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Summary

Since the 2011 U.S. withdrawal from Iraq, sectarian divisions have widened, fueling a revival of a Sunni Muslim insurgent challenge to Iraq's stability. Iraq's Sunni Arab Muslims resent Shiite political domination and perceived discrimination by the government of Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki. Iraq's Kurds are embroiled in separate political disputes with the Baghdad government over territorial, political, and economic issues, particularly their intent to separately export large volumes of oil produced in the Kurdish region. The political rifts produced a significant and sustained uprising in December 2013 led by the Sunni insurgent group Al Qaeda in Iraq, now also known by the name Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). The group and its allies still control several cities in Anbar Province, including the key city of Fallujah, and have pockets of control near Baghdad. There are a growing number of reports that some Shiite militias have reactivated to retaliate for violence against Shiites. The sectarian rift and violence, which killed nearly 9,000 Iraqis in 2013 (double the figure for 2012), could affect the legitimacy of national elections for a new parliament and government set for April 30, 2014. Facing divided opponents, Maliki is widely expected to seek to retain his post after that vote, largely on the strength of Shiite voters who see him as standing up to the Sunni challenge.

The latest violence has exposed weaknesses in the 800,000 person Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) in the absence of direct U.S. military involvement in Iraq. The ISF and informal security structures put in place during the U.S. intervention in Iraq in 2003-2011 have faltered against the ISIL challenge. Some formerly pro-government Sunni fighters have joined the uprising, further weakening government attempts to suppress the uprising.

U.S. forces left in December 2011 in keeping with a November 2008 bilateral U.S.-Iraq Security Agreement. Iraq had refused to extend their presence, seeking to put behind it the period of U.S. political and military control. Program components of what were to be enduring, close security relations languished, including U.S. training for Iraq's security forces through an Office of Security Cooperation—Iraq (OSC-I) and a State Department police development program. U.S. arms sales continued and have expanded somewhat to help Iraq confront the Sunni/ISIL uprising. The United States has accelerated delivery of HELLFIRE missiles and surveillance systems, and will soon begin deliveries of F-16 combat aircraft, air defense equipment, and attack helicopters. The Administration has ruled out any reintroduction of U.S. ground troops to Iraq, even if the Iraqi government were to request them. At the same time, the United States has counseled Iraqi restraint in use of force against civilians and promoted dialogue among Iraqi factions to resolve the underlying sources of Sunni resentment.

The Administration and Congress continue to cultivate Iraq as an ally in part to preserve the legacy of the U.S. intervention and to prevent Iraq from falling under the sway of Iran. Asserting that the Sunni-led rebellion in Syria is emboldening Iraqi Sunnis, Maliki has not joined U.S. and other Arab state calls for Syrian President Bashar Al Assad to leave office and Iraq has not consistently sought to prevent Iranian overflights of arms deliveries to Syria. Still, the legacy of the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war, Arab and Persian differences, and Iraq's efforts to reestablish its place in the Arab world limit Iranian influence over the Baghdad government. Iraq took a large step toward returning to the Arab fold by hosting an Arab League summit on March 27-29, 2012, and has substantially repaired relations with Kuwait, the state that Saddam Hussein invaded in 1990. In June 2013, the relationship with Kuwait helped Iraq emerge from most Saddam-era restrictions imposed under Chapter VII of the U.N. Charter.

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Overview of the Post-Saddam Political Transition

A U.S.-led military coalition, in which about 250,000 U.S. troops participated, crossed the border from Kuwait into Iraq on March 19, 2003. Turkey refused to allow any of the coalition force to move into Iraq from the north. After several weeks of combat, the regime of Saddam Hussein fell on April 9, 2003. During the 2003-2011 presence of U.S. forces, Iraq completed a transition from the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein to a plural political system in which varying sects and ideological and political factions compete in elections. A series of elections began in 2005, after a one-year occupation period and a subsequent seven-month interim period of Iraqi self-governance that gave each community a share of power and prestige to promote cooperation and unity. Still, disputes over the relative claim of each community on power and economic resources permeated almost every issue in Iraq and were never fully resolved. These unresolved differences—muted during the last years of the U.S. military presence—reemerged in mid-2012 and have returned Iraq to sectarian conflict.

Initial Transition and Construction of the Political System

After the fall of Saddam's regime, the United States set up an occupation structure based on concerns that immediate sovereignty would favor established Islamist and pro-Iranian factions over nascent pro-Western secular parties. In May 2003, President Bush named Ambassador L. Paul Bremer to head a "Coalition Provisional Authority" (CPA), which was recognized by the United Nations as an occupation authority. In July 2003, Bremer ended Iraqi transition negotiations and appointed a non-sovereign Iraqi advisory body, the 25-member "Iraq Governing Council" (IGC). U.S. and Iraqi negotiators, advised by a wide range of international officials and experts, drafted a "Transitional Administrative Law" (TAL, interim constitution), which became effective on March 4, 2004.¹ On June 28, 2004, after about one year of occupation, Ambassador Bremer appointed an Iraqi interim government, meeting the TAL-specified deadline of June 30, 2004, for the end of the occupation period. The TAL also laid out a 2005 elections roadmap.

Major Factions Dominate Post-Saddam Politics

The interim government was headed by a prime minister, Iyad al-Allawi, and a president, Sunni tribalist Ghazi al-Yawar. It was heavily populated by parties and factions that had long campaigned to oust Saddam, including the Shiite Islamist parties called the Da'wa Party and the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI). Both of these parties were Iran-supported underground movements that worked to overthrow Saddam Hussein since the early 1980s. Allawi led the Iraq National Accord (INA), a secular, non-sectarian anti-Saddam faction. Allawi is a Shiite Muslim but his supporters are mostly Sunni Arabs, including some former members of the Baath Party.

- *Da'wa Party "State of Law Coalition."* The largest faction of the Da'wa Party is led by Nuri al-Maliki, who displaced former leader Ibrahim al-Jaafari in 2006. Da'wa was active against Saddam but also had operatives in some Persian Gulf states, including Kuwait, where they committed attacks against the ruling family during the 1980s. Da'wa is the core of Maliki's current "State of Law" election coalition.

¹ Text, in English, is at <http://www.constitution.org/cons/iraq/TAL.html>.

- *Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI)* is led by the Hakim family—the sons of the revered late Grand Ayatollah Muhsin Al Hakim, who hosted Iran’s Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini when he was in exile in Iraq during 1964-1978. In the immediate post-Saddam period, Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim led the group after the August 2003 assassination of his elder brother, Mohammad Baqr al-Hakim, in a bombing outside a Najaf mosque. After Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim’s death in August 2009, his son Ammar, born in 1971, succeeded him as ISCI chief.
- *Sadrists*. Another Shiite Islamist faction, one loyal to radical cleric Moqtada Al Sadr, whose family had lived under Saddam’s rule, gelled as a cohesive party after Saddam’s ouster and also formed an armed faction called the Mahdi Army. Sadr is the son of revered Ayatollah Mohammad Sadiq Al Sadr, who was killed by Saddam’s security forces in 1999, and a relative of Mohammad Baqr Al Sadr, a Shiite theoretician and contemporary and colleague of Ayatollah Khomeini. The Sadrists compete in elections under the “Al Ahrar” (Liberal) banner.
- *Kurdish Factions: KDP and PUK*. Also influential in post-Saddam politics in Baghdad are the long-established Kurdish parties the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) headed by Masoud Barzani, son of the late, revered Kurdish independence fighter Mullah Mustafa Barzani, and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) headed by Jalal Talabani. Barzani’s brother, Idris, was killed during the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war; Idris’s son, Nechirvan, is a senior figure in Kurdish governance.
- *Iraqi National Congress (INC)*. Another significant longtime anti-Saddam faction was the INC of Ahmad Chalabi. The group had lobbied extensively in Washington, DC, since the early 1990s for the United States to overthrow Saddam, but did poorly in post-Saddam Iraqi elections.
- *Iraqi National Alliance (INA)/Iraqiyya*. Another major exile group that became prominent in post-Saddam Iraq was the Iraqi National Alliance (INA) of Iyad al-Allawi. Allawi is a Shiite but most of his political allies are Sunni Arab. After returning to Iraq, Allawi went on to become prime minister of the interim government and then leader of the major anti-Maliki secular bloc now called “Iraqiyya.”

Interim Government Formed and New Coalitions Take Shape

Iraqi leaders of all factions agreed that elections should determine the composition of Iraq’s new power structure. The beginning of the elections process was set for 2005 to produce a transitional parliament that would supervise writing a new constitution, a public referendum on a new constitution, and then the election of a full-term government under that constitution.

In accordance with the dates specified in the TAL, the first post-Saddam election was held on January 30, 2005, for a 275-seat transitional National Assembly (which would form an executive), four-year-term provincial councils in all 18 provinces (“provincial elections”), and a Kurdistan regional assembly (111 seats). The Assembly election was conducted according to the “proportional representation/closed list” election system, in which voters chose among “political entities” (a party, a coalition of parties, or people). The ballot included 111 entities, 9 of which were multi-party coalitions. Still restive, Sunni Arabs (20% of the overall population) boycotted, winning only 17 Assembly seats, and only 1 seat on the 51-seat Baghdad provincial council. Moqtada Al Sadr, whose armed faction was then fighting U.S. forces, also boycotted the election. The resulting transitional government included PUK leader Jalal Talabani as president and then

Da'wa party leader Ibrahim al-Jafari as prime minister. Sunni Arabs held the posts of Assembly speaker, deputy president, one of the deputy prime ministers, and six ministers, including defense.

Permanent Constitution²

A major task accomplished by the elected transitional Assembly was the drafting of a permanent constitution, adopted in a public referendum of October 15, 2005. A 55-member drafting committee in which Sunnis were underrepresented produced a draft providing for:

- The three Kurdish-controlled provinces of Dohuk, Irbil, and Sulaymaniyah to constitute a legal “region” administered by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), which would have its own elected president and parliament (Article 113).
- a December 31, 2007, deadline to hold a referendum on whether Kirkuk (Tamim province) would join the Kurdish region (Article 140).
- designation of Islam as “a main source” of legislation.
- all orders of the CPA to be applicable until amended (Article 126), and a “Federation Council” (Article 62), a second chamber with size and powers to be determined in future law (not adopted to date).
- a 25% electoral goal for women (Article 47).
- families to choose which courts to use for family issues (Article 41); making only primary education mandatory (Article 34).
- Islamic law experts and civil law judges to serve on the federal supreme court (Article 89). Many Iraqi women opposed this and the previous provisions as giving too much discretion to male family members.
- two or more provinces to join together to form new autonomous “regions.” This provision was implemented by an October 2006 law on formation of regions.
- “regions” to organize internal security forces, legitimizing the fielding of the Kurds’ *peshmerga* militia (Article 117). This continued a TAL provision.
- the central government to distribute oil and gas revenues from “current fields” in proportion to population, and for regions to have a role in allocating revenues from new energy discoveries (Article 109).

These provisions left many disputes unresolved, particularly the balance between central government and regional and local authority. The TAL made approval of the constitution subject to a veto if a two-thirds majority of voters in any three provinces voted it down. Sunnis registered in large numbers (70%-85%) to try to defeat the constitution, despite a U.S.-mediated agreement of October 11, 2005, to have a future vote on amendments to the constitution. The Sunni provinces of Anbar and Salahuddin had a 97% and 82% “no” vote, respectively, but the constitution was adopted because Nineveh province voted 55% “no”—short of the two-thirds “no” majority needed to vote the constitution down.

² Text of the Iraqi constitution is at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/10/12/AR2005101201450.html>.

December 15, 2005, Elections Establish the First Full-Term Government

The December 15, 2005, elections were for a full-term (four-year) national government (also in line with the schedule laid out in the TAL). Each province contributed a set number of seats to a “Council of Representatives” (COR), a formula adopted to attract Sunni participation. There were 361 political “entities,” including 19 multi-party coalitions, competing in a “closed list” voting system (in which votes are cast only for parties and coalitions, not individual candidates). Voters chose lists representing their sects and regions, and the Shiites and Kurds again emerged dominant. The COR was inaugurated on March 16, 2006, but political infighting caused the replacement of Jafari with another Da’wa figure, Nuri Kamal al-Maliki, as Prime Minister.

On April 22, 2006, the COR approved Talabani to continue as president. His two deputies were Adel Abd al-Mahdi (incumbent) of ISCI and Tariq al-Hashimi, leader of the mostly Sunni Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP). Another Sunni figure, Mahmoud Mashhadani, became COR speaker. Maliki won COR approval of a 37-member cabinet on May 20, 2006. Of the 37 posts, there were 19 Shiites; 9 Sunnis; 8 Kurds; and 1 Christian. Four were women.

2006-2011: Sectarian Conflict and U.S.-Assisted Reconciliation

The Bush Administration deemed the 2005 elections successful, but they did not resolve the Sunni-Arab grievances over their diminished positions in the power structure. Subsequent events worsened the violence by exposing and reinforcing the political weakness of the Sunni Arabs. With tensions high, the bombing of a major Shiite shrine within the Sunni-dominated province of Salahuddin in February 2006 set off major sectarian unrest, characterized in part by Sunni insurgent activities against government and U.S. troops, high-casualty suicide and other bombings, and the growth of Shiite militia factions to counter the Sunni acts. The sectarian violence was so serious that many experts, by the end of 2006, were considering the U.S. mission as failing - an outcome that an “Iraq Study Group” concluded was a significant possibility absent a major change in U.S. policy.³

As assessments of possible overall U.S. policy failure multiplied, the Administration and Iraq agreed in August 2006 on a series of “benchmarks” that, if adopted and implemented, might achieve political reconciliation. Under Section 1314 of a FY2007 supplemental appropriation (P.L. 110-28), “progress” on 18 political and security benchmarks—as assessed in Administration reports due by July 15, 2007, and then September 15, 2007—was required for the United States to provide \$1.5 billion in Economic Support Funds (ESF) to Iraq. President Bush exercised the waiver provision. The law also mandated an assessment by the Government Accountability Office, by September 1, 2007, of Iraqi performance on the benchmarks, as well as an outside assessment of the Iraqi security forces (ISF).

In early 2007, the United States began a “surge” of about 30,000 additional U.S. forces (bringing U.S. troop levels from their 2004-2006 baseline of about 138,000 to about 170,000) in order to

³ “The Iraq Study Group Report.” Vintage Books, 2006. The Iraq Study Group was funded by the conference report on P.L. 109-234, FY2006 supplemental, which provided \$1 million to the U.S. Institute of Peace for operations of an Iraq Study Group. The legislation did not specify the Group’s exact mandate or its composition.

blunt insurgent momentum and take advantage of growing Sunni Arab rejection of extremist groups. The Administration cited as partial justification for the surge the Iraq Study Group's recommendation of such a step. As 2008 progressed, citing the achievement of many of the major Iraqi legislative benchmarks and a dramatic drop in sectarian violence, the Bush Administration asserted that political reconciliation was advancing. However, U.S. officials maintained that the extent and durability of the reconciliation would depend on implementation of adopted laws, on further compromises among ethnic groups, and on continuing reductions in levels of violence.

United Nations Assistance Mission – Iraq (UNAMI)

The United Nations contributed to political reconciliation through its U.N. Assistance Mission—Iraq (UNAMI). The head of UNAMI is also the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Iraq. The first head of the office was killed in a car bombing on his headquarters in August 2003. Ad Melkert was the UNAMI head during 2009-2011. He was replaced in September 2011 by Martin Kobler, who was replaced by Bulgarian diplomat Nickolay Mladenov in September 2013. The mandate of UNAMI was established in 2003 and U.N. Security Council Resolution 2110 of July 24, 2013 provided the latest yearly renewal (until July 31, 2014). UNAMI's primary activities have been to help build civil society, assist vulnerable populations, consult on possible solutions to the Arab-Kurd dispute over Kirkuk province (see below), and resolve the status of the Iranian opposition group People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran that remains in Iraq (see below).

Iraqi Governance Strengthens As Sectarian Conflict Abates

The passage of Iraqi laws in 2008 that were considered crucial to reconciliation, continued reductions in violence accomplished by the U.S. surge, and the Sunni militant turn away from violence facilitated political stabilization. A March 2008 offensive ordered by Maliki against the Sadr faction and other militants in Basra and environs (“Operation Charge of the Knights”) pacified the city and caused many Sunnis and Kurds to see Maliki as willing to take on armed groups even if they were Shiite. This contributed to a decision in July 2008 by several Sunni ministers to end a one-year boycott of the cabinet.

