government accounts." Under interrogation, Majid stated that his goal was to unite *Ansar al-Sunnah*, the Army of Muhammad, and the Islamic Resistance Army.<sup>387</sup> Majid was a cousin and

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<sup>382</sup> Glaser. Schmitt and Shanker.

<sup>383</sup> Cordesman "Iraq's Evolving Insurgency," 53.

<sup>384</sup> Salah Nasrawi, "Hussein Nephew Arrested in Iraq," *Boston Globe*, (October 20, 2005), [http://www.boston.com/news/world/middleeast/articles/2005/10/20/hussein\\_nephew\\_arrested\\_in\\_iraq/](http://www.boston.com/news/world/middleeast/articles/2005/10/20/hussein_nephew_arrested_in_iraq/), (accessed October 20, 2005).

<sup>385</sup> Cordesman, "Iraq's Evolving Insurgency," 44.

<sup>386</sup> Glaser. Schmitt and Shanker.

<sup>387</sup> Cordesman, "Iraq's Evolving Insurgency," 51.

former bodyguard of Saddam Hussein.<sup>388</sup> Another tie between Zarqawi's Islamists and the Army of Muhammad was Major General Abd Daoud Suleiman, who was arrested in early 2005. Suleiman was one of the founders of the Army of Muhammad and was also a military advisor to Zarqawi.<sup>389</sup> Other Zarqawi financiers have been identified by the U.S. government in Kuwait, Jordan, and Syria.<sup>390</sup>

Crime provides another source of income for the resistance. "'Industrial scale' criminal gangs" are well established in many urban areas.<sup>391</sup> These elements are a strong potential ally for any resistance movement<sup>392</sup> due to the "leaderless nexus" that provides for opportunistic collaboration of criminal and resistance networks.<sup>393</sup>

Iraqi criminals under the former regime were involved in "oil smuggling and other enterprises" through a "widespread, globally networked criminal operation."<sup>394</sup> These criminals appear to remain "under the influence of various former regime elements" and some collaborate with resistance groups.<sup>395</sup> For example, Omar Hadid, a leader of one of the groups in Fallujah prior to the U.S. offensive, "ran a gangland-style operation," financing his group through criminal enterprises as well as donations.<sup>396</sup> Criminal activities ranging from "low-level crime and extortion, to involvement in smuggling and drug trafficking" provide funds for resisters. The endemic nature of organized crime that sprung up during the embargo years makes such criminal activity

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<sup>388</sup> "Saddam's Cousin Blasts 'Illegal' Trial," *Al-Jazeera* website, (December 16, 2003), <http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/DF1DD10A-B7B9-4F07-BF36-39AEC9AFE7E7.htm> (accessed November 9, 2005). "Saddam's Cousin: No Link to Fighters," *Al-Jazeera* website, (December 15, 2004), <http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/3A6C838C-17FE-48C0-B38C-BCBD8049AC97.htm> (accessed November 9, 2005).

<sup>389</sup> Raphaeli, "The Sheikh of the Slaughterers."

<sup>390</sup> Glaser.

<sup>391</sup> Toby Dodge, "Prepared Testimony for the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations."

<sup>392</sup> Metz, "Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq," 34.

<sup>393</sup> Dishman.

<sup>394</sup> Robert Tomes, "Schlock and Blah: Counter-insurgency Realities in a Rapid Dominance Era," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 16 No. 1, (March 2005): 45.

<sup>395</sup> Cordesman, "Iraq's Evolving Insurgency," 65.

<sup>396</sup> Schmitt and Shanker.



difficult to counteract.<sup>397</sup> U.S. military reports assert that around 80 percent of violent attacks in Iraq are purely criminal acts,<sup>398</sup> further fueling the chaos that assists the resisters' campaign.

A Pentagon official asserts that resistance activity abates as funds run low between shipments, which are increasingly targeted.<sup>399</sup> The capture of high-level financiers has led to the confiscation of large amounts of cash that would otherwise fuel attacks. These financiers and their infiltration routes are a crucial chokepoint for targeting. Creating a shortage of funds may also heighten tensions between groups by stiffening competition and thus highlighting long-term differences.

Some of this financial support can be cut off through military and police work. Border security can be improved, smuggling routes can be policed, and high-level financiers can be targeted. A good deal of support comes through sources embedded in Iraqi society, including mosques, *hawala* networks, and donations of local businessmen. These roots in the society are extremely difficult to extinguish through military action. Political solutions are needed to complement military action if financial starvation of the resistance is to work.

## **2. Other Ties Between Resistance Groups**

An important set of links between groups are “handlers” who provide the support, intelligence, and organization for attacks. One handler, interviewed under the pseudonym “Abu Qaqa al-Tamimi,” organizes attacks for several groups, from Islamic extremists to Iraqi nationalists. Al-Tamimi was a Republican Guard officer under the former regime and claims to have been a messenger for Saddam Hussein during the early days of the resistance. He has built a wide-ranging network of connections to varied groups. He boasts, “Many people in the insurgency know me, even if they have never met me.”<sup>400</sup> The networking function of this trained military officer shows how FRE hard-cores can serve as an enabler for the varied groups of resistance.

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<sup>397</sup> Temple.

<sup>398</sup> Schmitt and Shanker.

<sup>399</sup> Schmitt and Shanker.

<sup>400</sup> Ghosh, “Professor of Death.”

Journalist Alexis Debat, referring to U.S. military and intelligence sources, suggests that a *Mukhabarat* section charged with monitoring subversive groups in Iraq and neighboring states has provided officers that have served as contacts between FREs and Islamic extremists. *Mukhabarat* officers have also been implicated in early recruitment of foreign fighters, mostly Palestinian refugees in Jordanian, Lebanese, and Syrian camps, before and during the war.<sup>401</sup>

Debat also alleges that *Wahhabi* activists, secretly working in Iraq as early as the 1980s, were able to build a “small but powerful following in the army, even enlisting one of the generals heading the *Mukhabarat*.” These individuals then “openly joined” the radical *jihadis* following the collapse of the regime, serving as connections between FRE and Islamic extremist groups.<sup>402</sup>

Collaboration has also extended to a political statement in at least one case. The Ba’ath Party, Zarqawi’s group, and *Ansar al-Sunnah* jointly signed a November 24, 2004 statement posted on the internet. This statement denounced the Sharm al-Shaykh conference on Iraq. The website pointed out that the Islamist groups signed the statement “which was written by the Ba’ath Party, not because we support this party or we are supporters of Saddam Husayn, but because the statement expresses the demands of the resistance groups in Iraq.”<sup>403</sup>

Resistance groups have proven successful in networking for collaboration and support. They have found willing recruits, both through parochial motives of the Sunni sub-state power structure and the powerful draw of religion. Sunni society has not yet produced a leader capable or willing to call for an end to resistance activity. Average citizens, conditioned by years of survival in Saddam’s police state, either openly support the violent resisters or maintain an apolitical passivity that harms the coalition more than the resistance.

In this state, the resistance is like a tumor. It lives in the organism, capable of drawing all that it needs from the populace and the network it has embedded within. The

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<sup>401</sup> Alexis Debat, “Vivisection of the Jihad,” *The National Interest* 76 (Summer 2004): 19, 22.

<sup>402</sup> Debat, 21.

<sup>403</sup> “Ba’ath Party and Islamic Groups in Iraq Stress Continuing Resistance After Sharm al-Shaykh Conference,” *Al-Quds al-Arabi* (London: October 25, 2004), 3, trans. by FBIS, <http://www.fbis.gov>.

network feeds the resistance like blood vessels of the body feed the tumor. Medical professionals have found that a novel way of starving the tumor is to attack the fast-growing blood vessels that feed it. Similarly, when a resister's connection to society is cut off, he rapidly becomes a dead-ender. Without support, concealment, and new recruits from society, the resister is trapped. Some will lay down their arms and melt back into society. Others will fight to the death.

## **B. WHAT IS A DEAD-ENDER?**

In referring to the resistance as “dead-enders,” Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld compared them to the “Werewolves,”<sup>404</sup> a Nazi guerilla resistance organization created in the late and desperate days of the Third Reich in World War II. Differences between the resistance in Iraq and the Werewolves of Germany help to illustrate the strengths of the Iraqi resistance.

The Werewolves were a resistance unit created in the later days of the war, under the direction of the SS-Police and tied to the Hitler Youth and the Nazi Party. The Werewolves were not only meant as a resistance unit, but also as an enforcement unit in the face of faltering support for the Nazi regime. Originating in 1944, they were part of a larger “Nazi ‘terror’” aimed at stiffening fanatical resistance and removing internal defeatists.<sup>405</sup>

In his analysis of the Werewolf movement, Biddiscombe proposes two genres of resister. Some resisters “fight for an idea” while others “hide out” from authorities. The Werewolves largely fell into the later category that, Biddiscombe states, causes far fewer problems.<sup>406</sup> While many in Iraq are hiding from some sort of authority, the ranks have expanded to include many who are fighting for an idea as well. The weaknesses of the Werewolves illustrate the strengths of the resistance in Iraq.

At the late stage in World War II when the Werewolves became active, German people “were eager to point out Nazi saboteurs” because they feared reprisals from the

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<sup>404</sup> Rumsfeld, “Speech to Veterans of Foreign Wars.”

<sup>405</sup> Perry Biddiscombe, *Werewolf! The History of the National Socialist Guerilla Movement, 1944-1946*, (Buffalo, NY: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 7-8.

<sup>406</sup> Biddiscombe, 279.

occupiers, especially the Soviets. In the Western zones, the occupiers were the only thing between the German populace and the feared Soviets. The Werewolves were seen by the people as an invitation for trouble they did not want. Furthermore, the sound defeat of Germany at the end of an exhaustive war deprived the resistance of a solid hope of victory and a real base of resources. As a result of these factors, the Werewolves had little support from the German people and often found themselves hounded not only by the occupiers, but also by the German people themselves.<sup>407</sup>

The Iraqi resistance has proven to exist in much different circumstances than the Werewolves. While Iraq's economy was devastated by Saddam's rule, the level of exhaustion in Iraq is not comparable to that in Germany. Furthermore, the Germans were soundly defeated as a nation in an epic conflict. The Iraqi military was surely dismantled by an impressive campaign, but the waffling of the regime in Iraq did not leave the same impact that years of war did in Germany. In fact, many of the most troubled areas in Iraq were relatively untouched by conventional military conflict. Furthermore, the occupation in Iraq is not as pervasive as it was in Germany, nor is the fear of reprisals from the coalition similar to the fear of Soviet occupation. The Iraqi case lacks many of the mitigating factors against successful resistance in the German case.

In the Iraqi case, it appears that the regime prepared for some level of resistance, as did the Nazis, however, the Nazis failed to gain the support of the exhausted populace so the resisters were dead-enders. In Iraq, the FREs have been followed by other elements of Iraqi society that stood to lose in the new Iraq. Support for resistance has been swelled by tribal and identity ties, as well as the Sunni perception of being a targeted minority. The resistance has proven able to regenerate itself because it has access to a population that is at least passively supportive. The resistance has been able to recruit from motivated sectors of the population, despite its losses. Where recruitment fails, resisters are able to pay for attacks or coerce the population into supporting their effort and force individuals to carry out attacks.<sup>408</sup> Until the ability to feed off the people

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<sup>407</sup> Biddiscombe, 279-281.

<sup>408</sup> Andrew Krepinevich, "Are We Winning in Iraq?" Testimony before U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Armed Services, (March 17, 2005), <http://www.house.gov/hasc/testimony/109thcongress/Full%20Committee%202005/3-17-05IraqOperationsUpdate.pdf>, (accessed October 13, 2005).

is removed by denying the resistance access to Iraqi population centers, the resistance will continue to have a regenerative capacity. Once the population ceases to support the resistance to the extent that the groups cannot regenerate, the dead-end will be imminent.

### **C. FROM NETWORK TO DEAD-END**

In order to take the resistance from network to dead-end, it must be attacked as a system. Militarily, the financiers and handlers that operate across numerous groups are a point that can be targeted with good downstream effects. The infiltration routes of weapons, funds, and foreign fighters can be more heavily policed. Better policing inside Iraq can cut down on crime, reducing the funds available to resistance groups from criminal activity. These initiatives should be pursued, but they alone will not defeat the resistance system. The resistance must be cut off from support and recruits originating within the Iraqi populace. This can only be accomplished when a majority of Sunni Iraqis believe that violent resistance is not in their best interest. The solution for truly defeating the system is mainly political.

First, the maximalist groups must be cleaved from connections with other groups and from popular support. This can only be achieved by delegitimizing their violence and their long-term political program. The growing disgust of Iraqi Sunnis with the extremists, if allowed to continue, will remove societal support and solace for these organizations, allowing them to be militarily targeted with the support of the population. Second, the more moderate groups must be convinced that their interests can be secured more easily through political engagement than violent resistance. Sunni participation in parliamentary elections in December may be a beginning of this process. A study performed in July 2005 for the U.S. ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad, determined that political engagement of Sunnis and Sunni leaders, as well as removal of Sunni support from the extremist groups, were key tasks for success in Iraq,<sup>409</sup> supporting these conclusions.