Empowering Local Governance: 2008 Provincial Powers Law (Law No. 21)

In 2008, a “provincial powers law” (Law Number 21) was adopted to decentralize governance by delineating substantial powers for provincial (governorate) councils. It replaced a 1969 Provinces Law (Number 159). Under the 2008 law, the provincial councils enact provincial legislation, regulations, and procedures, and choose the province's governor and two deputy governors. The provincial administrations draft provincial budgets and implement federal policies. Some central government funds are given as grants directly to provincial administrations for their use. The term of the provincial councils is four years from the date of their first convention.

Since enactment, Law 21 has been used on several occasions to try to pacify restive areas of Iraq. Law 21 was amended substantially in late June 2013 to give the provincial governments substantially more power, a move intended to satisfy Sunnis. As a consequence of that and other laws, provinces have a greater claim on Iraqi financial resources than do districts, and many communities that dominate specific areas support converting their areas into provinces. In December 2013, the government decided to convert the district of Halabja—a symbolic city to the Kurds because of Saddam's use of chemical weapons there in 1988—into a separate province. On January 21, 2014, the government announced it had decided to convert several districts into new provinces: Fallujah (in Anbar Province), a hotbed of Sunni restiveness; Tuz Khurmato (in Salahuddin Province) and Tal Affar (in Nineveh Province), which both have Turkmen majorities; and the Nineveh Plains (also in Nineveh), which has a mostly Assyrian Christian population. This

latter announcement came amid a major Sunni uprising in Anbar Province, discussed below, and appeared clearly intended to keep minorities and Sunnis on the side of the Maliki government.

2009 Provincial Elections. After the 2008 provincial powers law was enacted, the next set of provincial elections were planned for October 1, 2008. They were postponed when Kurdish opposition caused a presidential veto of a July 22, 2008 draft election law that provided for equal division of power in Kirkuk (among Kurds, Arabs, and Turkomans)—a proposal that would have diluted Kurdish dominance there. On September 24, 2008, the COR passed another election law, providing for the provincial elections by January 31, 2009, but putting off provincial elections in Kirkuk and the three KRG provinces. In the elections, about 14,500 candidates vied for the 440 provincial council seats in the 14 Arab-dominated provinces of Iraq. About 4,000 of the candidates were women. About 17 million Iraqis (any Iraqi 18 years of age or older) were eligible for the vote, which was run by the Iraqi Higher Election Commission (IHEC). Pre-election violence was minimal. Turnout was about 51%, somewhat lower than some expected.

The certified vote totals (March 29, 2009) gave Maliki’s “State of Law Coalition” (a coalition composed of his Da’wa Party plus other mostly Shiite allies) a clear victory with 126 out of the 440 seats available (28%). ISCI went from 200 council seats to only 50, a result observers attributed to its perceived close ties to Iran and its corruption. Iyad al-Allawi’s faction won 26 seats, a gain of eight seats, and a competing Sunni faction loyal to Tariq al-Hashimi won 32 seats, a loss of about 15. Sunni tribal leaders, who were widely credited for turning Iraqi Sunnis against Al Qaeda-linked extremists in Iraq, had boycotted the 2005 elections but participated in the 2009 elections. Their slate came in first in Anbar Province. Although Maliki’s State of Law coalition fared well, his party still needed to strike bargains with rival factions to form provincial administrations. Subsequent provincial elections in Arab-dominated provinces were held during April-June 2013, as discussed below.

The March 7, 2010, Elections: Shiites Fracture and Sunnis Cohere

After a strong showing for his list in the provincial elections, Maliki was favored to retain his position in the March 7, 2010, COR elections that would choose the next government. Maliki derived further political benefit from the U.S. implementation of the U.S.-Iraq “Security Agreement” (SA), discussed below. Yet, as 2009 progressed, Maliki’s image as protector of law and order was tarnished by several high-profile attacks, including major bombings in Baghdad on August 20, 2009, in which almost 100 Iraqis were killed and the buildings housing the Ministry of Finance and of Foreign Affairs were heavily damaged. As Maliki’s image of strong leadership faded that year, Shiite unity broke down and a strong rival Shiite slate took shape—the “Iraqi National Alliance (INA)” consisting of ISCI, the Sadrists, and other Shiite figures. The INA coalition believed that each of its component factions would draw support from their individual constituencies to produce an election victory.

To Sunni Arabs, the outwardly cross-sectarian Iraq National Movement (“Iraqiyya”) of former transitional Prime Minister Iyad al-Allawi (a broader coalition than his INA faction) had strong appeal. There was an openly Sunni slate, leaning Islamist, called the Accordance, and some Sunni figures joined Shiite slates in order to improve their chances of winning a seat.

Table I. Major Coalitions for 2010 National Elections

State of Law Coalition (slate no. 337)	Led by Maliki and his Da'wa Party. Included some Sunni leaders such as Shaykh Hatim al-Dulaymi. Appealed to Shiite sectarianism during the campaign by backing the exclusion of candidates with links to outlawed Baath Party.
Iraqi National Alliance (slate no. 316)	Formed in August 2009, was the most formidable challenger to Maliki's slate. Consisted mainly of his Shiite competitors, including ISCI, the Sadrist movement, the Fadilah Party, the Iraqi National Congress of Ahmad Chalabi, and the faction of ex-Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jafari.
Iraqiyya (slate no. 333)	Formed in October 2009 by former Prime Minister Iyad al-Allawi, who is Shiite, although his faction is mainly Sunni, and Sunni leader Saleh al-Mutlaq (ex-Baathist leader of the National Dialogue Front). The coalition included the IIP and several powerful Sunni individuals, including Usama al-Nujaifi and Rafi al-Issawi.
Kurdistan Alliance (slate no. 372)	Competed again as a joint KDP-PUK Kurdish list. However, Kurdish solidarity was shaken by July 25, 2009, Kurdistan elections in which a breakaway PUK faction called Change (Gorran) did unexpectedly well. Gorran ran its own separate list for the March 2010 elections.
Unity Alliance of Iraq (slate no. 348)	Led by Interior Minister Jawad Bolani, a moderate Shiite, and included the Sunni tribal faction of Shaykh Ahmad Abu Risha, brother of slain leader of the Sunni Awakening movement in Anbar. The list also included first post-Saddam defense minister Sadun al-Dulaymi.
Iraqi Accordance (slate no. 338)	A coalition of Sunni parties, including some breakaway leaders of the IIP. Led by Ayad al-Samarrai, then-speaker of the COR.

Sources: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; various press.

Election Law and “De-Baathification” Controversies

The 2010 election was clouded by several disputes over election rules and procedures. Under the Iraqi constitution, the elections were to be held by January 31, 2010, in order to allow 45 days before the March 15, 2010, expiry of the COR's term. The election laws that run the election and can shape the election outcome were the subject of disputes, and the COR repeatedly missed self-imposed deadlines to pass them. Many COR members leaned toward a closed list system, but those who wanted an open list vote (allowing voters to vote for candidates as well as coalition slates) prevailed. Sunnis lost their struggle to have “reserved seats” for Iraqis in exile; many Sunnis had gone into exile after the fall of Saddam Hussein. Each province served as a single constituency (see **Table 3** for the number of seats per province).

The version of the election law passed by the COR on November 8, 2009 (141 out of 195 COR deputies voting), expanded the size of the COR to 325 total seats. Of these, 310 were allocated by province, with the constituency sizes ranging from Baghdad's 68 seats to Muthanna's seven. The COR size, in the absence of a recent census, was based on taking 2005 population figures and adding 2.8% per year growth.⁴ The remaining 15 seats were to be minority reserved seats (8) and “compensatory seats” (7)—seats allocated from “leftover” votes for parties and slates that did not meet a minimum threshold to win any seat.

De-Baathification Candidate Vetting. The 2010 electoral process was at least partly intended to bring Sunni Arabs further into the political structure. That goal was jeopardized by a major

⁴ Analysis of Iraq expert Reidar Visser. “The Hashemi Veto.” <http://gulfanalysis.wordpress.com/2009/11/18/the-hashemi-veto/>.

dispute over candidate eligibility. In January 2010, the Justice and Accountability Commission (JAC, the successor to the “De-Baathification Commission” that worked since the fall of Saddam to purge former Baathists from government) invalidated the candidacies of 499 individuals (out of 6,500 candidates running) on many different slates. The JAC was headed by Ali al-Lami, but was heavily influenced by Ahmad Chalabi, who had headed the De-Baathification Commission. Both are Shiites, leading many to believe that the disqualifications represented an attempt to exclude prominent Sunnis. Appeals reinstated many of them, although about 300 had already been replaced by other candidates on their respective slates, including senior Iraqiyya figure Saleh al-Mutlaq. Al Lami was assassinated on May 26, 2011, presumably by Sunnis who viewed him as an architect of the perceived discrimination. Maliki later named the Minister for Human Rights to serve as JAC chairman concurrently. The JAC continues to vet candidates.

Election and Results

The final candidate list contained about 6,170 total candidates spanning 85 coalitions; the major coalitions are depicted in **Table 1**. Total turnout was about 62%, according to the IHEC. The final count was announced on March 26, 2010. As noted in **Table 3**, Iraqiyya won a narrow plurality of seats (two-seat margin over Maliki’s State of Law slate). The Iraqi constitution (Article 73) mandates that the COR “bloc with the largest number” of members gets the first opportunity to form a government and Allawi demanded the first opportunity to form a government. However, on March 28, 2010, Iraq’s Supreme Court ruled that a coalition that forms after the election could be deemed to meet that requirement, denying Allawi the first opportunity to form a government. The vote was to have been certified by April 22, 2010, but factional disputes delayed the certification. After appeals of some of the results, Iraq’s Supreme Court certified the results on June 1, 2010, triggering the following timelines:

Post-Election Government

Part of the difficulty forming a government after the election was the perception that Iraqi politics is a “winner take all” proposition. In accordance with timelines established in the Constitution, the newly elected COR convened on June 15, 2010, but the session ended abruptly without electing a COR leadership team and subsequent constitutional deadlines to select a president, a prime minister, and a full government were not met. After months of deadlock, on October 1, 2010, Maliki received the backing of most of the 40 COR Sadrist deputies – appearing to guarantee Maliki would get a second term as prime minister . The Obama Administration backed a second Maliki term while demanding that Maliki form a government inclusive of Sunni leaders.

On November 10, 2010, with reported direct intervention by President Obama, the “Irbil Agreement” among major factions was finalized in which (1) Maliki and Talabani would remain in their offices for another term; (2) Iraqiyya would be extensively represented in government—one of its figures would become COR Speaker, another would be defense minister, and another (presumably Allawi himself) would chair an oversight body called the “National Council for Strategic Policies”;⁵ and (3) de-Baathification laws would be eased.

At the November 11, 2010, COR session to implement the agreement, Iraqiyya figure Usama al-Nujaifi (brother of Nineveh Governor Atheel Nujaifi) was elected COR speaker. Several days

⁵ Fadel, Leila and Karen DeYoung. “Iraqi Leaders Crack Political Deadlock.” *Washington Post*, November 11, 2010.

later, Talabani was reelected president and Talabani tapped Maliki as prime minister-designate, giving him until December 25, 2010, to achieve COR confirmation of a cabinet. That requirement was accomplished on December 21, 2010. Among major outcomes were the following:

- As for the State of Law list, Maliki remained prime minister, and retained for himself the Defense, Interior, and National Security (minister of state) posts pending permanent nominees for those positions. The faction took seven other cabinet posts, in addition to the post of first vice president (Khudayr al Khuzai of the Da'wa Party) and deputy prime minister for energy issues (Hussein Shahrastani, previously the oil minister).
- For Iraqiyya, Saleh al-Mutlaq was appointed a deputy Prime Minister; Tariq al-Hashimi remained a vice president (second of three). The bloc also obtained nine ministerial posts, including Finance Minister Rafi al-Issawi (previously a deputy prime minister).
- The Iraqi National Alliance obtained 13 cabinet positions, parceled out among its various factions. The Sadrists got eight ministries, including Housing, Labor and Social Affairs, Ministry of Planning, and Tourism and Antiquities, as well as one of two deputy COR speakerships. An INA technocrat, Abd al Karim Luaibi, was appointed oil minister. A Fadilah party member, Bushra Saleh, became minister of state without portfolio and the only woman in the cabinet at that time.
- The Kurdistan Alliance received major posts aside from Talabani. The third deputy prime minister is Kurdish/PUK figure Rows Shaways, who has served in various central and KRG positions since the fall of Saddam. Arif Tayfour is second deputy COR speaker. Alliance members had six other cabinet seats, including longtime Kurdish (KDP) stalwart Hoshyar Zebari remaining as foreign minister (a position he has held throughout the post-Saddam periods). Khairallah Hassan Babakir was named trade minister in February 13, 2011.

Grievances Unresolved as U.S. Involvement Concludes

The 2010 election in Iraq occurred near the end of the U.S. military presence in Iraq, which had begun to wind down in 2009 and was to conclude by the end of 2011. In addition to disputes over the power structure, numerous related issues were left unresolved, as discussed in the following sections.

Armed Sunni Groups

The power sharing arrangement reached among senior politicians did not produce dismantlement of the several Sunni armed groups that were operating in Iraq during and after the U.S. military exit from Iraq at the end of 2011. Such groups included Baath Party and Saddam Hussein supporters as well as hardline Islamists linked to Al Qaeda and Sunni tribal fighters. These armed groups comprised, broadly, the insurgency against U.S. forces in Iraq. The groups were relatively quiescent for the final two years of the U.S. presence in Iraq, but re-emerged to challenge stability and the Maliki government as Sunni unrest at Shiite political domination has increased.

Al Qaeda in Iraq/Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)

Iraq's Al Qaeda affiliate constitutes the most violent component of the Sunni rebellion that has become a major threat to Iraqi stability in early 2014. Often cooperating with similarly named elements of the armed rebellion in neighboring Syria, the group currently operates in Iraq under the name of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) or, alternately, Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, (ISIS).⁶ The leader of AQ-I/ISIL is Abu Bakr Al Baghdadi, who is active both in Iraq and in Syria. U.S. officials estimated in November 2011 that there might be 800-1,000 AQ-I/ISIL members, of which some are involved in media or operations finance.⁷ Although AQ-I/ISIL has focused on influencing the future of Iraq and, later, in Syria, the group has allegedly been responsible for some past attacks in Jordan. In October 2012, Jordanian authorities disrupted an alleged plot by AQ-I/ISIL to bomb multiple targets in Amman, Jordan, possibly including the U.S. Embassy there. However, the group does not appear to have close links to remaining senior Al Qaeda leaders believed mostly still in Pakistan or to Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in Yemen.

Attacks in Iraq attributed to AQ-I/ISIL escalated significantly after an assault on Sunni protesters in the town of Hawija incident on April 23, 2013, discussed below. According to some experts, AQ-I/ISIL is now able to carry out about 40 mass casualty attacks per month, much more than the 10 per month of 2010, and many AQ-I/ISIL attacks now span multiple cities.⁸ In 2013, AQ-I/ISIL began asserting control of territory,⁹ including operating some training camps in areas close to the Syria border. On July 21, 2013, when the group attacked prisons at Abu Ghraib and Taji; the Taji attack failed but the attacks on Abu Ghraib freed several hundred purported AQ-I/ISIL members. The attack on the heavily fortified Abu Ghraib—involving the use of suicide attackers and conventional tactics—shook confidence in the ISF. The head of the National Counterterrorism Center, Matt Olsen, told Congress on November 14, 2013, that AQ-I/ISIL is the strongest it has been since its peak in 2006.¹⁰ During his visit to Washington, DC, during October 29-November 1, 2013, Maliki attributed virtually all the ongoing violence in Iraq to “terrorists” affiliated with AQ-I/ISIL, and downplayed the broader Sunnis resentment as a source of unrest.¹¹

Naqshabandi Order (JRTN) and Ex-Saddam Military Commanders

Some groups that were prominent during the insurgency against U.S. forces remain allied with AQ-I/ISIL or active independently as part of the Sunni unrest. One such Sunni group, linked to ex-Baathists, is the Naqshabandi Order, known by its Arabic acronym “JRTN.”¹² It is based primarily in Nineveh province and has been designated by the United States as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO). Prior to the escalation of Sunni violence in 2013, the JRTN was responsible

⁶ An antecedent of AQ-I/ISIL was named by the United States as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) in March 2004 and the designation applies to AQ-I/ISIL.

⁷ Michael Schmidt and Eric Schmitt. “Leaving Iraq, U.S. Fears New Surge of Qaeda Terror.” *New York Times*, November 6, 2011.

⁸ Michael Knights. “Rebuilding Iraq’s Counterterrorism Capabilities.” *Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, July 31, 2013.

⁹ Ben Van Heuvelen. “Al Qaeda-Linked Group Gaining Ground in Iraq.” *Washington Post*, December 8, 2013.