The incompatible political visions of Ba'athists, Sunni nationalists, and Islamic extremists are an element that may assist in cleaving the network and thereby disrupting

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<sup>409</sup> Grossman.

the opportunistic collaboration that has been a strength of the resistance to this point. Recent developments point to growing friction between extreme *jihadis* and the more moderate groups. Disagreement over increasingly violent tactics is one aspect of this friction. Some analyses also suggest that Sunni nationalist groups have begun attempts “to reap political gain out of [their] violent roots.” Focus on long-term political goals brings division between Iraqi nationalist groups on one hand and transnational and extremist groups on the other. For example, Iraqi fighters have distributed fliers opposing the extremist groups’ tactics of kidnappings and civilian killings.<sup>410</sup> *Jihadis* have proven sensitive to this rift, propagating lengthy sermons of Islamic justifications of their actions.<sup>411</sup>

Heightened tensions between factions were evidenced when Islamic extremists tied to Zarqawi engaged local resisters in a firefight in Ramadi on November 6, 2005. Their dispute was reportedly over money, tactics, and involvement in the Iraqi political system. According to Kamil Ahmed, a Ramadi resident with ties to local resistance groups, tensions between the parochial and Islamist groups started with Islamic extremists’ targeting of local police and heightened when the Islamists killed several tribal sheikhs critical of their programs. The groups also differed over the October referendum, with parochial groups encouraging Sunnis to vote and Islamists rejecting political engagement. According to Ahmad, the recent firefight came as Al-Qaeda in Iraq demanded a cut of the protection money that local businesses pay to parochial groups. “What we have now is a very severe split. Open warfare isn’t far behind,” said Ahmed.<sup>412</sup>

Disgust with the violence of the extremists may be leading to a higher willingness of Iraqis to provide tips on resistance activity.<sup>413</sup> Some of these frictions may be a

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<sup>410</sup> Hamza Hendawi, “Insurgents Show Hostility to Extremists: Factions of Secular Resisters Unhappy with Tactics of al-Qaeda Muslims,” *San Diego Union-Tribune*, (April 20, 2005).

<sup>411</sup> Abu Anas al-Shami, “Justification for Killing Muslims,” audiotape posted July 28, 2005 at <http://alsaha.fares.net>, trans. transcript by FBIS, <http://www.fbis.gov>.

<sup>412</sup> Quoted in Mohammed Al Dulaimy, “Al Qaeda in Iraq Fights Other Terrorist Groups: Insurgents Disagree Over Money, Tactics,” *Detroit Free Press* (November 10, 2005).

<sup>413</sup> Edward Wong *et al.*, “Iraqi Leaders Plan to Meet Insurgents in Jordan,” *New York Times*, (October 26, 2004). Opiel. Jill Carroll, “Evolution in Iraq’s Insurgency: Attacks on US Troops are Down 22 Percent Since January, but Some are More Sophisticated,” *Christian Science Monitor*, (April 7, 2005).

product of a budding power struggle for dominance in some Sunni areas where nationalist Sunni resistance leaders are being overtaken by domestic Sunni Islamists.<sup>414</sup> As violence and competition for power intensify, religion may not prove flexible enough to justify all resistance groups. Even Abu Qaqa al-Tamimi, a handler for Islamic extremist suicide bombers sees the conflict coming. He says that the groups never have an answer for what their vision of future Iraq is. He believes that “one day, when the Americans have gone, we will need to fight another war, against these *jihadis*. They won’t leave quietly.”<sup>415</sup>

As for political participation, the indicators are mixed. Sunnis turned out in higher numbers for the constitution referendum in October 2005 than they had for the January elections, but voted overwhelmingly against the draft.<sup>416</sup> Furthermore, resisters’ vows to continue armed opposition to occupation<sup>417</sup> do not portend an end to the violence stemming from this vote. There are some hopeful signs, however.

The Iraqi Concord Front was created on October 26, 2005 as the Iraqi Islamic Party, the National Dialogue Council, and the Iraqi People’s Gathering, all Sunni groups, united to prepare for the December 15 parliamentary elections. While two of these groups opposed the constitution in the October referendum, they are attempting to create a “unified Arab Sunni bloc” for parliamentary elections, in the words of Mahmoud al-Mashahadani, a former member of the National Dialogue Council (NDC). “If we succeed, then we will be able to persuade the resisters to use the political solution. We will tell the resisters: ‘Come and talk with us – we could represent you. We are Arab Sunni; we can be the best mediator.’”<sup>418</sup>

On the other hand, some Sunni leaders are unsure of Sunni participation in the election. Saleh Mutlaq, another member of the NDC, was against the constitution, but

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<sup>414</sup> Schmitt and Shanker. Murphy. See also Miller and Marshall.

<sup>415</sup> Ghosh.

<sup>416</sup> Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq, “Press Release: IECI Announces Second Set of Preliminary Referendum Results,” (October 24, 2005) <http://www.ieciraq.org/final%20cand/PRESS%20RELEASE%20OCT%2024.pdf> (accessed November 10, 2005).

<sup>417</sup> Abdul-Ahad, “The New Sunni Jihad.”

<sup>418</sup> Quoted in Dexter Filkins, “Three Sunni Parties Form Bloc to Take Part in Iraqi Vote,” *New York Times* (October 27, 2005).

still plans on joining a political coalition of all Iraqi ethnicities for the upcoming elections. He believes that voter fraud in Nineveh and Diyala provinces were the reason for the successful passage of the constitution. (The vote in Nineveh was reported as 55% against,<sup>419</sup> Diyala 51% for, Salahadeen 82% against, and Anbar 97% against. Three provinces were required to vote the draft down by a two-thirds majority in order for the constitution to fail nationally.<sup>420</sup>) Abdul al-Kubaisi, a prominent Sunni cleric was more direct in his charges of fraud. “The noes have been changed just to approve the American conspiracy to steal the history and the past of the present Iraq.”<sup>421</sup> For these reasons, Mutlaq and his associates “are not sure if [the Sunni people] will vote. The lesson was very bad. This is what worries us.”<sup>422</sup>

In the end, the question of Sunni political engagement is not one that can be solved by American military action or overt political initiatives. At best, the U.S. can attempt to provide advice to those leaders in the government who will listen, that Sunni engagement must be won. Additionally, the coalition must do its best to provide security to Sunni Iraqis without further inflaming passions through heavy-handed tactics or inadvertent civilian deaths. In a more stable environment, Sunni society must aggregate its voice and work out its involvement in the politics of the new Iraq. For many Sunnis, the new Iraqi government is a second-best solution, but it is increasingly viewed as a much better future than continued violence and extremism.

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<sup>419</sup> Nineveh percentage has not been reported on IECI website due to auditing. Edward Wong, “Iraq Vote Approves Draft Constitution,” *International Herald Tribune* (October 25, 2005), [http://www.iht.com/bin/print\\_ipub.php?file=/articles/2005/10/25/news/iraq.php](http://www.iht.com/bin/print_ipub.php?file=/articles/2005/10/25/news/iraq.php) (accessed November 7, 2005).

<sup>420</sup> Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq, “Press Release.”

<sup>421</sup> Quoted in Filkins, “Three Sunni Parties.”

<sup>422</sup> Quoted in Filkins, “Three Sunni Parties.”



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## **V. CONCLUSION: REGIME CHANGE OR STATE AND SOCIETY CHANGE?**

Returning to the outset, one can ask, “How does this exploration of the Iraqi case help to explain, plan for, and predict resistance to transition?” First of all, looking at the resistance within the context of transition has provided an opportunity to go beyond a litany tactics and groups in order to explain why the resistance erupted and what structures and motivations the resistance was rooted in. This thesis was largely explanation.

An explanation of the roots of Iraqi resistance has also illuminated some factors that will help in planning a balanced policy for the successful consolidation of transition in Iraq. The insights gained in this pursuit can also be applied when examining future cases of transition for potential trouble areas. Transition scholarship must provide a more nuanced typology of regime attributes that impact the process and actors of transition. Such a typology will help to overcome some basic assumptions about transition that may not prove relevant to many future cases of reform in the developing world.

In November 2005, there is much hope for Iraq. There are also many pitfalls on the road ahead. The plan for success in Iraq must be a balanced strategy that drives the Iraqi Sunni population to political engagement and leads the Iraqi resistance to a dead-end. If Iraqi Sunnis become increasingly engaged in the political process over the next 12 months, support and recruits for the resistance will wane, information about resistance activity will increase, and some fighters will lay down their arms, satisfied that they have an acceptable future in Iraq. Others will continue to fight, but they will be cut off from support and unable to replace their losses. They will be dead-enders, hunted by combined Iraqi and coalition forces and shunned by the Iraqi people.

On the other hand, Sunni Iraqis may not come out and vote in large numbers in December. Security concerns may win the day if resistance groups target polling stations. Sunni disillusionment over perceived fraud in the October referendum may also hurt voter turnout. In this case, the future will be bleaker, but there are still concrete initiatives that can be pursued, based on the case laid out above.

First, all efforts must be made to convince Sunnis that their interests are safe in a peaceful governmental process. Perceptions of voting fraud must be addressed and Sunnis should be encouraged to vote, especially by emphasis on their opportunity to amend the constitution through the elected parliament. Second, a balanced political and military strategy should be followed to isolate the resistance from the population. Starting with areas held by the most extreme groups, trouble areas must be cleared and held by coalition and Iraqi troops. This initiative must be accompanied by political dialogue to convince Sunni Iraqis that the extremist resisters, if left unchecked, will destroy their country. Third, Iraqi forces must continue to be trained efficiently and swiftly so that they may take the lead in maintaining secure Sunni cities, free of extremist violence. The only maintainable end state is one maintained by Iraqi politicians, police officers, and security forces. By reviewing the nature of the resistance and pointing out some key issues, implications for the future of Iraq and the study of transition in general may be highlighted.

**A. EXPLAIN: WHY DID IRAQI RESISTANCE ERUPT?**

It is impossible to know if resistance in Iraq could have been somehow avoided, but the underlying reasons for resistance and the legacies of the former regime that fueled the resistance have been identified. The resistance in Iraq is primarily Sunni. The cadre of this resistance consists of former members of the regime, whose ranks have been swelled by other Sunnis motivated to resist for a number of reasons. Foreign volunteers have also made their impact for largely religious reasons. The addition of these other resisters to the cadre of FREs has created a self-regenerating resistance with a core of networked, military-trained, and well-supplied Iraqis who have provided assistance to numerous groups in the form of financial support, intelligence, and trained fighters and leaders.

Sunnis lost their predominant position with the fall of the Hussein regime. The Iraqis most immediately affected by the transition were members of the former regime with immediate access to the training and connections that enabled them to mount an effective resistance. The legacy of Saddam's rule gave this hard core of the former regime the motive to resist and the structures that made resistance effective. Members of

state security and intelligence services, as well as elite military units, were part of a patrimonial coercive apparatus<sup>423</sup> that afforded them status, power, and complicity in regime repression. These servants had everything to lose in the new Iraq. Their jobs, their status, and their power were gone and they faced possible retribution or prosecution to boot. With little hope for their future in a new, Shi'ite-dominated Iraq, these well-trained officers quickly turned to violent resistance to the occupation.

The hard core existed within a structure that greatly assisted their struggle. The Iraqi security apparatus consisted of layers of connected and redundant agencies. These agencies were well-versed in various intelligence and subversive warfare techniques. With the collapse of the regime, these security services devolved into cells of well-trained and disenfranchised Iraqis, many of whom took up arms. Influential Iraqis in close proximity to Saddam maintained connections to many individuals in the security services. They also had access to large amounts of cash and weapons stockpiled around the nation. Many of these high-level former regime elements became financiers and supporters of the many cells of resistance.

Motivation for resistance spread beyond the hard core of the regime through structural ties between the regime and society. Many Sunnis were patronized by the regime in the form of power, public works, and jobs that were lost with the fall of the regime. Powerful tribes, made largely autonomous in Saddam's later years, also stood to lose in the new Iraq. Along with these motivations, kinship ties to hard core resisters and the perception of U.S. targeting of Sunnis exacerbated motivations to resist. Thus, hard core resistance soon extended to non-regime Sunnis who were offended by coalition missteps or who took up arms in vengeance for the death of a family or tribe member. Heavily-armed tribal militias and gangs easily transitioned to resistance, often with the leadership of a kinsman from the lower-levels of the former regime security apparatus.

Religion has also proven to be a force through which resistance expanded. Saddam attempted to re-Islamize Iraq as a way of legitimizing his rule and extending his control of society. At the same time, Iraqis increasingly turned to religion for solace from the great hardships of life under repression and sanctions. The tumult of the

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<sup>423</sup> Bellin, "The Robustness of Authoritarianism."

invasion and occupation has increased this trend. Many Sunnis heeded a religious call to resist occupation that was couched in modern interpretations of Islamic doctrines of *jihad*. The religious motivations have provided willing volunteers both within Iraq and from other Islamic populations. The power of religious networks has provided recruits willing to undertake suicide missions, drawing fighters from near and far. Religious structures have also provided another avenue of funding and support for various resistance groups.

A common thread between these groups is that they are all actors that covet state powers and usurp the state's monopoly on the use of force, but they are not constrained by the rules and processes through which states must act. Security servants, tribal networks, religious leaders, and influential Sunni farmers and businessmen all were able to personally benefit from Saddam's rule in return for their loyalty. These actors set up a power structure beneath the state where they were able to enjoy a good degree of local autonomy and personal gain. A weakened central government willingly gave up its state powers to these actors in turn for loyalty and stability in the Sunni areas. The recentralization of state powers under a new order was almost sure to be resisted by this sub-national power structure.

## **B. PLAN: POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF IRAQI TRANSITION**

Analysis of the tactics of the insurgents yields little in the way of policy prescriptions, besides counter-tactics. Explanation of the legacy that spawned resistance provides an understanding of the motivations and structural issues underlying the current situation. These factors can provide a basis for sound policy prescription that addresses root issues, rather than symptoms.

The legacy that led to resistance was the Sunni power structure in Iraq. Sunnis became accustomed to the way things were. While many welcomed the ouster of Saddam, they did not welcome a restructuring of Iraq that would empower the Shi'a at their expense. The Sunnis cannot and should not be restored to a position of dominance in Iraq. Sunnis must, however, be convinced that there is a place for them in the new Iraq

and that their interests can be secured politically, but not militarily. Senator Richard Lugar expresses this eloquently.