¹⁰ Eileen Sullivan. “Official: Al-Qaida in Iraq Strongest Since 2006.” Associated Press, November 14, 2013.

¹¹ Prime Minister Maliki address at the U.S. Institute of Peace. Attended by the author, October 31, 2013.

¹² The acronym stands for Jaysh al-Rijal al-Tariq al-Naqshabandi, which translated means Army of the Men of the Naqshabandi Order.

primarily for attacks on U.S. facilities in northern Iraq, which might have contributed to the State Department decision in mid-2012 to close the Kirkuk consulate. The faction has supported Sunni demonstrators, and in February 2013 Sunnis linked to the JRTN circulated praise for the protests from the highest ranking Saddam regime figure still at large, Izzat Ibrahim al Duri. Other rebels are said to be linked to long-standing insurgent groups such as the 1920 Revolution Brigades or the Islamic Army of Iraq.

Generally aligned with the JRTN are ex-Saddam era military officers who were dismissed during the period of U.S. occupation and control in Iraq. Press reports in early 2014 said that ex-officers are the commanders of a new opposition structure called the “General Military Council for Iraqi Revolutionaries,” which includes Sunni tribal fighters discussed below and other ex-insurgent figures.

Sons of Iraq Fighters

Another longstanding Sunni grievance has been the slow pace with which the Maliki government implemented its pledge to fully integrate the approximately 100,000 “Sons of Iraq” fighters. Also known as “Awakening” fighters, these are former insurgents who in 2006 began cooperating with U.S. forces against AQ-I/ISIL. Many of them are linked to the tribes of Anbar Province, but others are non-Al Qaeda Islamists that supported such Sunni Islamist organizations as the Muslim Scholars Association (MSA). The MSA is led by Harith al-Dari, who in 2006 fled U.S. counter-insurgency operations to live in Jordan. Harith al-Dari’s son, Muthana, reportedly is active against the Maliki government currently.

During the later stages of the U.S. intervention in Iraq, the Iraqi government promised them integration into the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) or government jobs. About 70,000 were integrated into the ISF or given civilian government jobs, while 30,000-40,000 continued to man checkpoints in Sunni areas and are paid about \$300 per month by the government. In part to preserve the loyalty of the Sons of Iraq, in early 2013 the government increased their salaries by about 66% to \$500 per month. The bulk of the Sons of Iraq fighters did not join the AQ-I/ISIL–led Sunni uprising in early 2014, but some did, according to many accounts.

The Sadr Faction and Shiite Militias

The 2006-2008 period of sectarian conflict was fueled in part by retaliatory attacks by Shiite militias, such as those that emanated from the faction of Shiite cleric Moqtada Al Sadr. The large Sadrist constituency, particularly among those who are on the lower economic echelons, has caused an inherent rivalry with Maliki and other Shiite leaders in Iraq. As noted, Sadr was part of an anti-Maliki Shiite coalition for the March 2010 elections, then supported Maliki for a second term, and later joined the unsuccessful effort to vote no-confidence against Maliki. Sadr says he opposes Maliki serving a third term subsequent to the April 30, 2014 elections. In February 2014, Sadr publicly announced his formal withdrawal from Iraqi politics, although Sadrist representatives remain in their posts and most experts assess that Sadr has continued influence over their activities. Sadrist candidates are competing in the April 30, 2014 elections.

Sadr’s withdrawal from politics represents a departure from the high level of activity he has exhibited since he returned to Iraq, from his studies in Iran, in January 2011. After his return, he gave numerous speeches that, among other themes, insisted on full implementation of a planned U.S. withdrawal by the end of 2011. Sadr’s position on the U.S. withdrawal appeared so firm that,

in an April 9, 2011, statement, he threatened to reactivate his Mahdi Army militia if U.S. forces remained in Iraq beyond the December 31, 2011, deadline. In 2009, the Mahdi Army announced it would integrate into the political process as a charity and employment network called *Mumahidoon*, or “those who pave the way.” Sadr’s followers conducted a large march in Baghdad on May 26, 2011, demanding a full U.S. military exit. The threats were pivotal to the Iraqi decision not to retain U.S. troops in Iraq beyond 2011.

Sadrist Offshoots and Other Shiite Militias

Although Sadr formed what was the largest Shiite militia in post-Saddam Iraq, his efforts unleashed separate Shiite militant forces. They operate under names including Asa’ib Ahl al-Haq (AAH, League of the Family of the Righteous), Khata’ib Hezbollah (Hezbollah Battalions), and Promised Day Brigade. In June 2009, Khata’ib Hezbollah was named by the United States as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO). On November 8, 2012, the Treasury Department designated several Khata’ib Hezbollah operatives, and their Iranian Revolutionary Guard—Qods Force mentors as terrorism supporting entities under Executive Order 13224.

The Shiite militias were part of an effort by Iran to ensure that the United States completely withdrew from Iraq. U.S. officials accused Shiite militias of causing an elevated level of U.S. troop deaths in June 2011 (14 killed, the highest in any month in over one year). During 2011, U.S. officials accused Iran of arming these militias with upgraded rocket-propelled munitions, such as Improvised Rocket Assisted Munitions (IRAMs). U.S. officials reportedly requested that the Iraqi government prevail on Iran to stop aiding the militias, actions that temporarily quieted the Shiite attacks on U.S. forces in Iraq. Until the U.S. withdrawal in December 2011, some rocket attacks continued against the U.S. consulate in Basra, which has nearly 1,000 U.S. personnel (including contractors).

The U.S. exit in 2011 removed other militias’ justification for armed activity and they moved into the political process. AAH’s leaders returned from Iran and opened political offices, trying to recruit loyalists, and setting up social service programs. The group, reportedly supported by Iran, did not compete in the April 20, 2013, provincial elections but is competing as an informal Maliki ally in the 2014 national elections (Al Sadiqun, “the Friends,” slate 218).¹³ AAH’s leader, Qais al-Khazali, took refuge in Iran in 2010 after three years in U.S. custody for his alleged role in a 2005 raid that killed five American soldiers.

Prior to 2013, experts had maintained that the Shiite militias were acting with restraint by not retaliating for Sunni attacks on Shiite citizens. However, as of mid-2013, this restraint apparently has weakened and some militias are conducting retaliatory attacks on Sunnis. In doing so, some experts see the militias as receiving the tacit cooperation of the Shiite-dominated ISF, particularly in Baghdad.¹⁴ Iraqi Shiite militiamen are reportedly increasingly involved in Syria fighting and protecting Shiite shrines in support of the government of Bashar Al Assad.¹⁵

¹³ Liz Sly. “Iran-Tied Group Is On Rise in Iraq.” *Washington Post*, February 19, 2013.

¹⁴ Michael Knights. “Iraq’s Never-Ending Security Crisis.” *BBC News*, October 3, 2013.

¹⁵ Abigail Hauslohner. “Iraqi Shiites Take Up the Cudgels for Syrian Government.” *Washington Post*, May 27, 2013.

The Kurds and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) ¹⁶

Since the end of the U.S.-led war to liberate Kuwait in early 1991, the United States has played a role in protecting Iraq's Kurdish autonomy. Iraq's Kurds have tried to preserve this "special relationship" with the United States and use it to their advantage.

The Iraqi Kurds have long been divided between two main factions—the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, PUK, and the Kurdistan Democratic Party, KDP. The two are abiding by a power sharing arrangement formalized in 2007, but they have a history of occasional and sometimes armed confrontation. The KRG has a President, Masoud Barzani, directly elected in July 2009, an elected Kurdistan National Assembly (KNA, sometimes called the Kurdistan Parliament of Iraq, or KPI), and an appointed Prime Minister. Since January 2012, the KRG Prime Minister has been Nechirvan Barzani (Masoud's nephew), who returned to that post after three years during in which the post was held by PUK senior figure Barham Salih. Masoud Barzani's son, Suroor, heads a KRG "national security council." Over the past five years, however, a new faction has emerged as a significant group in Kurdish politics—Gorran (Change), a PUK breakaway. The electoral success of Gorran, coupled with the continued infirmity of Iraqi President Jalal Talabani (head of the PUK), has shifted political strength within the KRG to the KDP and away from the PUK.

The Iraqi Kurds also—as permitted in the Iraqi constitution—field their own force of *peshmerga* (Kurdish militiamen) numbering perhaps 75,000 fighters. They are generally lightly armed. Kurdish leaders continue to criticize Maliki for paying out of the national budget only about half of the total *peshmerga* force (those who are under the control of the KRG's Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs). However, about half are not incorporated into this structure and are funded out of the KRG budget. The KRG is in the process of reforming the *peshmerga* into a smaller but more professional and well trained force.

Since 2001, U.S. immigration officials have placed the KDP and PUK in a "Tier Three" category that makes it difficult for members of the parties to obtain visas to enter the United States. The categorization is a determination that the two parties are "groups of concern" – meaning some of their members have committed acts of political violence. The designation was based on the fact that the Kurdish parties, particularly their *peshmerga*, had used violence to try to overthrow the government of Saddam Hussein. The designation was made before the United States militarily overthrew Saddam in 2003, and has not been revoked.

The characterization seems to many in Congress and the Administration to be inconsistent with the close political relations between the United States and the KDP and PUK. KRG President Barzani has said he will not visit the United States until the designation is removed. Two bills, H.R. 4474 and S. 2255 would legislatively remove the PUK and KDP from Tier 3 categorization. On April 14, 2014, State Dept. spokeswoman Jen Psaki said the Administration supports the legislation.

¹⁶ For more information on Kurd-Baghdad disputes, see CRS Report RS22079, *The Kurds in Post-Saddam Iraq*, by Kenneth Katzman.

KRG-Baghdad Relations

Senior Iraq's Kurdish leaders have long said they do not seek outright independence or affiliation with Kurds in neighboring countries, but rather to secure and expand the autonomy they have achieved in Iraq. However, the issues dividing the KRG and Baghdad have expanded to the point where some KRG President Barzani has begun to assert that the KRG might seek independence, but without use of violence against the central government. Following a visit to Washington, DC, in April 2012 and since, Barzani has threatened to hold a vote on Kurdish independence unless Maliki holds to his pledges of power-sharing and resolves major issues with the KRG.¹⁷ As noted, Kurds in the COR joined the failed 2012 effort to vote no confidence against Maliki. The animosity continued in 2013, but the Kurdish leadership and Maliki have continued to engage and exchange views and visits. Maliki made his first visit to Irbil in two years on June 10, 2013 and Barzani visited Baghdad on July 7, 2013, his first since late 2010. The two sides subsequently established seven joint committees to try to resolve the major disputes between them.¹⁸ Some reports suggest that the Kurdish leaders might accept Maliki's selection to a third term as Prime Minister.

As do political tensions, disputes between the forces of the two political entities sometimes come close to major conflict. In November 2012, a commercial dispute between an Arab and Kurd in Tuz Khurmatu, a town in Salahuddin Province straddling the Baghdad-KRG territorial border, caused a clash and a buildup of ISF and Kurdish troops facing off. Several weeks of U.S. and intra-Iraq mediation resulted in a tentative agreement on December 6, 2012, for both sides to pull back their forces and for local ethnic groups to form units to replace ISF and *peshmerga* units along the Baghdad-KRG frontier. The agreement was only partially implemented. In May 2013, *peshmerga* forces advanced their positions in Kirkuk province, taking advantage of the ISF drawdown there as the ISF dealt with Sunni violence elsewhere in Iraq.

The continued clashes and frontier tensions could be attributed, in part, to the end of the "combined security mechanism" (CSM) set up by the United States when its troops were in Iraq. The CSM began in January 2010, consisting of joint (ISF-U.S.-Kurdish) patrols, maintenance of 22 checkpoints, and U.S. training of participating ISF and *peshmerga* forces. The mechanism was administered through provincial level Combined Coordination Centers, and disagreements were referred to a Senior Working Group and a High Level Ministerial Committee.¹⁹

Kirkuk Dispute

The KRG-Baghdad clashes have been spurred in part by the lack of any progress in recent years in resolving the various territorial disputes between the Kurds and Iraq's Arabs. The most emotional of these is the Kurdish insistence that Tamim Province (which includes oil-rich Kirkuk) is "Kurdish land" and must be formally affiliated to the KRG. There was to be a census and referendum on the affiliation of the province by December 31, 2007, under Article 140 of the Constitution, but the Kurds have agreed to repeated delays in order to avoid jeopardizing overall progress in Iraq. Nor has the national census that is pivotal to any such referendum been conducted; it was scheduled for October 24, 2010, but then repeatedly postponed by the broader

¹⁷ Interview with Masoud Barzani by Hayder al-Khoie on Al-Hurra television network. April 6, 2012.

¹⁸ Testimony of Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Brett McGurk before the House Foreign Affairs Committee. November 13, 2013.

¹⁹ "Managing Arab-Kurd Tensions in Northern Iraq After the Withdrawal of U.S. Troops." Rand Corporation, 2011.

political crisis and differences over how to account for movements of populations into or out of the Kurdish-controlled provinces.

On the other hand, some KRG-Baghdad disputes have moved forward. The Property Claims Commission that is adjudicating claims from the Saddam regime's forced resettlement of Arabs into the KRG region is functioning. Of the 178,000 claims received, nearly 26,000 were approved and 90,000 rejected or ruled invalid by the end of 2011, according to the State Department. Since 2003, more than 28,000 Iraqi Arabs settled in the KRG area by Saddam have relocated from Kirkuk back to their original provinces.

KRG Oil Exports

The KRG and Baghdad are still at odds over the Kurds' insistence that it export oil that is discovered and extracted in the KRG region. Baghdad reportedly fears that Kurdish oil exports can potentially enable the Kurds to set up an economically viable independent state and has called the KRG's separate energy development deals with international firms "illegal." Baghdad has supported KRG oil exports through the national oil export pipeline grid in which revenues from the KRG exports go into central government accounts, proceeds (17% agreed proportion) go to the KRG, and Baghdad pays the international oil companies working in the KRG.

KRG oil exports through the national grid have been repeatedly suspended over central government withholding of payments to the international energy firms. In September 2012, the KRG and Baghdad agreed that Baghdad would pay arrears due the international firms. However, that pact held only until late December 2012. The 2013 budget adopted by the COR on March 7, 2013, allocated only \$650 million to the companies exporting KRG oil; the Kurds had sought the full \$3.5 billion owed international firms for that purpose. The Kurds boycotted a March 17, 2014 COR vote on the first reading of the 2014-15 national budget which again fails to compensate international firms the \$5 billion they are owed (as of March 2014) for Kurdish oil and demands that the KRG export at least 400,000 barrels per day of oil using Iraqi national export routes and marketing institutions. According to the budget bill, any shortfall below that export total would be deducted from the KRG's 17% share of the oil revenue received. The budget has not been adopted to date because of this dispute. And, to maintain leverage in the dispute, since January 2014, the Iraqi government has suspended all but a small fraction of its payments of about \$1 billion per month to the KRG on the grounds that the KRG is not contributing oil revenue to the national coffers.

In the absence of agreement between the KRG and Baghdad, the KRG has exported some oil through a newly constructed pipeline to Turkey (that the Kurds assert bypasses the Iraqi national grid, even though it intersects in Turkey with the Iraq-Turkey pipeline controlled by Baghdad) capable of carrying 300,000 barrels per day of oil. However, the oil (1.5 million barrels) has thus far been stored pending resolution of the dispute over whether the KRG or Baghdad have the right to market the oil and collect the revenue.²⁰ The KRG trucks an additional 60,000 barrels per day to Turkey. KRG fields currently have the potential to export 500,000 barrels per day and it is expected to be able to increase exports to 1 million barrels per day by 2019,²¹ if export routes are

²⁰ Much of the dispute centers on differing interpretations of a 1976 Iraq- Turkey treaty, which was extended in 2010, and which defines "Iraq" (for purposes of oil issues) as the "Ministry of Oil of the Republic of Iraq." See: "analysis: Iraq-Turkey Treaty Restricts Kurdistan Exports." Iraq Oil Report, April 18, 2014.

²¹ Jane Arraf. "Iraq's Unity Tested by Rising Tensions Over Oil-Rich Kurdish Region." *Christian Science Monitor*, (continued...)

available. The Obama Administration has generally sided with Baghdad on the dispute, asserting that major international energy projects involving Iraq should be negotiated and implemented through a unified central government in Baghdad.

Related to the disputes over KRG oil exports is a broader disagreement over foreign firm involvement in the KRG energy sector. The central government has sought to deny energy deals with the central government to companies that sign development deals with the KRG. This dispute has affected such firms as Exxon-Mobil and Total SA of France.