It has become common in discussions of Iraq to say that without security little can be achieved politically or economically. But it is also important to understand that there is no purely military solution in Iraq. Success depends on establishing a political process that gives all the major ethnic groups a stake in the government. It is notable that insurgent attacks in some Sunni areas were intentionally suspended during the voting to allow Sunni voters to go to the polls in the hope of defeating the Constitution at the ballot box. This demonstrated that a substantial element of the insurgency is focused on the political outcome in Iraq, not merely on nihilistic terrorist philosophies.<sup>424</sup>

Political engagement of the Sunnis is critical. Officials in Iraq must be attuned to signals that some Sunni resistance groups are focused on a political outcome. Political engagement will not serve to unduly “legitimize” violent resisters; rather, it will convince violent resisters to become engaged in a political process which is non-violent. Success in the political arena, or more simply, the perception that the Sunni voice can make a difference politically, is a necessary factor in removing the support for violent resistance.

Some resisters are highly unlikely to give up violence. The true die-hards will likely prove to be the radical Islamists and the most hard core Ba’athists who face prosecution and revenge for their complicity in Saddam’s crimes and those they have committed since 2003. The other elements of the resistance, such as the Iraqi nationalists, the “part time” resisters, and the societal supporters of the resistance, will be willing to give up their support of violence for an acceptable political solution.

The resistance is a Sunni Iraqi problem. The most influential players in the resistance are prominent Sunni Iraqis from the former regime who provide support and solace to the fighters, often from neighboring states. Foreign fighters are a minority in the resistance, but their tactics and information operations cause disproportionate impact. These foreign fighters rely heavily on Iraqi support for infiltration, intelligence, and

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<sup>424</sup> Senator Richard Lugar, “Opening Statement for Hearing on Iraq Policy,” Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, (October 19, 2005), available at <http://foreign.senate.gov/testimony/2005/LugarStatement051019.pdf>, (accessed October 23, 2005).

operations within Iraq. Thus, a politically engaged Sunni Iraqi population can be convinced to cut off the foreign (and Iraqi) extremists, making them dead-enders, easily targeted by military action.

Although the resistance is largely Sunni, the Sunnis are not all resisters. Transition scholars predict that actors in the transition are “likely to be divided and hesitant about their interests and ideals and, hence, incapable of coherent collective action.”<sup>425</sup> Indeed, the Sunnis are divided among themselves. Based on two years of reporting from Iraq, Patrick Graham observed “a society feeling its way into the future, almost blindly and without consensus.” He observes that the confusion has prevented the resistance from becoming more cohesive and widespread,<sup>426</sup> but such confusion also impairs the ability to raise a coherent Sunni alternative to the resistance. Recent attempts at consolidation of a Sunni political bloc for the December elections are a step in the right direction: toward a coherent Sunni voice interested in peaceful political engagement.

Inside Iraq, policy must address the motivations for continued Sunni resistance. Iraqi Sunnis feel disenfranchised and targeted. They believe that “they are the natural rulers” of Iraq. They fear the influence of Iran that could be expressed through Shi’ite dominance in Iraq. The Sunni also “feel that they will not share in Iraq’s enormous wealth” under Shi’a rule. The belief, reportedly held by many Sunnis, that Sunni Arabs and Sunni Kurds actually form a majority in Iraq makes Shi’a dominance even more unpalatable.<sup>427</sup>

Some Sunnis believe their only recourse is through violence. Graham observed, “Most Sunnis that I met were ambivalent about the insurgency, but the occupation did little to win them over.”<sup>428</sup> For Sunnis, the best future would be one where they continued to enjoy the privileges of minority rule in Iraq. This is the vision that some are fighting for and others are unwilling to give up. They must be convinced that the “best case” is unobtainable and that they must turn to a second-best solution of political engagement in a federal Iraq.

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<sup>425</sup> O’Donnell and Schmitter, 3-4.

<sup>426</sup> Patrick Graham, “The Message from the Sunni Heartland,” *New York Times*, (May 22, 2005).

<sup>427</sup> Graham, “The Message from the Sunni Heartland.”

<sup>428</sup> Graham, “The Message from the Sunni Heartland.”

Only when Sunnis realize that second-best is not so bad will they turn wholeheartedly to politics. Implicit in this is a disavowal of violence as a method through which they can return to dominance. Sunnis must be convinced of the costs of continued violence. They have already shut themselves out of the initial drafting of the constitution. They have since been given a chance to amend the constitution through the offices of the Iraqi parliament. If violence continues to rule the Sunni areas, they may well miss out on this chance to shape the constitution to their liking.

The Iraqi Sunnis cannot rid their areas of violence without help. Until recently, the coalition's cycle of clearing, leaving, and returning to Sunni areas did little to secure support. Coalition forces clear a town of well-established resistance elements. Due to manpower constraints and tactics currently used, the forces are then forced to leave the cleared town to sweep another area. Meanwhile, resistance elements slowly move back in, recruiting newly motivated Iraqis as they go, and within several months the resistance is again well-entrenched. Before long, coalition troops are forced to return to once again clear the town.<sup>429</sup>

Facile comparisons between Iraq and Vietnam abound, but the phenomenon of clearing the same real estate at high human cost, multiple times is one we must learn to avoid. In order to truly clear a town of resistance, troops must clear and stay. Krepinevich recommends such a strategy in an influential article in *Foreign Affairs*. Under this strategy, a unit would clear an area of resistance elements and then break up into smaller formations to provide local security throughout the cleared area. During this period, the coalition troops would also train and assist local police by combined patrolling and operations, eventually giving way to capable Iraqi forces. This strategy would provide the long-term stability within a given area that is required for reconstruction, social reform, and winning the support of the populace.<sup>430</sup>

Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice asserts that the coalition is actively pursuing a similar strategy. "With the Iraqi government, our strategy – the key – is to clear [the

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<sup>429</sup> The operation to re-clear Tal Afar in September 2005 is an example. See Richard A. Opperl, "Under Pressure, Rebels Abandon Iraqi Stronghold," *New York Times*, (September 12, 2005).

<sup>430</sup> Andrew Krepinevich, "How to Win in Iraq," *Foreign Affairs* 84, no. 5 (September/October 2005): 96.



toughest places... and disrupt foreign support], hold [secure areas, integrating political and economic outreach] and build [truly national institutions]... None of these elements can be achieved by military action alone.” Secretary Rice admits that holding territory once cleared has been a problem area to date, but increasingly capable Iraqi units are the key to success in this area.<sup>431</sup> These policy statements appear to be in synch with events on the ground in Iraq. Lieutenant Colonel Julian Alford, commander of a Marine battalion in western Iraq, recently stated, “We’re not sweeping any area unless we can leave a platoon of Marines and a platoon of Iraqis there... It’s fruitless unless you leave behind Marines and Iraqi soldiers to do ... counterinsurgency.”<sup>432</sup>

On the other hand, Alford’s superior, Colonel Stephen Davis was paraphrased as saying that he is “attempting to disprove the notion that a counterinsurgency cannot be won simply by killing insurgents.”<sup>433</sup> All military, diplomatic, and political efforts must be synchronized in Iraq to feed into a balanced strategy that addresses the roots of the resistance, as well as the symptoms. Simply killing insurgents will not defeat a network that can self-regenerate. Only a systemic approach, like the clear, hold, and build strategy, can cut off resistance cells. The three policy areas emphasized in the opening of the chapter feed directly into this strategy.