KRG Elections and Intra-Kurdish Divisions

Provincial elections in the KRG-controlled provinces were not held during the nationwide January 2009 provincial elections or during the March 7, 2010, COR vote. In April 2013, the KRG announced that elections would be held in 2013 for provincial councils in the three KRG provinces, for the KNA, and for the KRG presidency. However, on July 1, 2013, the KNA voted, after substantial debate, to extend Barzani's term two years, until August 19, 2015. The State Department said on July 2, 2013, that it is confident that the KNA elected in September would finalize a KRG constitution and set presidential elections possibly earlier than that term expiration. Subsequently, the IHEC, which runs elections even in the KRG area, persuaded the KRG it could not also hold provincial elections on the same day as the KNA elections. The KNA elections were confirmed for September 21, 2013, and the KRG provincial elections were scheduled for November 21, 2013. On October 8, 2013, the IHEC announced that the provincial elections in the KRG region would be held concurrent with the Iraq-wide parliamentary elections on April 30, 2014.

September 21, 2013, KNA Elections. The KNA elections went forward on September 21, 2013 as planned, and further complicated the political landscape in the KRG. About 1,130 candidates registered to run for the 111 available seats, 11 of which are reserved for minority communities that live in the north, such as Yazidis, Shabaks, Assyrians, and others. The 2013 KNA elections continued a trend begun in the previous KNA elections of March 2010 in which Gorran emerged as a major player. Headed by Neshirvan Mustafa, Gorran won an unexpectedly high 25 KNA seats in March 2010 and won 24 seats in the September 21, 2013, KNA election. The 2013 result was particularly significant because in the 2013 election, the KDP and the PUK ran separately, not combined as the Kurdistan Alliance. In the 2013 vote, Gorran's 24 seats placed it second to the KDP's 38 (up from 30 in 2010). The PUK was humbled by coming in third with only 18 seats, down from 29 in the 2010 election. The results have elevated Gorran's political strength, a contributing factor to the Kurds' inability to reorganize the KRG government to date. Kurdish officials say they hope to complete the governmental reorganization before the April 30, 2014 Iraqi national election.

Many experts on the Kurdish region attribute the PUK's showing in the 2013 KNA elections to the infirmity of Iraq's President and PUK leader Jalal Talabani and the attendant turmoil in the PUK leadership. Talabani remains in Germany to recuperate from his stroke, although he has not stepped down as Iraq's President. Barham Salih, mentioned above, is said to be pressing to replace Talabani as president after the April 30, 2014 national elections, in part because the Kurds do not want the Kurds to lose control of the position of president to a Sunni Arab. Another PUK

(...continued)
May 4, 2012.

stalwart, Kosrat Rasoul, who serves as KRG Vice President, is said to be seeking support to succeed Talabani as PUK leader. Talabani's son, Qubad, who headed the KRG representative office in Washington, DC, until returning to the KRG in July 2012, has become more involved in Kurdish and PUK politics as his father's health fades. Talabani's wife, Hero Ibrahim Ahmad Talabani, is also a major figure in PUK politics and is said to be an opponent of Kosrat Rasoul.

Post-U.S. Withdrawal Political Unraveling

With the grievances discussed above unresolved, armed factions still able and willing to use violence to achieve their objectives, and U.S. forces not present in large numbers to suppress violence, the 2010 power-sharing arrangement unraveled. Throughout 2011, Maliki's opponents became increasingly vocal in accusing him of concentrating power in his and his faction's hands – in particular his appointment of allies as “acting” ministers of three key security ministries— Defense, Interior, and National Security (intelligence) while retaining those portfolios for himself.²² Through his Office of the Commander-in-Chief, Maliki directly commands the 10,000 person Counter-Terrorism Service, of which about 4,100 are Iraqi Special Operations Forces (ISOF). These forces are tasked with countering militant groups, although Maliki's critics assert that he uses them to intimidate his senior Sunni critics and Iraq's Sunnis more broadly.

Critics assert that Maliki also put under his executive control several supposedly independent bodies. In late 2010, he successfully requested that Iraq's Supreme Court rule that the Independent Higher Election Commission (IHEC) that runs Iraq's elections and the Commission of Integrity, the key anti-corruption body be supervised by the cabinet.²³ In March 2012, Maliki also asserted governmental control over the Central Bank.

On December 19, 2011, the day after the final U.S. withdrawal (December 18, 2011)—and one week after Maliki met with President Obama in Washington, DC, on December 12, 2011—the government announced an arrest warrant against Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi, a major Sunni Iraqiyya figure, for allegedly ordering his security staff to commit acts of assassination. Hashimi fled to the KRG region and refused to return to face trial in Baghdad unless his conditions for a fair trial there were met. A trial in absentia in Baghdad convicted him and sentenced him to death on September 9, 2012, for the alleged killing of two Iraqis. Hashimi remains in Turkey, where he eventually fled.

The arrest cast doubt on President Obama's assertion, marking the U.S. withdrawal, that Iraq is now “sovereign, stable, and self-reliant.” U.S. officials immediately attempted to contain the crisis by intervening with the various political factions. The effort produced some results when Maliki released some Baathists prisoners and agreed to legal amendments to give provinces more budgetary autonomy and the right of consent when national security forces are deployed.²⁴ (These concessions were included in a revised provincial powers law adopted by the COR in June 2013, as discussed above.) The concessions prompted Iraqiyya COR deputies and ministers to resume their duties by early February 2012.

²² Sadun Dulaymi, a Sunni Arab, is acting Defense Minister; Falih al-Fayad, a Shiite, is acting Minister of State for National Security; and Adnan al-Asadi, another Shiite, is acting Interior Minister.

²³ Parker, Ned and Salar Jaff. “Electoral Ruling Riles Maliki's Rivals.” *Los Angeles Times*, January 23, 2011.

²⁴ Tim Arango. “Iraq's Prime Minister Gains More Power After Political Crisis.” *New York Times*, February 28, 2012.

Failed Effort to Oust Maliki Politically in 2012. In March 2012, the factions tentatively agreed to hold a “national conference,” to be chaired by President Talabani, respected as an even-handed mediator, to try to reach a durable political solution. However, late that month KRG President Barzani accused Maliki of a “power grab” and the conference was not held. Maliki critics Allawi, COR speaker Osama Nujaifi, and Moqtada Al Sadr met in April 2012 in the KRG region and subsequently collected signatures from 176 COR deputies to request a no-confidence vote against Maliki’s government. Under Article 61 of the constitution, signatures of 20% of the 325 COR deputies (65 signatures) are needed to trigger a vote, but President Talabani (who is required to present a valid request to the COR to hold the vote) stated on June 10, 2012 that there were an insufficient number of valid signatures remaining to proceed with that vote.²⁵ Maliki apparently convinced many Sadrist COR deputies to remove their signatures. Maliki also reinstated deputy Prime Minister Saleh al-Mutlaq as part of an effort to reach out to Sunni leaders.

Political Crisis Reopens Broader Sectarian Rift in 2013

Political disputes flared again after the widely respected President Talabani suffered a stroke on December 18, 2012 and was flown out of Iraq for treatment. On December 20, 2012, Maliki moved against another perceived Sunni adversary, Finance Minister Rafi al-Issawi, by arresting 10 of his bodyguards. He resigned as Finance Minister and took refuge in Anbar province with Sunni tribal leaders. The actions against Issawi sparked anti-Maliki demonstrations in the Sunni cities of Anbar, Salahuddin, and Nineveh provinces, as well as in Sunni districts of Baghdad. (Talabani has remained in Germany since for rehabilitation, and second Vice President Khudayr Khuzai has served as acting President.)

As demonstrations continued, what had been primarily disputes among elites was transformed into substantial public unrest. The thrust of the Sunni complaints was based on perceived discrimination by the Shiite-dominated Maliki government. Some Sunni demonstrators were reacting not only to the moves against senior Sunni leaders, but also to the fact that the overwhelming majority of prisoners in Iraq’s jails are Sunnis, according to Human Rights Watch researchers. Sunni demonstrators demanded the release of prisoners, particularly women; a repeal of “Article 4” anti-terrorism laws under which many Sunnis are incarcerated; reform or end to the de-Baathification laws that has been used against Sunnis; and improved government services.²⁶

During January-March 2013, the use of small amounts of force against demonstrators caused the unrest to worsen. On January 25, 2013, the ISF killed nine protesters on a day when oppositionists killed two ISF police officers. Sunni demonstrators protested every Friday during that period, and began to set up encampments in some cities. Some observers maintained that the protest movement was emboldened by the Sunni-led rebellion in neighboring Syria.

The Sunni unrest, coupled with the U.S. departure, provided “political space” for long-standing violent Sunni elements to revive. Violent Sunni elements—weakened but never totally eliminated by the United States during 2003-2011—reactivated to try to reinforce peaceful Sunni protesters; undermine confidence in the ISF; expel Shiite members of the ISF from Sunni areas; and reignite the sectarian war that prevailed during 2006-2008. All of these motivations, in the apparent view of the militants, could have the effect of destabilizing Maliki and his Shiite-led rule. To try to

²⁵ “Embattled Iraqi PM Holding On To Power for Now.” Associated Press, June 12, 2012.

²⁶ Author conversations with Human Rights Watch researchers, March 2013.

accomplish these goals, Sunni militant groups have attacked pilgrims to the various Shiite shrines and holy sites in Iraq; Shiite neighborhoods and businesses; ISF personnel; government installations; and some Sunnis who are cooperating with the government.

The unrest prompted some further rifts and leadership responses. The COR passed a law limiting Maliki to two terms, although Iraq's Supreme Court struck that law down in mid-2013. In March 2013, Kurdish ministers suspended their participation in the central government. Maliki tried to mollify the Sunni leaders and protesters by forming a committee, headed by Deputy Prime Minister Shahrastani, to examine protester grievances and suggest reforms and by releasing some imprisoned Sunnis.

Escalation of Violence Since April 2013 Hawijah Incident

On April 23, 2013, three days after the first group of provinces voted in provincial elections, the ISF stormed a Sunni protest camp in the town of Hawijah, near the mostly Kurdish city of Kirkuk. About 40 civilians and three ISF personnel were killed in the battle that ensued. In the following days, many Sunni demonstrators and tribal leaders took up arms and called on followers to arm themselves. Sunni gunmen took over government buildings in the town of Suleiman Pak for a few days. At the political level, Iraqiyya pulled out of the COR entirely, and three Sunni ministers resigned. In a speech to the nation on April 24, 2013, Maliki urged dialogue but also stated that the ISF “must impose security in Iraq.”

U.S. officials reportedly pressed Maliki not to use the military to suppress Sunni protests, arguing that such a strategy has led to all-out civil war in neighboring Syria, and also worked with Sunni tribal leaders to appeal for calm. On April 30, 2013, following meetings with central government members, Kurdish leaders agreed to return Kurdish ministers to their positions in Baghdad.

Even as the major factions tried to restore mutual trust, Sunni Arab attacks on government forces, Shiite gathering places, and even against other Sunnis cooperating with the government escalated. Many of these attacks—particularly the simultaneous multiple-target attacks—were carried out by AQ-I/ISIL. According to the U.N. Assistance Mission-Iraq (UNAMI), about 9,000 Iraqis were killed in 2013, of whom all but about 1,000 were civilians, and the remainder were members of the ISF. This was more than double the death toll for all of 2010, and the highest total since the height of sectarian conflict in 2006-2007, although still about 60% below those levels.

Tentative signs emerged in mid-2013 that Shiite armed groups might be reactivating to retaliate against the Sunni-led attacks on the Shiite community. The ISF, which is largely Shiite and perceived by Sunnis as aligned with the Shiite community, has put significant security measures into effect in Baghdad. These included the establishment of numerous checkpoints and restricting movements of cars in order to be able to check the contents of each one. Sunnis complain that these measures are discriminatory and essentially confine them to enclaves. The abduction and killing of 18 Sunnis in Baghdad on November 29, 2013 was allegedly carried out by Shiite militiamen.²⁷

Maliki undertook gestures toward the Sunnis, although the actions did not end the unrest. In June 2013 the COR amended the 2008 provincial powers law (No. 21, see above) to give the provinces substantially more authority relative to the central government, including some control over

²⁷ Duraid Adnan. “18 Are Found Shot to Death After Abduction in Baghdad.” *New York Times*, November 30, 2013.

security forces (Article 31-10). The revisions also specify a share of revenue to be given to the provinces and mandate that within two years, control of the province-based operations of central government ministries be transferred to the provincial governments.²⁸ In July 2013, the cabinet approved a package of reforms easing the de-Baathification laws to allow many former Baathists to hold government positions—a key demand of the Sunni protesters. During his visit to Washington, D.C. during October 2013, Maliki denied he has sought to marginalize Sunni leaders and asserted that all his actions were taken under his authority in the Iraqi constitution.²⁹

April 2013 Provincial Elections Occur Amid the Tensions

The escalating violence affected, but did not derail, 2013 provincial elections. The mandate of the nine-member IHEC, which runs the election, expired at the end of April 2012, and the COR confirmed a new panel in September 2012. On October 30, 2012, the IHEC set an April 20, 2013, election date, while deciding that provincial elections would not be held in the three KRG-controlled provinces or in the province of Kirkuk. The COR's law to govern the election for the 447 provincial council seats (including those in Anbar and Nineveh that voted on June 20, 2013) passed in December 2012, providing for an open list vote. A total of 50 coalitions registered, including 261 political entities as part of those coalitions or running separately. About 8,150 individual candidates registered, of which 200 were later barred by the JAC for alleged Baathist ties. Because of the escalating violence, the government postponed the elections in two Sunni provinces, Anbar and Nineveh, until June 20, 2013. The KRG set September 21, 2013, to vote for Kurdistan National Assembly elections, but not a vote for any other posts, as discussed below.

The results appeared to demonstrate that most Iraqis want to rebuild political power-sharing. With the April 20, 2013, vote being held mostly in Shiite areas, the election was largely a test of Maliki's popularity. Maliki's State of Law coalition remained relatively intact, consisting mostly of Shiite parties, including Fadilah (Virtue) and the ISCI-offshoot the Badr Organization. ISCI registered its own "Citizen Coalition," and Sadr registered a separate "Coalition of Liberals." Among the mostly Sunni groupings, Allawi's Iraqiyya and 18 smaller entities ran as the "Iraqi National United Coalition." A separate "United Coalition" consisted of supporters of the Nujafis (COR speaker and Nineveh governor), Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi, and Rafi al-Issawi. A third Sunni coalition was loyal to Saleh al-Mutlaq. The two main Kurdish parties ran under the Co-Existence and Fraternity Alliance.

Turnout on April 20, 2013, was estimated at about 50% of registered voters. Election day violence was minimal, although 16 Sunni candidates were assassinated prior to the election. According to results finalized on May 19, 2013, Maliki's State of Law won a total of about 112 seats—about 22%, down from the 29% it won in 2009, but a plurality in 7 of the 12 provinces that voted. The loss of some of its seats cost Maliki's list control of the key provincial councils of Baghdad and Basra. ISCI's Citizen Coalition won back some of the losses it suffered in the 2009 elections, winning about 75 seats. Sadr's slate won 59 seats, including a plurality in Maysan province. Among Sunnis, the United Coalition bested the Iraqiyya-led coalition, an outcome most relevant in the two majority Sunni provinces that voted that day—Diyala and Salahuddin.

²⁸ Reidar Vissar. "Provincial Powers Revisions, Elections Results for Anbar and Nineveh: Is Iraq Headed for Complete Disintegration?" June 27, 2013.

²⁹ Prime Minister Maliki address at the U.S. Institute of Peace. Attended by the author, October 31, 2013.

The June 20, 2013, election in Anbar and Nineveh was primarily a contest among the Sunni blocs. In heavily Sunni Anbar, the Nujaifi bloc won a slight plurality, but newly emerging leaders there selected as governor Ahmad Khalaf al-Dulaimi, who works amicably with the Maliki government. In Nineveh, where the Nujaijis previously held an outright majority of provincial council seats (19 or 37), Kurds won 11 out of the province's 39 seats. The Nujaifi grouping came in second with eight seats, but Atheel Nujaifi was selected to another term as governor. The results suggested to some experts that many Sunnis want to avoid a return to sectarian conflict.³⁰

Major Uprising Flares in Late 2013

After the provincial elections, unrest in Sunni areas continued but did not escalate sharply until the end of 2013. A major upsurge in Sunni Arab unrest began on December 26, 2013 when, following an ISIL attack that killed 17 ISF officers, Maliki sought the arrest of Sunni parliamentarian Ahmad al-Alwani on charges of inciting anti-government activity. The arrest prompted a gun battle with security forces that killed Alwani's brother and several of his bodyguards. Maliki subsequently ordered security forces to close down a protest tent camp in Ramadi, the capital of Anbar Province. That action prompted significant rebellion in both Ramadi and Fallujah by ISIL, later spreading, to lesser degrees, to other Sunni cities in and outside Anbar. Both Ramadi and Fallujah were major objectives of U.S. counterinsurgency efforts during the Iraq war. ISIL fighters, joined by some Sunni protesters, defectors from the Iraq Security Forces (ISF), and some Sons of Iraq and other tribal fighters, took over major parts of both Ramadi and Fallujah and burned police stations in these cities, freed prisoners, and captured or destroyed many ISF vehicles. However, most Sons of Iraq fighters appear to have obeyed the urgings of many tribal leaders' urgings to back the government and help suppress the ISIL-led insurrection.

Partly at the urging of U.S. officials, Maliki opted not to order an ISF assault but to instead provide weapons and funding to Sunni tribal leaders and Sons of Iraq fighters who stood with the government so that they could expel the ISIL fighters themselves. Maliki also signaled compromise by ordering the arrest of a Shiite hardliner, "Mukhtar Army" leader Wahtiq al-Batat and ordered the ISF to cease attacking homes—a gesture to the Sunni population. By the end of the first week of January 2014, the government had regained most of Ramadi, but Fallujah remained in insurgent hands. In early April 2014, ISIL-led insurgents also established a presence in Abu Ghraib, which is only ten miles from Baghdad. Iraq closed the prison because of the security threat and transferred the prisoners to other prisons around Iraq. In mid-April 2014, the government urged Fallujah citizens to leave the city in advance of government air strikes on insurgent positions, although the strikes did not dislodge the rebels. Some ISF officers have told journalists the ISF effort to assist in the recapture of Fallujah and small locations under opposition control has been disorganized and ineffective.³¹ Insurgents also have continued to attack Shiite civilian and ISF and government targets in Baghdad and other several other cities. As a result of the insurrection, an estimate 140,000 Iraqis have left Anbar Province, relocating mostly to Baghdad according to press accounts.

U.S. Response to the Insurrection. The major escalation of violence in Iraq in early 2014 insurrection has caused the Obama Administration to take a more active role in Iraq. On January

³⁰ Kirk Sowell. "Sunni Voters and Iraq's Provincial Elections." July 12, 2013.

³¹ Loveday Morris. "Iraqi Army Struggles in Battles Against Islamist Fighters in Anbar Province." Washington Post, February 27, 2014.

5, 2014, Secretary of State John Kerry said the United States would provide the Iraqi government help to deal with the crisis, but he directly ruled out the possibility of U.S. reintroduction of ground troops to Iraq.³² As outlined below, including in House Foreign Affairs Committee testimony of February 5, 2014 by Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Brett McGurk, the United States is encouraging Maliki to take a “holistic” strategy of combatting ISIL and also accommodating his Sunni opponents. The United States has:

- *Delivered and sold additional weaponry.* In late December 2013, the Defense Department sent 75 HELLFIRE missiles as well as unarmed surveillance drones to the ISF for use against ISIS camps. However, the missiles were for use by Iraq’s propeller-driven aircraft, because the Administration turned down an Iraqi request to transfer armed drones for that same purpose. On January 23, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) notified Congress of a 2014, proposed sale to Iraq of an additional 500 HELLFIREs and associated training and equipment, at an estimated cost of \$82 million. 100 of the missiles were delivered in late March 2014, according to press reports. The Administration also obtained the concurrence of Congress to release for sale and lease 30 “Apache” attack helicopters to Iraq. Some in Congress had earlier held up provision of these aircraft out of concerns that the Iraqi government would use the attack helicopters against non-violent opponents. The United States also is providing unarmed surveillance drones, as discussed below.
- *Additional Training.* The Department of Defense has increased bilateral and regional training opportunities for Iraqi counterterrorism (CT) units; Iraq and Jordan are discussing advanced training for Iraqi forces in Jordan.³³ The training would presumably help burnish ISF counter-insurgency skills that, according to several experts, have lapsed since the departure of U.S. troops in 2011. By all accounts, other than weapons and equipment deliveries, there has been no direct U.S. military involvement in or assistance to the ISF responses in Anbar.
- *Efforts at Accommodation.* U.S. officials, including Vice President Biden, who is reported to have played a major role in the Administration’s Iraq policy to date, reportedly have been in contact with Maliki and his Sunni and Kurdish opponents to encourage dialogue and accommodation. As noted above, in an apparent gesture to the Sunnis community and minority communities in the north, on January 21, 2014 the Iraqi government announced a plan to create three new provinces, including one centered on the restive city of Fallujah. Provinces are able to obtain and control financial resources more readily than subordinate localities.

April 30, 2014, COR Elections

The escalating violence has the potential to disrupt the COR elections to be held on April 30, 2014, in particular by preventing any voting in insurgent-held areas. Because a new government is chosen by the elected parliament, postponing the election in restive areas only is not a realistic

³² Loveday Morris and Anne Gearan. “Kerry Says U.S. Will Help Iraq Against al-Qaeda but Won’t Send Troops Back In.” *Washington Post*, January 5, 2014.

³³ “U.S. Seeks to Resume Training of Iraqi Commandos.” Dow Jones Newswire, January 9, 2014; Statement of Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Brett McGurk before the House Foreign Affairs Committee. February 5, 2014.

option. There are likely to be some international election observers present, but likely few or none in the restive cities of Anbar, and it is doubtful that there will be any voting in Fallujah.

An election law to regulate the election was the subject of debate primarily between the Kurds and Maliki's allies, delaying passage of the election law until November 4, 2013—slightly beyond the IHEC-imposed deadline of October 31. The Kurds had sought to have the 2005 election system used, in which all of Iraq is considered one district. Maliki and other Shiites prevailed in their preference to use the system employed in the 2010 elections, in which voters cast votes in specific districts. The election law expanded the number of seats of the new COR to 328, an increase of three seats (all three are from the KRG region).

A total of 39 coalitions, comprising 275 political entities (parties), some of which will run separately, have registered. Maliki's State of Law bloc remains relatively intact and many rival blocs have fractured since the 2010 election – making his return to the Prime Ministership highly likely. Shiite blocs are likely, as they did in 2010, to unify after the election to ensure there is a Shiite Prime Minister—and Maliki appears to be the strongest among them. The Iraqiyya bloc, for example, which won more seats than did State of Law in 2010, has fragmented into components led by various Sunni and other leaders, as shown in the table below. The major Kurdish factions appear to be a united coalition, as has been the case previously, although they might compete separately in some areas. And, the Kurdish party Gorran is more of a force than it has been previously, and it is running separately—potentially reducing Kurdish leverage in post-election Iraqi government formation.

Because President Talabani remains outside Iraq, it is virtually certain that a different president will be selected after the election. However, it is possible that the Sunnis might argue that a Sunni become President; if that argument is made and prevails, the Sunnis would presumably yield the COR speakership to a Kurdish official. The major coalitions are in the table below.

The April 30, 2014 elections will also include elections for 89 total seats on the provincial councils in the three KRG provinces. The campaign period nationwide began on April 1.

Table 2. Major Coalitions in April 30, 2014 COR Elections

Coalition	Leaders and Components
State of Law (Slate No. 277)	Maliki and his Da'wa Party; deputy P.M. Shahrستاني (both running in Baghdad); Badr Organization (ISCI offshoot)
Muwatin (Citizens Coalition) (273)	ISCI list. Includes former Interior Minister Bayan Jabr Solagh; Ahmad Chalabi; many Basra politicians
Al Ahrar (Liberals) (214)	Sadrists. Allied with ISCI in 2010 but separate in 2014.
Wataniya (Nationalists) (239)	Iyad al-Allawi (running in Baghdad), Includes Allawi followers from former Iraqiyya bloc
Mutahiddun (United Ones) (259)	COR Speaker Nujaifi (running in Nineveh). No candidates in Shiite-dominated provinces. Was part of Allawi Iraqiyya bloc in 2010.
Arabiyya (Arabs) (255)	deputy P.M. Saleh al-Mutlaq (running in Baghdad) Also limited to mostly Sunni provinces. Was part of Iraqiyya bloc in 2010.
Kurdistan Alliance	KDP and PUK, but running separately in some constituencies.
Fadilah (219)	Shiite faction, was allied with ISCI in 2010 election but running separately in 2014.
Da'wa (Jaafari) (205)	Da'wa faction of former P.M. Ibrahim al-Jafari (who is running in Karbala). Was allied with ISCI in 2010.

Source: Reidar Vissar, "Iraq and Gulf Analysis."

Governance, Economic Resources, and Human Rights Issues

The continuing political crises discussed above have dashed most hopes that Iraq will become a fully functioning democracy with well-established institutions and rule of law. On the other hand, some experts assert that most Iraqis remain committed to the success of the existing governing structure and that all the outstanding disputes are soluble and that the success of Iraq's energy sector is mitigating these adverse factors.

Energy Sector and Economic Development

Adopting national oil laws has been considered key to developing and establishing rule of law and transparency in a key sector. Substantial progress appeared near in August 2011 when both the COR and the cabinet drafted the oil laws long in the works to rationalize the energy sector and clarify the rules for foreign investors. However, there were differences in their individual versions: the version drafted by the Oil and Natural Resources Committee was presented to the full COR on August 17, 2011. The cabinet adopted its separate version on August 28, 2011—a version that the KRG opposed as favoring too much "centralization" (i.e., Baghdad control) in the energy sector. The September 2012 KRG-Baghdad agreement on KRG oil exports included a provision to set up a six-member committee to review the different versions of the oil laws under consideration and decide which version to submit to the COR for formal consideration. However, no definitive movement on this issue has been announced since.

The continuing deadlock on oil laws has not, however, prevented growth in the crucial energy sector, which provides 90% of Iraq's budget. Iraq possesses a proven 143 billion barrels of oil. After long remaining below the levels achieved prior to the ouster of Saddam Hussein, Iraq's oil exports recovered to Saddam-era levels of about 2.1 million barrels per day by March 2012. Production reached the milestone 3 million barrels per day mark in February 2012, which Iraqi leaders trumpeted as a key milestone in Iraq's recovery, and expanded further to about 3.6 million barrels per day as of early April 2014. The growth in Iraq's exports has contributed to keeping the global oil market well supplied as the oil customers of neighboring Iran have cut back Iranian oil purchases in cooperation with U.S. sanctions on Iran.

Iraqi leaders say they want to increase production to over 10 million barrels per day by 2017. The International Energy Agency estimates more modest but still significant gains: it sees Iraq reaching 6 mbd of production by 2020 if it attracts \$25 billion in investment per year, and potentially 8 mbd by 2035.

What is helping the Iraqi production is the involvement of foreign firms, including BP, Exxon-Mobil, Occidental, and Chinese firms. China now buys about half of Iraq's oil exports. Chinese firms such as China National Petroleum Corp. (CNPC) are major investors in several Iraqi fields. U.S. firms assisted Iraq's export capacity by developing single-point mooring oil loading terminals to compensate for deterioration in Iraq's existing oil export infrastructure in Basra and Umm Qasr. Press reports in November 2013 say that Royal Dutch Shell and the Iraqi government are close to an \$11 billion deal for the firm to build a petrochemical production facility in southern Iraq. This would follow a \$17 billion 2012 deal between the company and Iraq to produce natural gas that were previously flared in Iraq's southern oil fields.

Oil Resources Fuels Growth

The growth of oil exports appears to be fueling a rapid expansion of the economy. Iraqi officials estimated that growth was about 9% for 2013. Press reports have noted the development of several upscale malls and other consequences of positive economic progress. The more stable areas of Iraq, such as the Shiite south, are said to be experiencing an economic boom as they accommodate increasing numbers of Shiite pilgrims to Najaf and Karbala. Iraqi officials said in mid-February 2013 that the country now has about \$105 billion in foreign exchange reserves. GDP reached about \$150 billion by the end of 2013. On September 18, 2013, Iraq launched a \$357 billion five-year National Development Plan, with projects across many different sectors. As discussed above, Iraq's cabinet and COR are debating a \$150 billion budget for 2014 but it has not been adopted because of disputes with the KRG over KRG oil export revenue issues.

General Human Rights Issues

The State Department human rights report for 2013, released February 27, 2014, largely repeated the previous years' criticisms of Iraq's human rights record. The report for 2013 states that a "culture of impunity" largely protected members of the security services and others in government from accountability or punishment for abuses.³⁴ The State Department report cited a wide range of human rights problems committed by Iraqi government security and law enforcement personnel—as well as by KRG security institutions—including unlawful killings;

³⁴ <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2013&dclid=220355#wrapper>

torture and other cruel punishments; poor conditions in prison facilities; denial of fair public trials; arbitrary arrest; arbitrary interference with privacy and home; limits on freedoms of speech, assembly, and association due to sectarianism and extremist threats; lack of protection of stateless persons; wide scale governmental corruption; human trafficking; and limited exercise of labor rights. Many of these same abuses and deficiencies are alleged in reports by outside groups such as Human Rights Watch.

On the other hand, U.S. officials assert that civil society organizations are expanding in size and authority to perform formal and informal oversight of human rights in Iraq. During a visit to Iraq on June 28-30, 2013, Deputy Secretary of State William Burns awarded the 2012 “Human Rights Defender Award” to an Iraqi human rights organization, the Hammurabi Human Rights Organization.

Trafficking in Persons

The State Department’s Trafficking in Persons report for 2013, released on June 19, 2013, places Iraq in “Tier 2.” That was an upgrade from the Tier 2 Watch List rating for Iraq for four previous years. The upgrade was a product of the U.S. assessment that Iraq is making “significant efforts” to comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. Previously, Iraq received a waiver from automatic downgrading to Tier 3 (which happens if a country is “watchlisted” for three straight years) because it had developed a plan to make significant efforts to meet minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and was devoting significant resources to that plan. On April 30, 2012, the COR enacted a law to facilitate elimination of trafficking in persons, both sexual and labor-related.

Media and Free Expression

While State Department and other reports attribute most of Iraq’s human rights difficulties to the security situation and factional infighting, apparent curbs on free expression appear independent of such factors. One issue that troubles human rights activists is a law, passed by the COR in August 2011, called the “Journalist Rights Law.” The law purports to protect journalists but left many of the provisions of Saddam-era libel and defamation laws in place. For example, the new law leaves in place imprisonment for publicly insulting the government. The State Department human rights reports have noted continuing instances of harassment and intimidation of journalists who write about corruption and the lack of government services. Much of the private media that operate is controlled by individual factions or powerful personalities. There are no overt government restrictions on access to the Internet.

In March 2012, some observers reported a setback to free expression, although instigated by militias or non-governmental groups, not the government. There were reports of 14 youths having been stoned to death by militiamen for wearing Western-style clothes and haircuts collectively known as “Emo” style. In late June 2012, the government ordered the closing of 44 new organizations that it said were operating without licenses. Included in the closure list were the BBC, Voice of America, and the U.S.-funded Radio Sawa. In early 2013, the COR adopted an “Information Crimes Law” to regulate the use of information networks, computers, and other electronic devices and systems. Human Rights Watch and other human rights groups criticized

that law as “violat[ing] international standards protecting due process, freedom of speech, and freedom of association,”³⁵ and the COR revoked it February 2013.

Corruption

The State Department human rights report for 2013, released February 27, 2014, repeats previous years’ reports that political interference and other factors such as tribal and family relationships regularly thwart the efforts of anti-corruption institutions, such as the Commission on Integrity (COI). The 2013 report says that corruption among officials across government agencies was widespread. A Joint Anti-Corruption Council, which reports to the cabinet, is tasked with implementing the government’s 2010-2014 Anti-Corruption Strategy. Another body is the Supreme Board of Audits, which monitors the use of government funds. The COR has its own Integrity Committee that oversees the executive branch and the governmental anti-corruption bodies. The KRG has its own separate anti-corruption institutions, including an Office of Governance and Integrity in the KRG council of ministers.

Labor Rights

A 1987 (Saddam era) labor code remains in effect, restricting many labor rights, particularly in the public sector. Although the 2005 constitution provides for the right to strike and form unions, the labor code virtually rules out independent union activity. Unions have no legal power to negotiate with employers or protect workers’ rights through collective bargaining.

Religious Freedom/Situation of Religious Minorities

The Iraqi constitution provides for religious freedom and the government generally respected religious freedom, according to the State Department’s report on International Religious Freedom for 2012, released May 20, 2013.³⁶ However, reflecting the conservative Islamic attitudes of many Iraqis, Shiite and Sunni clerics seek to enforce aspects of Islamic law and customs, sometimes coming into conflict with Iraq’s generally secular traditions as well as constitutional protections. On September 13, 2012, hundreds—presumably Shiites—took to the streets in predominantly Shiite Sadr City to protest the “Innocence of Muslims” video that was produced in the United States and set off protests throughout the Middle East in September 2012. In February 2014, the cabinet adopted a Shiite “personal status law” that would permit underage marriages—reportedly an attempt by Maliki to shore up electoral support among Shiite Islamists.