Sunni engagement in the political process feeds directly into the rejection of extremists that will assist in clearing, holding, and building. The importance of Iraqi security forces in holding cleared terrain also demands Sunni engagement in the new government. To this end, the Ministry of Defense recently announced that it welcomes Iraqi officers with the rank of major or below from the old army to apply for the new security forces. This move, seen as targeted at Sunnis, has been received with cautious

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<sup>431</sup> Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, “Iraq and U.S. Policy,” Testimony Before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, (October 19, 2005), <http://foreign.senate.gov/testimony/2005/RiceTestimony051019.pdf> (accessed November 10, 2005).

<sup>432</sup> Quoted in Gordon Trowbridge, “‘They know we’re coming:’ Steady Presence, Trust Help Troops Make Clean Sweep Through Desert,” *Marine Corps Times* online, (November 7, 2005), <http://www.marinetimes.com/print.php?f=0-MARINEPAPER-1207281.php> (accessed November 10, 2005).

<sup>433</sup> Paraphrased in Trowbridge.

optimism by some Sunnis.<sup>434</sup> Clearing and holding terrain is also a start toward isolating resisters from the population. Political and economic outreach are key areas that must be emphasized in order to truly get to the root of Sunni motivations for resistance. Finally, the building of Iraqi national institutions, including diverse Iraqi security forces, is the ticket to an end state that can be managed by Iraqis.

Had analysts and planners more thoroughly investigated and heeded the lessons of transition, some of the trouble areas for Iraqi transition may have been identified earlier. Such an analytical approach may have provided an earlier recognition of the roots of the Sunni resistance in the legacies of Saddam's rule, rather than a dismissal of the violence as the last gasp of a few dead-enders. The transition in Iraq should be carefully watched and aggressively analyzed to provide lessons for future transitions.

### **C. PREDICT: CREATING A NEW BASELINE OF ASSUMPTIONS FOR TRANSITION IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY**

Placing the Iraqi case within the body of literature on transition provides some predictive value for other cases of transition in the developing world. Scholars have thoroughly examined cases of transition in Europe and Latin America. The conclusions from their work have been used to illuminate the Iraqi case. The basic assumptions that have guided theoretical perspectives regarding the shape, process, and actors of transition need to be revisited, however, as the focus of transition scholars shifts from the cases of the past to the cases to come in the developing world. The Iraqi experience provides some salient points for consideration regarding potential outcomes of other cases of transition sure to confront the Middle East and the rest of the developing world.

Iraq takes up an important position within the literature on transition for several reasons. First, as an Arab and Islamic country confronting a major effort at transition from repressive rule toward democracy, it holds some important attributes in common with other states that may confront transition in the future. Second, Iraq is the most prominent case of externally-monitored transition since the post-World War II

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<sup>434</sup> Edward Wong, "Iraq Asks Return Of Some Officers Of Hussein Army," *New York Times* (November 3, 2005). "Iraq's Defense Minister Invites Former Army Officers to Return to Service," *Asharq al-Awsat* internet edition, (November 3, 2005), <http://www.asharqalawsat.com/english/news.asp?section=1&id=2496> (accessed November 7, 2005).

occupations. The lessons for externally-monitored transition may prove important for future efforts to shepherd states through transition. Such cases may result from intervention before or after state-collapse, or civil or international war. Third, Iraq is a test case for the idea of “regime change” transition and has significant implications for the feasibility of such an endeavor. For these reasons, the Iraqi case should figure prominently as scholars wrestle with future cases of transition.

The literature on transition has provided a useful lens in searching for the legacies of Saddam’s rule and in determining how those legacies impact the process of transition in Iraq. The literature does not, however, provide much guidance regarding the process of transition as it unfolds in Iraq, nor does it inform policies designed to guide Iraq from the legacies of its patrimonial past to a more democratic future. In its current state, the literature on transition does not provide a robust mechanism for evaluating and addressing the gamut of actors and paths likely to characterize transition in the twenty-first century. Transition literature has several key flaws that must be addressed in order for it to prove relevant to the coming cases of transition. Assumptions about how transitions will be initiated, about the actors that will figure prominently in transition, and about the prerequisites for and impediments to democracy must be readdressed in light of the regime types yet to face democratic opening in the developing world.

First, transition scholars’ assumptions regarding the basics of how transition is likely to occur must be re-evaluated. Stepan argues that “the overwhelming majority of cases of redemocratization have been and will be ones in which sociopolitical forces rather than external military forces play the key role.”<sup>435</sup> O’Donnell and Schmitter boldly state “that there is no transition whose beginning is not the consequence – direct or indirect – of important divisions within the authoritarian regime itself, principally along the fluctuating cleavage between hard-liners and soft-liners.”<sup>436</sup> Most other evaluations of transition follow the same basic assumptions.<sup>437</sup>

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<sup>435</sup> Stepan, “Paths Toward Redemocratization: Theoretical and Comparative Considerations,” 65.

<sup>436</sup> O’Donnell and Schmitter, 19.

<sup>437</sup> See Casper, 6. Rustow argues externally influenced transitions should be excluded for methodological purposes under his plan to study the genesis of democracy, 348.

These assumptions are flawed when it comes to the regime types existing in much of the developing world, where meaningful openings are increasingly unlikely to be the result of splits in the regime or of well-developed campaigns from below. The literature has given little attention to different regime types due to the relative homogeneity of structures in the European and Latin American cases.<sup>438</sup> Many regimes in the developing world are characterized by neo-patrimonialism, “a form of organization in which relationships of a broadly patrimonial type pervade a political and administrative system which is formally constructed on rational-legal lines.” The power of state officials is used largely for personal purposes, rather than public good, and the patron-client relations that pervade the state yield a personalistic rule, rather than a rational-legal professionalism.<sup>439</sup>

In neo-patrimonial regimes, the ruling elites are unlikely to split over ideologies of political reform into hard-liner and soft-liner groups. When fractures do occur, they are more likely to be the result of a struggle over dwindling resources than one over promotion of political reform.<sup>440</sup> Not surprisingly, most transitions in neo-patrimonial regimes appear to be initiated from below, yet the destruction of civil society in these states and the regime’s willingness to hold out until collapse ensure that efforts toward transition from below are “spontaneous, sporadic, disorganized, and unsustainable,” greatly damaging the prospects for successful consolidation of democracy.<sup>441</sup> Furthermore, neo-patrimonial regimes “are susceptible to institutional collapse when patronage resources run dry.”<sup>442</sup> Thus, transition in these cases can be expected to be much more chaotic and much more difficult to negotiate than earlier transitions in Europe and Latin America.

Traditional transition theorists also assume that authoritarian rule is a transitory state that must give way to an opening, in which the public will demand “the removal of the authoritarian regime and its replacement by a democratic one.”<sup>443</sup> Observers have

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<sup>438</sup> Bratton and Van de Walle, 457.

<sup>439</sup> Clapham, *Third World Politics*, 48-49.

<sup>440</sup> Bratton and Van de Walle, 464.

<sup>441</sup> Bratton and Van de Walle, 461.

<sup>442</sup> Bratton and Van de Walle, 460.

<sup>443</sup> O’Donnell and Schmitter, 15.

noted recently that “liberalized autocracy has proven far more durable than once imagined” becoming “a type of political system whose institutions, rules, and logic defy any linear model of democratization.”<sup>444</sup> If this countervailing observation is true, and if the assumptions that transition must come from within are also correct, then new democracies should be few and far between in the future.

Furthermore, Stepan postulates that “it is virtually impossible” for the conditions that supported the externally monitored transitions of West Germany, Japan, Italy, and Austria to reappear;<sup>445</sup> yet, two ambitious externally-monitored transitions have been initiated in the past few years in Afghanistan and Iraq. Meanwhile, some influential scholars are arguing that states and international institutions should embark on ambitious projects amounting to externally-monitored installations in failed states and post-conflict situations in the developing world.<sup>446</sup>

In an increasingly interconnected world, it is difficult to allow persistent unrest following the collapse of autocratic forms of rule. In some cases, extensive unilateral or international monitoring may be necessary during transitions in order to avoid humanitarian catastrophes, to assist in institution-building, and to avoid spill-over effects on regional and global security. The paucity of rational-legal institutional development in many states of the developing world mean that future transitions will have to “democratize while... grappling with the reality of building a state from scratch or coping with an existent but largely nonfunctional state.”<sup>447</sup> Such a daunting task is unlikely to succeed without considerable external assistance.

Transition scholarship must reconcile basic assumptions with the changing evaluation of the tenacity of autocratic regimes and the recent cases of externally monitored installation in order to remain relevant. In the words of one scholar, “reality is

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<sup>444</sup> Brumberg, “The Trap of Liberalized Autocracy,” 56.

<sup>445</sup> Stepan, “Paths Toward Redemocratization: Theoretical and Comparative Considerations,” 71.

<sup>446</sup> James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, “Neotrusteeship and the Problem of Weak States,” *International Security* 28, no. 4 (Spring 2004). See also Steven D. Krasner, “The Case for Shared Sovereignty,” *The Journal of Democracy* 16, no. 1 (January 2005).

<sup>447</sup> Thomas Carothers, “The End of the Transition Paradigm,” *Journal of Democracy* 13, no. 1 (January 2002): 9.

no longer conforming to the model” set forth by early transition scholars.<sup>448</sup> Some important issues include the likelihood of self-initiated opening and transition in the world’s more persistent autocracies, the implications of neo-patrimonial regime types on transition assumptions, the anticipated prevalence of externally monitored installations (either externally imposed regime changes or robust external monitoring after collapse or during transition), and the implications of tenacious autocracies for latent institutions that will impact transition in the developing world.

Iraq is a landmark case for the study of externally monitored transition. The tenacity of the regime in holding on to power despite severe outside pressure calls into question any hope that Iraq might have initiated a transition (beyond a palace coup or succession struggle within the elite) without external involvement. The effect of the regime on latent institutions in state and society also raises severe doubts about the ability of such states to successfully install a democratic government without robust and sustained external monitoring and assistance. This is not to advocate more cases of forceful regime change, but to raise the question of whether many developing states will be able to successfully transition from autocracy to democracy in future cases of regime collapse without significant external assistance.

Second, the types of actors arising from such transitions are different than those observed in the Latin American and European cases. Traditional scholarship expected the authoritarian regime to figure prominently in the transition, maintaining control over many aspects of the rules and procedures that might govern the process of transition.<sup>449</sup> Regime soft-liners are expected to be a critical element in creating an opening, for they are the first to recognize that the regime will require “some form of electoral legitimation” in the near future. To prepare for such legitimation, the soft-liners recommend the reintroduction of “certain freedoms.”<sup>450</sup> In such a model, regime soft-liners and moderates in the opposition can make a pact that leads to a successful transition.

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<sup>448</sup> Carothers, 6.

<sup>449</sup> O’Donnell and Schmitter, 6.

<sup>450</sup> O’Donnell and Schmitter, 16.

As noted above, however, many authoritarian regimes in the developing world have found ways to sustain their rule without opening to meaningful electoral legitimation. If this observation continues to hold true, one can expect that authoritarian regimes will be able to hold onto power without meaningful opening until some crisis event (war, revolution, or economic collapse) topples the regime. Regimes may also slowly destroy the state without creating any space for liberalization.

In such cases, the actors faced with transition will be much different than those considered in the European and Latin American cases. The regime will not expect that electoral legitimation is necessary, so there will be no soft-liner push for opening. Furthermore, elite actors in the neo-patrimonial regimes that are prevalent in the Middle East and Africa are likely to split over the “spoils” of patrimonial distribution, not over a decision to liberalize.<sup>451</sup> Regime elites facing crisis are unlikely to be thinking about liberalization and will be in a very disadvantageous position for any sort of pacted transition. If international agents attempt to monitor and assist the transition, regime actors may be ousted almost entirely, as was the case in Iraq. In this case, negotiations take on a much different character than the give and take of a pacted transition between regime soft-liners and opposition moderates. The remaining actors in society are often split and confused over their roles in the new order. Poorly developed civil society and a lack of soft-liner regime elites and unifying opposition leadership figures in society leave latent institutions of the former regime and traditional social structures as key actors in the transition.

An observer of state failure noted, “State collapse begins when the central state starts to deteriorate, leading to the fractionalization of society, with loyalties shifting from the state to traditional communities that seem to offer better protection.”<sup>452</sup> In Iraq, this process was definitely underway by the 1990s as Saddam and the Iraqi populace turned to tribal and Islamic structures for solace and stability. When combined with the ethnic and religious fault-lines in much of the developing world, the latent institutions of primary identity are likely to figure much more prominently in future as actors in transition.

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<sup>451</sup> Bratton and Van de Walle, 463.

<sup>452</sup> David Carment, “Assessing State Failure: Implications for Theory and Policy,” *Third World Quarterly* 24, no. 3 (2003): 414.

Where civil society is believed to be a major boost for budding democracies, the latent institutions of primary identity in mixed states are contentious for transition. The lack of civil society and the contentious nature of sectarian and ethnic politics in Iraq have inflamed the chaos of transition. The legacy of patrimonial rule, combined with a weakened state and a divided population, yielded latent institutions and motivations that are key features in Iraq and will bear directly on future cases of transition. Integrating existing scholarship on the role of the latent institutions of primary identity and patrimonial security services into scholarship on new transitions will greatly enhance understanding of future cases.

Third, the debate over prerequisites for democracy and obstacles to transition must be transcended. Schmitter argues, “The root hypothesis is that for an effective and enduring challenge to authoritarian rule to be mounted, and for political democracy to become and remain an alternative mode of political domination, a country must possess a civil society in which certain community and group identities exist independent of the state and in which certain types of self-constituted units are capable of acting autonomously in defense of their own interests and ideals.”<sup>453</sup> Numerous other factors that highly correlate with successful democratic transition have been noted, as have prominent road blocks. Instead of assuming certain attributes must pre-exist and others must not be present, transition scholarship should examine how states and societies can get from point A to point B in order to attain the characteristics that provide hope for democracy.