Concern about religious freedom in Iraq tends to center on government treatment of religious minorities—an issue discussed extensively in the State Department International Religious Freedom report. A major concern is the safety and security of Iraq’s Christian and other religious minority populations which are concentrated in northern Iraq as well as in Baghdad. These other groups include most notably the Yazidis, which number about 500,000-700,000; the Shabaks, which number about 200,000-500,000; the Sabeans, who number about 4,000; the Baha’i’s that number about 2,000; and the Kakai’s of Kirkuk, which number about 24,000. Since the 2003 U.S. intervention, more than half of the 1 million-1.5 million Christian population that was there

³⁵ Human Rights Watch. “Iraq’s Information Crimes Law: Badly Written Provisions and Draconian Punishments Violate due Process and Free Speech.” July 12, 2012.

³⁶ <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2012&dliid=208390#wrapper>

during Saddam's time have left. Recent estimates indicate that the Christian population of Iraq is between 400,000 and 850,000.

Violent attacks on members of the Christian community have tended to occur in waves. About 10,000 Christians in northern Iraq, fearing bombings and intimidation, fled the areas near Kirkuk during October-December 2009. On October 31, 2010, a major attack on Christians occurred when a church in Baghdad (Sayidat al-Najat Church) was besieged by militants and as many as 60 worshippers were killed. Partly as a result, Christian celebrations of Christmas 2010 were said to be subdued—following three years in which Christians had felt confident enough to celebrate that holiday openly. Several other attacks appearing to target Iraqi Christians have taken place since.

Even at the height of the U.S. military presence in Iraq, U.S. forces did not specifically protect Christian sites at all times, partly because Christian leaders do not want to appear closely allied with the United States. The State Department religious freedom report for 2011 said that during 2011, U.S. Embassy Baghdad designated a “special coordinator” to oversee U.S. funding, program implementation, and advocacy to address minority concerns.

Some Iraqi Assyrian Christians in the north blame the various attacks on them on ISIL, which operates in Nineveh Province and asserts that Christians are allies of the West. Some human rights groups allege that it is the Kurds who are committing abuses against Christians and other minorities in the Nineveh Plains, close to the KRG-controlled region. Kurdish leaders deny the allegations. To address this threat, some Iraqi Assyrian Christian groups have been advocating a “Nineveh Plains Province Solution,” in which the Nineveh Plains would be turned into a self-administering region, possibly its own province. Supporters of the idea claim such a zone would pose no threat to the integrity of Iraq, but others say the plan's inclusion of a separate Christian security force could set the scene for violence and confrontation. The Iraqi government appears to have adopted a form of the plan in its January 2014 announcement that the cabinet had decided to convert the Nineveh Plains into a new province.

Funding Issues. Appropriations for FY2008 and FY2009 each earmarked \$10 million in ESF to assist the Nineveh Plain Christians. The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2010 (P.L. 111-117) made a similar provision for FY2010, although focused on Middle East minorities generally and without a specific dollar figure mandated for Iraqi Christians. The State Department International Religious Freedom report for 2012 said that the United States has funded more than \$73 million for projects to support minority communities in Iraq.

Women's Rights

Iraq has a tradition of secularism and liberalism, and women's rights issues have not been as large a concern for international observers and rights groups as they have in Afghanistan or the Persian Gulf states, for example. Women serve at many levels of government, as discussed above, and are well integrated into the work force in all types of jobs and professions. By tradition, many Iraqi women wear traditional coverings but many adopt Western dress. On October 6, 2011, the COR passed legislation to lift Iraq's reservation to Article 9 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

Mass Graves

As is noted in the State Department report on human rights for 2012, the Iraqi government continues to uncover mass graves of Iraqi victims of the Saddam regime. This effort is under the authority of the Human Rights Ministry. The largest to date was a mass grave in Mahawil, near Hilla, that contained 3,000 bodies; the grave was discovered in 2003, shortly after the fall of the regime. In July 2012, a mass grave was discovered near Najaf, containing the bodies of about 500 Iraqi Shiites killed during the 1991 uprising against Saddam Hussein. Excavations of mass graves in Wasit and Dhi Qar provinces took place in April and May 2013, respectively.

Regional Relationships

Iraq's neighbors, as well as the United States, have significant interest in Iraq's stability and its regional alignments. Iraq's post-Saddam Shiite leadership has affinity for Iran, which supported the Iraqi Shiites in years of struggle against Saddam. Yet, Iraq also seeks to reintegrate into the Arab fold—of which Iran is not a part—after more than 20 years of ostracism following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990.

Iraq's reintegration into the Arab world took a large step forward with the holding of an Arab League summit in Baghdad during March 27-29, 2012. Iraq hailed the gathering as a success primarily because of the absence of major security incidents. However, only nine heads of state out of the 22 Arab League members attended, of which only one was a Persian Gulf leader (Amir Sabah al-Ahmad Al Sabah of Kuwait). On May 23-24, 2012, Iraq hosted nuclear talks between Iran and six negotiating powers.

Iraq is also sufficiently confident to begin offering assistance to other emerging Arab democracies. Utilizing its base of expertise in chemical weaponry during the Saddam Hussein regime, Iraq has provided some technical assistance to the post-Qadhafi authorities in Libya to help them clean up chemical weapons stockpiles built up by the Qadhafi regime. It donated \$100,000 and provided advisers to support elections in Tunisia after its 2011 revolution.³⁷

Iran

The United States has sought to limit Iran's influence over Iraq, even though many assert that it was U.S. policy that indirectly brought to power Iraqi Shiites long linked to Iran. Some argue that the withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Iraq represented a success for Iranian strategy. There has been no discernible change in Iran's influence in Iraq following the accession of the relatively moderate Iranian president Hassan Rouhani in August 2013.

Prime Minister Maliki has tried to calm fears that Iran exercises undue influence over Iraq, stressing that Iraqi nationalism resists Iranian influence. On Syria, Iraqi leaders have stressed that Iraq is neutral in the Syrian conflict and has not adopted Iran's position of openly supporting the Assad regime. Experts also note lingering distrust of Iran from the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war, in which an estimated 300,000 Iraqi military personnel (Shiite and Sunni) died. And Iraq's Shiite

³⁷ Tim Arango. "Iraq Election Official's Arrest Casts Doubt on Prospects for Fair Voting." *New York Times*, April 17, 2012.

clerics also resist Iranian interference and take pride in Najaf as a more prominent center of Shiite theology and history than is the Iranian holy city of Qom.

In a December 5, 2011, op-ed in the *Washington Post*, entitled “Building a Stable Iraq,” Maliki wrote:

Iraq is a sovereign country. Our foreign policy is rooted in the fact that we do not interfere in the affairs of other countries; accordingly, we oppose foreign interference in Iraqi affairs.

On the other hand, Maliki’s frequent visits to Tehran have increased U.S. concerns about his alignment with Iran. His most recent visit was on December 4, 2013, about ten days after Iran and the international community agreed to an interim deal on Iran’s nuclear program. Most experts assessed the visit as an effort by Maliki to judge the potential for Iran’s rebuilding of its relations with the international community. However, some observers speculated the visit might have been an effort by Maliki to arrange Tehran’s support for a third term as Prime Minister.

There are indications the Shiite-led government of Iraq has sought to shield pro-Iranian militants who committed past acts of violence against U.S. forces. In May 2012, Iraqi courts acquitted and Iraq released from prison a purported Hezbollah commander, Ali Musa Daqduq, although he subsequently remained under house arrest. He had been in U.S. custody for alleged activities against U.S. forces but, under the U.S.-Iraq Security Agreement (discussed below) he was transferred to Iraqi custody in December 2011. In July 2012, U.S. officials asked Iraqi leaders to review the Daqduq case or extradite him to the United States, but Iraq released him in November 2012 and he returned to Lebanon, despite U.S. efforts to persuade Iraq to keep him there.

Still others see Iranian influence as less political than economic, raising questions about whether Iran is using Iraq to try to avoid the effects of international sanctions. Some reports say Iraq is enabling Iran’s efforts by allowing it to interact with Iraq’s energy sector and its banking system. In July 2012, the Treasury Department imposed sanctions on the Elaf Islamic Bank of Iraq for allegedly conducting financial transactions with the Iranian banking system that violated the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2010 (CISADA, P.L. 111-195). Those sanctions were lifted in May 2013 when Elaf reduced its involvement in Iran’s financial sector. Iraq also is at least indirectly assisting U.S. policy toward Iran by supplying oil customers who, in cooperation with U.S. sanctions against Iran, are cutting back buys of oil from Iran. Iran’s exports to Iraq reached about \$10 billion from March 2012 to March 2013, a large increase from the \$7 billion in exports in the prior one year.

The Iraqi government treatment of the population of Camp Ashraf and Camp Hurriya, camps in which over 3,500 Iranian oppositionists (People’s Mojahedin Organization of Iran, PMOI) have resided, is another indicator of the government’s close ties to Iran. The residents of the camps accuse the Iraqi government of recent attacks on residents. This issue is discussed in substantial detail in CRS Report RL32048, *Iran: U.S. Concerns and Policy Responses*, by Kenneth Katzman.

Iran has periodically acted against other Iranian opposition groups based in Iraq. The Free Life Party (PJAK) consists of Iranian Kurds, and it is allied with the Kurdistan Workers’ Party that opposes the government of Turkey. Iran has shelled purported camps of the group on several occasions. Iran is also reportedly attempting to pressure the bases and offices in Iraq of such Iranian Kurdish parties as the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDP-I) and Komaleh.

Syria

One of the major disagreements between the United States and Iraq is on the issue of Syria. U.S. policy is to achieve the ouster of President Bashar Al Assad. Maliki's government, as noted above, stresses official "neutrality," but it is said to perceive that a post-Assad Syria would be dominated by Sunni Arabs. Maliki and his associates reportedly see the armed rebellion in Syria as aggravating the political unrest in Iraq by emboldening Iraqi Sunnis to escalate armed activities against the Maliki government.

Iraq refrained from sharp criticism of Assad for using military force against protests and it abstained on an Arab League vote in November 2011 to suspend Syria's membership. (Yemen and Lebanon were the only two "no" votes.) Perhaps to ensure Arab participation at the March 2012 Arab League summit in Baghdad, Iraq voted for a January 22, 2012, Arab League plan for a transition of power in Syria. As an indication of Iraq's policy of simultaneously engaging with the United States on the Syria issue, Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari has attended U.S.-led meetings of countries that are seeking Assad's ouster. At the conclusion of Maliki's meeting with President Obama on November 1, 2013, Iraq expressed support for the "Geneva II" meeting scheduled for January 22, 2014 to try to arrange a political transition in Syria.

An issue that has divided Iraq and the United States since August 2012 has been Iraq's reported permission for Iranian arms supplies to overfly Iraq en route to Syria.³⁸ Iraq has searched a few of these flights, particularly after specific high-level U.S. requests to do so, but has routinely allowed the aircraft to proceed after finding no arms aboard, sometimes because the Iranian aircraft had already dropped off their cargo in Syria. Instituting regular inspections of these flights was a major focus of the March 24, 2013, visit of Secretary of State Kerry to Baghdad, but the Iraqi leadership—perhaps in an effort to speed up U.S. arms deliveries—has argued that Iraq lacks the air defense and aircraft to interdict the Iranian flights. The March 2013 Secretary Kerry visit reportedly resulted in an agreement for the United States to provide Iraq with information on the likely contents of the Iranian flights in an effort to prompt Iraqi reconsideration of its position. U.S. officials said in late 2013 that the overflights appear to be diminishing in frequency.

As further indication of Maliki's support for Assad, on February 20, 2013, the Iraqi cabinet approved construction on a natural gas pipeline that will traverse Iraq and deliver Iranian gas to Syria. The project is potentially sanctionable under the Iran Sanctions Act that provides for U.S. penalties on projects that help Iran develop its energy sector, including natural gas.

Aside from official Iraqi policy, the unrest in Syria has generated a scramble among Iraqi factions to affect the outcome there. As noted above, ISIL operates on both sides of the border and each branch assists the other.³⁹ On March 4, 2013, suspected ISIL members on the Iraq side of the border killed 48 Syrian military personnel, and their Iraqi military escorts; the Syrians had fled a battle on the border into Iraq and were ambushed while being transported south within Iraq pending repatriation to Syria. On December 11, 2012, the United States designated a Syrian jihadist rebel group, the Al Nusrah Front, as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO), asserting that it is an alias of ISIL. At the same time, as noted above, Iraqi Shiite militiamen from groups discussed above have gone to Syria to fight on behalf of the Assad regime.

³⁸ Kristina Wong, "Iraq Resists U.S. Prod, Lets Iran Fly Arms to Syria." *Washington Times*, March 16, 2012.

³⁹ Sahar Issa. "Iraq Violence Dips Amid Rise in Syria." *Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 21, 2012.

The KRG appears to be assisting those Syrian Kurds who have joined the revolt against Assad. The KRG reportedly has been training Syrian Kurdish militia forces to prepare them to secure an autonomous Kurdish area if Assad loses control of the area. In August 2013, in response to fighting between the Syrian Kurds and Syrian Islamist rebel factions, Barzani threatened to deploy KRG peshmerga to help the Syrian Kurds—but no Iraqi Kurdish peshmerga have been sent. Still, many experts assert that the threat could have been the trigger for a series of bombings in normally safe Irbil on September 29, 2013. Six Kurdish security forces who guarded the attacked official buildings were killed.

Turkey

Turkey's policy toward Iraq has historically focused almost exclusively on the Iraqi Kurdish insistence on autonomy and possible push for independence—sentiments that Turkey apparently fears could embolden Kurdish oppositionists in Turkey. The anti-Turkey Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) has long maintained camps inside Iraq, along the border with Turkey. Turkey continues to conduct periodic bombardments and other military operations against the PKK encampments in Iraq. In October 2011, Turkey sent ground troops into northern Iraq to attack PKK bases following the killing of 24 Turkish soldiers by the PKK. However, suggesting that it has built a pragmatic relationship with the KRG, Turkey has emerged as the largest outside investor in northern Iraq and has built a close political relationship with the KRG as well.

As Turkey's relations with the KRG have deepened, relations between Turkey and the Iraqi government have worsened, although there are signs of Baghdad-Ankara reconciliation. Turkey's provision of refuge for Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi has been a source of tension; Maliki unsuccessfully sought his extradition for trial. On August 2, 2012, Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu visited the disputed city of Kirkuk, prompting a rebuke from Iraq's Foreign Ministry that the visit constituted inappropriate interference in Iraqi affairs.

In an effort to improve relations, Davutoglu visited Baghdad in mid-November 2013 and, aside from meeting Maliki and other Iraqi leaders, visited Najaf and Karbala—Iraqi cities holy to Shiites. That visit appeared intended to signal Turkish evenhandedness with regard to sectarian disputes in Iraq, as well as a willingness to minimize any dispute over KRG oil exports through Turkey. During that visit, Maliki reportedly proposed the two develop a “north-south” energy corridor through which Iraqi energy exports could flow to Europe via Turkey. Davutoglu apparently did not commit or object to that proposal. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Brett McGurk testified before the House Foreign Affairs Committee on November 13, 2013, that the United States supports that concept as well as another export pipeline that would carry Iraqi oil to Jordan's Red Sea outlet at Aqaba.

Gulf States

Iraq has reduced tensions with several of the Sunni-led Persian Gulf states who have not fully accommodated themselves to the fact that Iraq is now dominated by Shiite factions. All of the Gulf states were represented at the March 27-29, 2012, Arab League summit in Baghdad summit but Amir Sabah of Kuwait was the only Gulf head of state to attend. Qatar sent a very low-level delegation, which it said openly was meant as a protest against the Iraqi government's treatment of Sunni Arab factions.

Saudi Arabia had been widely criticized by Iraqi leaders because it has not opened an embassy in Baghdad, a move Saudi Arabia pledged in 2008 and which the United States has long urged. This issue faded somewhat after February 2012, when Saudi Arabia announced that it had named its ambassador to Jordan, Fahd al-Zaid, to serve as a non-resident ambassador to Iraq concurrently—although still not opening an embassy in Baghdad. The other Gulf countries have opened embassies and all except the UAE have appointed full ambassadors to Iraq.

The government of Bahrain, which is mostly Sunni, also fears that Iraq might work to empower Shiite oppositionists who have demonstrated for a constitutional monarchy during 2011. Ayatollah Sistani is revered by many Bahraini Shiites, and Iraqi Shiites have demonstrated in solidarity with the Bahraini opposition, but there is no evidence that Iraq has had any direct role in the Bahrain unrest.

Kuwait

The relationship with Kuwait has always been considered difficult to resolve because of the legacy of the 1990 Iraqi invasion. However, greater acceptance of the Iraqi government was demonstrated by the visit of Kuwait's then prime minister to Iraq on January 12, 2011. Maliki subsequently visited Kuwait on February 16, 2011, and, as noted above, the Amir of Kuwait attended the Arab League summit in Baghdad in March 2012. The Prime Minister of Kuwait visited in mid-June 2013, which led to an agreement to remove the outstanding issues of Kuwaiti persons and property missing from the Iraqi invasion from U.N. Security Council (Chapter VII) supervision to oversight by UNAMI under Chapter VI of the U.N. Charter. This transition was implemented by U.N. Security Council Resolution 2107 of June 27, 2013. The two countries have also resolved the outstanding issues of maintenance of border demarcation. In late October 2013, the Iraqi cabinet voted to allow Kuwait to open consulates in Basra and Irbil.

The resolution of these issues follows the U.N. Security Council passage on December 15, 2010, of Resolutions 1956, 1957, and 1958. These resolutions had the net effect of lifting most Saddam-era sanctions on Iraq, although the U.N.-run reparations payments process remains intact (and deducts 5% from Iraq's total oil revenues). As of the end of December 2012, a U.N. Compensation Commission set up under Security Council Resolution 687 has paid \$38.8 billion to claimants from the 1990-1991 Iraqi occupation of Kuwait, with an outstanding balance of \$13.6 billion to be paid by April 2015. These issues are discussed in detail in CRS Report RS21513, *Kuwait: Security, Reform, and U.S. Policy*, by Kenneth Katzman.

U.S. Military Withdrawal and Post-2011 Policy

A complete U.S. military withdrawal from Iraq by the end of 2011 was a stipulation of the November 2008 U.S.-Iraq Security Agreement (SA), which took effect on January 1, 2009. Following the SA's entry into force, President Obama, on February 27, 2009, outlined a U.S. troop drawdown plan that provided for a drawdown of U.S. combat brigades by the end of August 2010, with a residual force of 50,000 primarily for training the Iraq Security Forces, to remain until the end of 2011. An interim benchmark in the SA was the June 30, 2009, withdrawal of U.S. combat troops from Iraq's cities. These withdrawal deadlines were adhered to.

Question of Whether U.S. Forces Would Remain Beyond 2011

During 2011, with the deadline for a complete U.S. withdrawal approaching, fears of expanded Iranian influence, and perceived deficiencies in Iraq's nearly 800,000 member security forces caused U.S. officials to seek to revise the SA to keep some U.S. troops in Iraq after 2011. Some U.S. experts feared the rifts among major ethnic and sectarian communities were still wide enough that Iraq could still become a "failed state" unless some U.S. troops remained. U.S. officials emphasized that the ongoing ISF weaknesses centered on lack of ability to defend Iraq's airspace and borders. Iraqi comments that it would be unable to execute full external defense until 2020-2024, reinforced those who asserted that a U.S. force presence was still needed.⁴⁰ Renegotiating the SA to allow for a continued U.S. troop presence required discussions with the Iraqi government and a ratification vote of the Iraqi COR.

Several high-level U.S. visits and statements urged the Iraqis to consider extending the U.S. troop presence. Maliki told visiting Speaker of the House John Boehner during an April 16, 2011, visit to Baghdad that Iraq would welcome U.S. training and arms after that time.⁴¹ Subsequent to Boehner's visit, Maliki, anticipating that a vote of the COR would be needed for any extension, stated that a request for U.S. troops might be made if there were a "consensus" among political blocs (which he later defined as at least 70% concurrence).⁴² This appeared to be an effort to isolate the Sadr faction, the most vocal opponent of a continuing U.S. presence. On August 3, 2011, major factions gave Maliki their backing to negotiate an SA extension. In September 2011, a figure of about 15,000 remaining U.S. troops, reflecting recommendations of the U.S. military, was being widely discussed.⁴³ The *New York Times* reported on September 7, 2011, that the Administration was considering proposing to Iraq to retain only about 3,000-4,000 forces, mostly in a training role.⁴⁴ Many experts criticized that figure as too low to carry out intended missions.

Decision on Full Withdrawal

The difficulty in the negotiations—partly a function of Sadrist opposition to a post-2011 U.S. presence—clarified on October 5, 2011 when Iraq issued a statement that Iraq would not extend the legal protections contained in the existing SA. That stipulation failed to meet the Defense Department requirements that U.S. soldiers not be subject to prosecution under Iraq's constitution and its laws. On October 21, 2011, President Obama announced that the United States and Iraq had agreed that, in accordance with the November 2008 Security Agreement (SA), all U.S. troops would leave Iraq at the end of 2011. With the formal end of the U.S. combat mission on August 31, 2010, U.S. forces dropped to 47,000, and force levels dropped steadily from August to December 2011. The last U.S. troop contingent crossed into Kuwait on December 18, 2011.

The subsequent Sunni unrest and violence has caused some to argue that the Administration should have pressed Iraqi leaders harder to allow a U.S. contingent to remain. Those who support the Administration view say that political crisis was likely no matter when the United States withdrew and that it is the responsibility of the Iraqis to resolve their differences.

⁴⁰ "Iraq General Says Forces Not Ready 'Until 2020.'" Agence France Presse, October 30, 2011.

⁴¹ Prashant Rao. "Maliki Tells US' Boehner Iraqi Troops Are Ready." *Agence France Presse*, April 16, 2011.

⁴² Aaron Davis. "Maliki Seeking Consensus on Troops." *Washington Post*, May 12, 2011.

⁴³ Author conversations with Iraq experts in Washington, DC, 2011.

⁴⁴ Eric Schmitt and Steven Lee Myers. "Plan Would Keep Military in Iraq Beyond Deadline." September 7, 2011.

Post-2011 U.S.-Iraq Security Relationship

After the withdrawal announcement, senior U.S. officials stated that the United States would be able to continue to help Iraq secure itself using programs commonly provided for other countries. Administration officials stressed that the U.S. political and residual security-related presence would be sufficient to exert influence and leverage to ensure that Iraq remained stable, allied to the United States, continuing to move toward full democracy, and economically growing and vibrant. At the time of the withdrawal, there were about 16,000 total U.S. personnel in Iraq, about half of which were contractors. Of the contractors, most were on missions to protect the U.S. Embassy and consulates, and other U.S. personnel and facilities throughout Iraq.

Office of Security Cooperation-Iraq (OSC-I)

The Office of Security Cooperation—Iraq (OSC-I), operating under the authority of the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, is the primary Iraq-based U.S. institution that interacts with the Iraqi military—primarily by administering the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) programs (U.S. arms sales to Iraq). OSC-I, funded with the Foreign Military Financing (FMF) funds discussed in the aid table below, is the largest U.S. security cooperation office in the world. It works out of the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad and five other locations around Iraq (Kirkuk Regional Airport Base, Tikrit, Besmaya, Umm Qasr, and Taji).

The total OCS-I personnel numbers over 3,500, but the vast majority are security and support personnel, most of which are contractors. Of the staff, about 175 are U.S. military personnel and an additional 45 are Defense Department civilians. About 46 members of the staff administer the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program and other security assistance programs such as the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program. Since 2005, DOD has administered 231 U.S.-funded FMS cases totaling \$2.5 billion, and 201 Iraq-funded cases totaling \$7.9 billion. There are a number of other purchase requests initiated by Iraq that, if they all move forward, would bring the estimated value of all Iraq FMS cases to nearly \$25 billion.⁴⁵

Major Arms Sales

The United States has been selling substantial quantities of arms to Iraq, both before and after the U.S. withdrawal, and before and after the 2014 ISIL-led uprising. A large part of the pre-U.S. withdrawal arms sale program to Iraq was for 140 M1A1 Abrams tanks. Deliveries began in August 2010 and were completed in August 2012. The tanks cost about \$860 million, of which \$800 million was paid out of Iraq's national funds. A year after the withdrawal, in December 2012, the U.S. Navy delivered two support ships to Iraq, which will assist Iraq's fast-attack and patrol boats that secure its offshore oil platforms and other coastal and offshore locations. The United States also has sold Iraq equipment that its security forces can use to restrict the ability of insurgent and terrorist groups to move contraband across Iraq's borders and checkpoints (RAPISCAN system vehicles), at a cost of about \$600 million. Some refurbished air defense guns were provided gratis as excess defense articles (EDA). Since late 2013, nearly 600 HELLFIRE missiles for use on Iraq's propeller-driven aircraft, have been rushed to Iraq in the context of the ISIL-led insurrection, as discussed above.

⁴⁵ Iraq Signs Arms Deals Worth \$4.2 Billion. *Washington Post*, October 10, 2012; Tony Capaccio. "Iraq Seeks Up to 30 General Dynamics Stryker Vehicles." *Bloomberg News*, November 19, 2012.

F-16s. The largest FMS case is the sale of 36 U.S.-made F-16 combat aircraft to Iraq, notified to Congress in two equal tranches, the latest of which was made on December 12, 2011 (Transmittal No. 11-46). The total value of the sale of 36 F-16s is up to \$6.5 billion when all parts, training, and weaponry are included. The first deliveries of the aircraft are scheduled for September 2014, although Iraqi officials—including Maliki during his visit to Washington, DC, in late October 2013—say that accelerating the deliveries would facilitate Iraqi efforts to inspect Iranian overflights to Syria. Some experts and Iraqi politicians, particularly the Kurds, called for withholding the F-16 deliveries unless Maliki recommits to power-sharing with Sunni and Kurdish leaders, loosens ties to Iran, and fully cooperates with U.S. policy on Syria. Iraq’s Kurdish leaders have long argued that Maliki could use the F-16s against domestic opponents. The late 2013-early 2014 ISIL uprising have virtually ensured the delivery will go forward.

Apache Attack Helicopters and Stingers. In order to secure its airspace and to combat ISIL, in 2013 Iraq requested to purchase from the United States the Integrated Air Defense System and Apache attack helicopters, with a total sale value of about \$10 billion.⁴⁶ The sale of the Air Defense system was notified to Congress on August 5, 2013, with a value of \$2.4 billion, and includes 681 Stinger shoulder held units, 3 Hawk anti-aircraft batteries, and other equipment. On that day, and in the preceding week, DSCA notified about \$2.3 billion worth of other sales to Iraq of Stryker nuclear, chemical, and biological equipment reconnaissance vehicles, 12 Bell helicopters, the Mobile Troposcatter Radio System, and maintenance support. The provision of Apaches involves the lease of six of the helicopters, with an estimated cost of about \$1.37 billion, and the sale of 24 more, with an estimated value of \$4.8 billion. The six to be leased might arrive later in 2014 and the 24 to be sold would be delivered by 2017. As noted above, the provision of the Apaches was held up by some in Congress until the 2014 ISIL-led insurrection that created an apparent acute need for the system.

Drones. The United States has sold Iraq several unmanned aerial vehicles that perform surveillance, for example of ISIL camps in western Anbar Province. The systems provided including ten “Scaneagle” aerial vehicles.⁴⁷

Non-U.S. Sales

Perhaps to hedge against a potential U.S. cutoff, Iraq seeks to diversify its arms supplies. Maliki visited Russia on October 8, 2012, and signed deals for Russian arms worth about \$4.2 billion. In early November 2013, Russia delivered four Mi-35 attack helicopters to Iraq. Iraq might also buy MiG fighter jets in the future, according to press reports. In mid-October 2012, Iraq agreed to buy 28 Czech-made military aircraft, a deal valued at about \$1 billion.⁴⁸ On December 12, 2013, South Korea signed a deal to export 24 FA-50 light fighter jets to Iraq at an estimated cost of \$1.1 billion; the aircraft will be delivered between 2015 and 2016.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ John Hudson. “Iraqi Ambassador: Give Us Bigger Guns, And Then We’ll Help on Syria.” July 17, 2013.

⁴⁷ <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20140106/DEFREG02/301060019/US-Speeds-Up-Drone-Missile-Deliveries-Aid-Iraq>

⁴⁸ Adam Schreck. “Iraq Presses US For Faster Arms Deliveries.” Yahoo.com, October 18, 2012.

⁴⁹ Defense News. December 12, 2013.

Police Development Program

A separate program is the Police Development Program, the largest program that transitioned from DOD to State Department lead, using International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INCLE) funds. However, Iraq's drive to emerge from U.S. tutelage produced apparent Iraqi disinterest in the PDP. By late 2012, it consisted of only 36 advisers, about 10% of what was envisioned as an advisory force of 350, and it is being phased out entirely during 2013. Two facilities built with over \$200 million in U.S. funds (Baghdad Police College Annex and part of the U.S. consulate in Basra) are to be turned over the Iraqi government by December 2012. Some press reports say there is Administration consideration of discontinuing the program entirely.⁵⁰

Other Security Assistance and Training Programs

In addition to administering arms sales to Iraq, OSC-I conducts train and assist programs for the Iraq military. Because the United States and Iraq have not concluded a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) document that would grant legal immunities to U.S. military personnel, the 160 OSC-I personnel involved in these programs are mostly contractors. They train Iraq's forces on counterterrorism and naval and air defense. Some are "embedded" with Iraqi forces as trainers not only tactically, but at the institutional level by advising Iraqi security ministries and its command structure.

As Sunni unrest has increased since early 2012, Iraq has sought additional security cooperation with the United States. On August 19, 2012, en route to a visit to Iraq, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Martin Dempsey said that "I think [Iraqi leaders] recognize their capabilities may require yet more additional development and I think they're reaching out to us to see if we can help them with that."⁵¹ Aside from accelerated delivery of U.S. arms to be sold,⁵² Iraq reportedly expressed to Dempsey interest in expanded U.S. training of the ISF and joint exercises. After the Dempsey visit, it was reported that, at the request of Iraq, a unit of Army Special Operations forces had deployed to Iraq to advise on counterterrorism and help with intelligence, presumably against AQ-I/ISIL.⁵³ (These forces presumably are operating under a limited SOFA or related understanding crafted for this purpose.) Other reports suggest that Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) paramilitary forces had, as of late 2012, largely taken over some of the DOD mission of helping Iraqi counter-terrorism forces (Counter-Terrorism Service, CTS) against ISIL in western Iraq.⁵⁴ Part of the reported CIA mission is to also work against ISIL in Syria.

During December 5-6, 2012, Under Secretary of Defense for Policy James Miller and acting Under Secretary of State for International Security Rose Gottemoeller visited Iraq and a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed with acting Defense Minister Sadoun Dulaymi. The five year MOU provides for:

- high level U.S.-Iraq military exchanges

⁵⁰ Tim Arango. "U.S. May Scrap Costly Efforts to Train Iraqi Police." *New York Times*, May 13, 2012.

⁵¹ "U.S. Hopes For Stronger Military Ties With Iraq: General" Agence France-Presse, August 19, 2012.

⁵² Dan De Luce. "U.S. 'Significant' in Iraq Despite Troop Exit: Dempsey." Agence France-Presse, August 21, 2012.

⁵³ Tim Arango. "Syrian Civil War Poses New Peril For Fragile Iraq." *New York Times*, September 25, 2012.

⁵⁴ Adam Entous et al. "CIA Ramps Up Role in Iraq." *Wall Street Journal*, March 12, 2013.

- professional military education cooperation
- counter-terrorism cooperation
- the development of defense intelligence capabilities
- joint exercises

The MOU appeared to address many of the issues that have hampered OSC-I from performing the its mission to its full potential. The MOU also reflects some of the more recent ideas put forward, such as joint exercises.

The concept of enhanced U.S.-Iraq cooperation gained further consideration in mid-2013. In June 2013, General Dempsey, said that the United States was ooking for ways to improve the military capabilities of Iraq and Lebanon, two countries extensively affected by the Syria conflict. He added that enhanced assistance could involve dispatching training teams and accelerating sales of weapons and equipment. During his August 2013 visit to Washington D.C, conducted primarily to attend meetings of the U.S.-Iraq Political and Diplomatic Joint Coordination Committee (JCC), Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari indicated that Iraq wants to expand security cooperation with the United States to enhance ISF capability. His visit came several weeks after a major insurgent attack on July 21, 2013, against the Abu Ghraib prison outside Baghdad that caused many experts to say that the lapsing of U.S.-Iraq security cooperation had caused ISF proficiency to deteriorate.