Bellin has observed that states in the Middle East and North Africa have not only failed at transition, but most states “have failed to initiate transition at all.” It is not the lack of prerequisites, but the presence of obstacles, “specifically, a robust coercive apparatus in these states,” that explains the failure to transition.<sup>454</sup> The observation that transition is most likely to be initiated from below in neo-patrimonial regimes<sup>455</sup> presents

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<sup>453</sup> Philippe C. Schmitter, “An Introduction to Southern European Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Italy, Greece, Portugal, Spain, and Turkey,” in “Part I: Southern Europe,” *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Prospects for Democracy*, ed. Guillermo O’Donnell, Philippe Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead, 3-10 (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 6.

<sup>454</sup> Bellin, “The Robustness of Authoritarianism,” 142-143.

<sup>455</sup> Bratton and Van de Walle, 461.



a particular problem in the Middle East. In addition to the problems of collective action in societies plagued by clientelism and a lack of civil society, the oil and strategic rents of the Middle East fuel a robust coercive apparatus that can repress any stirring for democratic opening from below.<sup>456</sup>

Bellin's conclusions present a conundrum for those hoping to observe transition in the Middle East. Removal of the coercive apparatus is a necessary, but not sufficient condition for democratic transition in her eyes. The underlying prerequisites for democracy must also be fostered in order for transition to be a success; therefore, "in the absence of effective state institutions, removing an oppressive coercive apparatus will lead, not to democracy, but rather to authoritarianism of a different stripe or, worse, chaos."<sup>457</sup> Removing the coercive apparatus will not lead to democracy, but with the coercive apparatus in place, there is little hope for building the "effective, impartial state institutions" and "associations that reach across ethnic lines,"<sup>458</sup> that Bellin recommends. It is this sort of circular logic that must be transcended by new transition scholarship.

Can political reform be enacted while a coercive patrimonial apparatus is in place? If not, how can the apparatus be weakened or removed, allowing the foundations of civil society and rational institutions to be built? These are thorny questions. At the bottom line, whether a coercive apparatus is removed by force or topples of its own accord, there is little hope that the robust, rational, and cross-cutting institutions of state and society that are considered to be a prerequisite of democracy will exist in many future cases of transition. Therefore, transition scholars and policy-makers must recognize this likelihood and study the case of Iraq for clues as to how a transitory state can be nurtured from the chaos of the conflictual latent institutions of neo-patrimonialism to a more stable, consensual political arrangement. By changing the basic assumptions about the way in which transitions will be initiated, the shape of state and society at the beginning of transition, and the actors who will figure prominently in transition; the debate over what conditions must be present or absent for successful transition can be transcended. With these theoretical adjustments, scholars may be able to suggest ways of

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<sup>456</sup> Bellin, "The Robustness of Authoritarianism," 148-149.

<sup>457</sup> Bellin, "The Robustness of Authoritarianism," 153.

<sup>458</sup> Bellin, "The Robustness of Authoritarianism," 153.

removing obstacles and moving toward the prerequisites rather than assuming that these conditions will be met before transition begins.

The extensive legacies of neo-patrimonial rule, compounded by rentier economies, weakened state structures, empowered traditional institutions, and a context of religious radicalism call into question the feasibility of a “plug and play” version of regime change. A more systemic approach to rehabilitating state and society will be called for when regimes weaken and topple, or open to transition. Installing a new government will do little if security and stability is not rapidly provided to avoid a descent into chaos. Stemming early violence may assist in maintaining control over the trajectory of transition and encouraging the emergence of peaceful opposition, rather than violent resistance. Early efforts toward creating stability must be rapidly augmented by a balanced set of initiatives aimed at addressing the deep seated motives and structures that will confront the new order. All of these efforts can be greatly aided by a re-examination of the phenomenon of transition.

In order to redress the problems with basic assumptions, new scholarship on transition in the developing world should develop a more nuanced system of state typologies as they bear on the potential process, actors, and substance of transition. Expanding on the typology of neopatrimonial regimes developed by Bratton and Van de Walle,<sup>459</sup> states in the developing world can be evaluated with regard to the degree of patrimonialism, regime coercion, external rents, ethnic and sectarian division, political participation, and political competition present. High degrees of patrimonialism, regime coercion, sectarian division, and to some extent external rents characterized the state of Iraq. These factors left a contentious legacy and a paucity of civil society and rational-legal state institutions. Due to these factors, political competition and participation were virtually non-existent in Iraq. Expanding outward from Iraq, the other states of the Middle East and developing world could be evaluated along these lines. Understanding the degree to which these factors are present and their expected impact on state and societal institutions will provide a much more nuanced estimation of transition prospects

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<sup>459</sup> Bratton and Van de Walle, 468-471.

and pitfalls. Furthermore, this system can also be used to codify and examine past cases of transition in order to provide a more robust empirical data set to inform transition scholarship.

The case of Iraq dramatically demonstrates some of the many contentious legacies of tenacious, patrimonial coercive autocracies. These are the legacies that must be addressed in order for transition to proceed from the most contentious starting point toward a more consensual and stable form of government. Latent institutions figure prominently in such transitions. The institutions of the regime produce a class of former regime elements who identify personally with the status quo and are faced with very high costs of reform. These former regime elements are often tied into traditional structures of primary identity, further complicating reform. Latent institutions within the society are often enhanced by the waning power of the central state. Unable to exert the control integral to continued survival, ruling elites turn to traditional structures of ethnicity, religion, and family identity to extend their reach and cement their control of society. These empowered social institutions are the antithesis of civil society. They combine primary identity, state patronage, and personal profit in one package, denying the cross-cutting ties that make consensual politics more palatable. Furthermore, economic dysfunction and rampant criminal activity are likely to further complicate the landscape and undermine the centralization of impartial and effective state institutions. These are huge obstacles to be sure, but scholarship on transition must not assume them away. The unenviable task of determining how to overcome these legacies and to lead such a troubled transitory state toward a better political arrangement has begun in Iraq. The duty of scholars is to examine this case and to fully analyze its triumphs and tragedies, looking for lessons that may serve to assist other peoples in finding their way from coercive autocracy toward a better life.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

The case of transition in Iraq is far from completion. The Iraqi people could continue their tenacious, slow progress toward a successful consolidation of a democratic government. If the roots of the resistance in Iraq are not addressed, however, violence will continue to be endemic and a weakened state will collapse at some point in the

future. The lessons of transition in Iraq have been won at a tremendous price in human life. These lessons must be heeded. They must inform balanced policies in Iraq to address the roots of resistance, to stem their violent symptoms, and to produce a political end-state that can be maintained by Iraqis. These solutions will require courage and perseverance on the part of Iraqis, Americans, and coalition partners around the world. We cannot turn our back on the Iraqi people, nor can we forgive ourselves for giving up the vision of a stable Iraq that so many have died for.

Looking forward, scholars, analysts and statesmen must scan beyond the surface of troubled regimes. Whether looking for a change of regime, or attempting to assist others in their quest for a better future through democratic opening, simple solutions are unlikely to last. Transition is a complex event, in which the lasting legacies of the old regime confront the new realities that demand change. In order to help others navigate the contentious landscape that such a transition must travel, we must look beyond the problematic leadership to the troubles that lie beneath.

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