During his November 1, 2013, meeting with President Obama, Maliki reportedly discussed enhanced security cooperation, including expanded access to U.S. intelligence, with U.S. officials, including President Obama and Secretary of Defense Hagel.⁵⁵ The joint statement issued at the conclusion of Maliki's meeting with President Obama did not specify any U.S. commitments to this level of cooperation, but did express a "shared assessment of al Qaida affiliated groups threatening Iraq." The joint statement indicated that Iraq has a "comprehensive strategy" to isolate AQ-I/ISIL through "coordinated security, economic, and political measures," appearing to adopt U.S. urgings for a political solution in addition to security measures targeted at militant groups in Iraq. Prior to the November 1 meeting, six Senators signed a letter to President Obama expressing concerns about broadening strategic relations with Iraq in light of Maliki's policies toward his domestic opponents. Some members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the House Foreign Affairs Committee met with Maliki during his visit and reportedly expressed similar concerns to him directly.⁵⁶

In the context of the ISIL-led insurrection in early 2014, OSC-I has stepped up "non-operational" training with Iraqi counterterrorism units, as testified by Deputy Assistant Secretary McGurk on February 5, 2014. If a SOFA is agreed, some of these missions could be performed by U.S. military personnel, presumably augmenting the effectiveness of the programs. However, there has been no direct U.S. combat assistance to the ISF in the context of the 2014 ISIL-led insurrection. On January 5, 2014, Secretary of State Kerry pointedly ruled out any deployment of U.S. troops to Iraq, saying that it would be left to the Iraqis themselves to handle the crisis. Instead, the U.S. military says it has sought to integrate the ISF into regional security exercises and structures that can augment the ISF's proficiency. The United States has arranged Iraq's participation in the regional Eager Lion military exercise series in Jordan. Iraq also participated in the U.S.-led

⁵⁵ Michael Gordon and Eric Schmitt. "As Security Deteriorates at Home, Iraqi Leader Arrives in U.S. Seeking Aid." *New York Times*, November 1, 2013.

⁵⁶ Author conversations with congressional staff and outside experts. October 2013.

international mine countermeasures exercise off Bahrain in 2013. In July 2013, the United States convened a strategic dialogue that includes Iraq, Jordan, and the United Arab Emirates, and Egypt joined the subsequent session of the dialogue the week of November 18, 2013.

Regional Reinforcement Capability

Should the United States decide to intervene directly to assist Iraq, it retains a significant capability in the Persian Gulf region to do so. The United States has about 35,000 military personnel in the region, including about 10,000 mostly U.S. Army forces in Kuwait, a portion of which are combat ready rather than purely support forces. There is also prepositioned armor there and in Qatar. There are about 7,000 mostly Air Force personnel in Qatar; 5,000 mostly Navy personnel in Bahrain; and about 5,000 mostly Air Force and Navy in the UAE, with very small numbers in Saudi Arabia and Oman. The rest are part of at least one aircraft carrier task force in or near the Gulf at any given time. The forces are in the Gulf under bilateral defense cooperation agreements with all six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states that give the United States access to military facilities to station forces and preposition some heavy armor.

The Diplomatic and Economic Relationship

In his withdrawal announcement, President Obama stated that, through U.S. assistance programs, the United States would be able to continue to develop all facets of the bilateral relationship with Iraq and help strengthen its institutions.⁵⁷ The bilateral civilian relationship was the focus of a visit to Iraq by Vice President Biden in early December 2011, just prior to the December 12, 2011, Maliki visit to the United States.

The cornerstone of the bilateral relationship is the Strategic Framework Agreement (SFA). The SFA, signed and entered into effect at the same time as the SA, presents a framework for long-term U.S.-Iraqi relations, and is intended to help orient Iraq's politics and its economy toward the West and the developed nations, and reduce its reliance on Iran or other regional states. The SFA sets up a Higher Coordination Committee (HCC) and as an institutional framework for high-level U.S.-Iraq meetings, and subordinate Joint Coordinating Committees. No meeting of the HCC was held in 2012, but Foreign Minister Zebari's August 2013 visit was in conjunction with one of the JCCs. During Maliki's October 29-November 1, 2013, visit, the HCC was convened—the fourth meeting of the HCC since the SFA was signed.

The SFA provides for the following (among other provisions):

- U.S.-Iraq cooperation “based on mutual respect,” and that the United States will not use Iraqi facilities to launch any attacks against third countries, and will not seek permanent bases.
- U.S. support for Iraqi democracy and support for Iraq in regional and international organizations.
- U.S.-Iraqi dialogue to increase Iraq's economic development, including through the Dialogue on Economic Cooperation and a Trade and Investment Framework

⁵⁷ Remarks by the President on Ending the War in Iraq,” <http://www.whitehouse.gov>, October 21, 2011.

Agreement (TIFA). The United States and Iraq announced on March 6, 2013, that a bilateral TIFA had been finalized.

- Promotion of Iraq's development of its electricity, oil, and gas sector.
- U.S.-Iraq dialogue on agricultural issues and promotion of Iraqi participation in agricultural programs run by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and USAID.
- Cultural cooperation through several exchange programs, such as the Youth Exchange and Study Program and the International Visitor Leadership Program. The joint statement following Maliki's meeting with President Obama said that nearly 1,000 Iraqi students were studying in the United States and that the two sides had a "shared commitment" to increase that number and to increase cultural, artistic, and scientific exchanges.

State Department-run aid programs are intended to fulfill the objectives of the SFA, according to State Department budget documents. These programs are implemented mainly through the Economic Support Fund, and the State Department budget justification for foreign operations for FY2014 indicates that most U.S. economic aid to Iraq for FY2014 will go to programs to promote democracy, adherence to international standards of human rights, rule of law, and conflict resolution. Programs funded by the State Department Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL) will focus on rule of law, moving away from previous use of INL funds for police training. Funding will continue for counterterrorism operations (NADR funds), and for anti-corruption initiatives.

U.S. officials stress that the United States does not bear the only burden for implementing the programs above, in light of the fact that Iraq is now a major oil exporter. For programs run by USAID in Iraq, Iraq matches one-for-one the U.S. funding contribution.

The State Department as Lead Agency

Virtually all of the responsibility for conducting the bilateral relationship falls on the State Department, which became the lead U.S. agency in Iraq as of October 1, 2011. With the transition completed, the State Department announced on March 9, 2012, that its "Office of the Iraq Transition Coordinator" had closed. In July 2011, as part of the transition to State leadership in Iraq, the United States formally opened consulates in Basra, Irbil, and Kirkuk. An embassy branch office was considered for Mosul but cost and security issues kept the U.S. facility there limited to a diplomatic office. The Kirkuk consulate closed at the end of July 2012 due in part to security concerns, as well as to save costs. As reflected in its FY2014 budget request, the State Department is planning to replace the U.S. consulate in Irbil with a New Consulate Compound in Irbil. The FY2014 Consolidated Appropriation, P.L. 113-76 provides \$250 million for that purpose. The Ambassador in Iraq is Robert Stephen Beecroft, who was confirmed by the Senate in September 2012.

The size and cost of the U.S. civilian presence in Iraq is undergoing reduction. U.S. officials said in mid-2012 that the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, built at a cost of about \$750 million, carries too much staff relative to the needed mission. From nearly 17,000 personnel at the time of the completion of the U.S. withdrawal at the end of 2011, the number of U.S. personnel in Iraq fell to

about 10,000 in mid-2013 and has fallen to about 5,500 at the end of 2013.⁵⁸ Of the U.S. personnel in Iraq, about 1,000 are U.S. diplomats or other civilian employees of the U.S. government.⁵⁹ There have been no U.S. casualties in Iraq since the troop withdrawal.

As shown in **Table 4** below (in the note), the State Department request for operations (which includes costs for the Embassy as well as other facilities and all personnel in Iraq) is about \$1.18 billion for FY2014—less than half the \$2.7 billion requested for FY2013, and down 66% from the \$3.6 billion provided in FY2012. FY2012 was considered a “transition year” to State Department leadership, requiring high start-up costs.

No Sanctions Impediments

As the U.S.-Iraq relationship matures, some might focus increasingly on U.S.-Iraq trade and U.S. investment in Iraq. After the fall of Saddam Hussein, all U.S. economic sanctions against Iraq were lifted. Iraq was removed from the “terrorism list,” and the Iraq Sanctions Act (Sections 586-586J of P.L. 101-513), which codified a U.S. trade embargo imposed after Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait, was terminated. As noted above in the section on the Gulf states, in December 2010, a series of U.N. Security Council resolutions removed most remaining “Chapter VII” U.N. sanctions against Iraq, with the exception of the reparations payments to Kuwait. The lifting of U.N. sanctions allows any country to sell arms to Iraq. Iraq still is required to comply with international proliferation regimes that bar it from reconstituting Saddam-era weapons of mass destruction programs. On October 24, 2012, Iraq demonstrated its commitment to compliance with these restrictions by signing the “Additional Protocol” of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Because sanctions have been lifted, there are no impediments to U.S. business dealings with Iraq.

⁵⁸ Ernesto Londono. “U.S. Clout Wanes in Iraq.” *Washington Post*, March 24, 2013.

⁵⁹ Tim Arango. “U.S. Plans to Cut Its Staff by Half at Iraq Embassy.” *New York Times*, February 8, 2012.

Table 3. March 2010 COR Election: Final, Certified Results by Province

Province	Elected Seats in COR	Results
Baghdad	68	Maliki: 26 seats; Iraqiyya: 24 seats; INA: 17 seats; minority reserved: 2 seats
Nineveh (Mosul)	31	Iraqiyya: 20; Kurdistan Alliance: 8; INA: 1; Accordance: 1; Unity (Bolani): 1; minority reserved: 3
Qadisiyah	11	Maliki: 4; INA: 5; Iraqiyya: 2
Muthanna	7	Maliki: 4; INA: 3
Dohuk	10	Kurdistan Alliance: 9; other Kurdish lists: 1; minority reserved: 1
Basra	24	Maliki: 14; INA: 7; Iraqiyya: 3
Anbar	14	Iraqiyya: 11; Unity (Bolani): 1; Accordance: 2
Karbala	10	Maliki: 6; INA: 3; Iraqiyya: 1
Wasit	11	Maliki: 5; INA: 4; Iraqiyya: 2
Dhi Qar	18	Maliki: 8; INA: 9; Iraqiyya: 1
Sulaymaniyah	17	Kurdistan Alliance: 8; other Kurds: 9
Kirkuk (Tamim)	12	Iraqiyya: 6; Kurdistan Alliance: 6
Babil	16	Maliki: 8; INA: 5; Iraqiyya: 3
Irbil	14	Kurdistan Alliance: 10; other Kurds: 4
Najaf	12	Maliki: 7; INA: 5
Diyala	13	Iraqiyya: 8; INA: 3; Maliki: 1; Kurdistan Alliance: 1
Salahuddin	12	Iraqiyya: 8; Unity (Bolani): 2; Accordance: 2
Maysan	10	Maliki: 4; INA: 6
Total Seats	325 (310 elected + 8 minority reserved + 7 compensatory)	Iraqiyya: 89 + 2 compensatory = 91 Maliki: 87 + 2 compensatory = 89 INA: 68 + 2 compensatory = 70 (of which about 40 Sadrist) Kurdistan Alliance: 42 + 1 compensatory = 43 Unity (Bolani): 4 Accordance: 6 other Kurdish: 14 minority reserved: 8

Source: Iraqi Higher Election Commission, March 26, 2010.

Total seats do not add to 325 total seats in the COR due to some uncertainties in allocations.

Table 4. U.S. Assistance to Iraq: FY2003-FY2015
(appropriations/allocations in millions of \$)

	FY '03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	Total 03-12	FY13	FY14	FY15 (request)
IRRF	2,475	18,389	—	10	—	—	—	—	—	—	20,874			
ESF	—	—	—	1,535.4	1,677	429	541.5	382.5	325.7	250	5,140	72.3	72.3	22.5
Democracy Fund	—	—	—	—	250	75	—	—	—	—	325			
IFTA (Treasury Dept. Asst.)	—	—	—	13.0	2.8	—	—	—	—	—	15.8			
NADR	—	—	3.6	—	18.4	20.4	35.5	30.3	29.8	32	170	31.1	31.1	23.86
Refugee Accounts (MRA and ERMA)	39.6	.1	—	—	78.3	278	260	316	280	—	1,100			
IDA	22	—	7.1	.3	45	85	51	42	17	—	269			
Other USAID Funds	470	—	—	—	—	23.8	—	—	—	—	494			
INCLE	—	—	—	91.4	170	85	20	702	114.6	137	1,320	13.5	13.5	11.0
FMF	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	850	850	471.3	471.3	250
IMET	—	1.2	—	—	1.1	—	2	2	1.7	2	10	1.1	1.7	1.4
DOD—ISF Funding	—	—	5,391	3,007	5,542	3,000	1,000	1,000	1,155	—	20,095			
DOD—Iraq Army	51.2	—	210	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	261			
DOD—CERP	—	140	718	708	750	996	339	263	44.0	—	3,958			
DOD—Oil Repair	802	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	802			
DOD—Business Support	—	—	—	—	50.0	50.0	74.0	—	—	—	174			
Total	3,859	18,548	6,329	5,365	8,584	5,042	2,323	2,738	1,968	1,519	56,259	589.4	590	308.7

Sources: FY2014 Consolidated Appropriation (P.L. 113-76); State Department FY2015 budget documents, and CRS calculations.

Notes: Table prepared by Curt Tarnoff, Specialist in Foreign Affairs, This table does not contain agency operational costs, except where these are embedded in the larger reconstruction accounts. IMET=International Military Education and Training; IRRF=Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund; INCLE=International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Fund; ISF=Iraq Security Force; NADR=Nonproliferation, Anti-Terrorism, Demining and Related; ESF=Economic Support Fund; IDA=International Disaster Assistance; FMF=Foreign Military Financing; ISF= Iraqi Security Forces. FY2015 request includes \$250 million to construct new consulate compound in Basra to support Iraq's oil and oil export industry expansion.

Table 5. Recent Democracy Assistance to Iraq
(in millions of current \$)

	FY2009	FY2010 (act.)	FY2011	FY2012
Rule of Law and Human Rights	32.45	33.3	16.5	29.75
Good Governance	143.64	117.40	90.33	100.5
Political Competition/Consensus-Building	41.00	52.60	30.00	16.25
Civil Society	87.53	83.6	32.5	55.5
Totals	304.62	286.9	169.33	202.0

Source: Congressional Budget Justification, March 2011. Figures for these accounts are included in the overall assistance figures presented in the table above. FY2013 and FY2014 ESF and INCLE-funded programs focus extensively on democracy and governance, rule of law, and anti-corruption.

Table 6. Election Results (January and December 2005)

Bloc/Party	Seats (Jan. 05)	Seats (Dec. 05)
United Iraqi Alliance (UIA, Shiite Islamist). 85 seats after departure of Fadilah (15 seats) and Sadr faction (28 seats) in 2007. Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq of Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim has 30; Da'wa Party (25 total: Maliki faction, 12, and Anizi faction, 13); independents (30).	140	128
Kurdistan Alliance—KDP (24); PUK (22); independents (7)	75	53
Iraqis List (secular, Allawi); added Communist and other mostly Sunni parties for Dec. vote.	40	25
Iraq Accord Front. Main Sunni bloc; not in Jan. vote. Consists of Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP, Tariq al-Hashimi, 26 seats); National Dialogue Council of Khalaf Ulayyan (7); General People's Congress of Adnan al-Dulaymi (7); independents (4).	—	44
National Iraqi Dialogue Front (Sunni, led by former Baathist Saleh al-Mutlak) Not in Jan. 2005 vote.	—	11
Kurdistan Islamic Group (Islamist Kurd) (votes with Kurdistan Alliance)	2	5
Iraqi National Congress (Chalabi). Was part of UIA list in Jan. 05 vote	—	0
Iraqis Party (Yawar, Sunni); Part of Allawi list in Dec. vote	5	—
Iraqi Turkomen Front (Turkomen, Kirkuk-based, pro-Turkey)	3	1
National Independent and Elites (Jan)/Risalyun (Message, Dec.) pro-Sadr	3	2
People's Union (Communist, non-sectarian); on Allawi list in Dec. vote	2	—
Islamic Action (Shiite Islamist, Karbala)	2	0
National Democratic Alliance (non-sectarian, secular)	1	—
Rafidain National List (Assyrian Christian)	1	1
Liberation and Reconciliation Gathering (Umar al-Jabburi, Sunni, secular)	1	3
Ummah (Nation) Party. (Secular, Mithal al-Alusi, former INC activist)	0	1
Yazidi list (small Kurdish, heterodox religious minority in northern Iraq)	—	1

Notes: Number of polling places: January: 5,200; December: 6,200; Eligible voters: 14 million in January election; 15 million in October referendum and December; Turnout: January: 58% (8.5 million votes)/ October: 66% (10 million)/December: 75% (12 million).

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