Iraq: Politics, Governance, and Human Rights

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Summary

Two years after the 2011 U.S. withdrawal from Iraq, sectarian divisions and the Sunni-led uprising in neighboring Syria have fueled a revival of radical Islamist Sunni Muslim insurgent groups that are attempting to undermine Iraq's stability. Iraq's Sunni Arab Muslims increasingly resent the 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. The rifts delayed some provincial elections during April-June 2013 and could affect the timing and viability of national elections for a new parliament and government set for April 30, 2014. Maliki is widely expected to seek to retain his post after that vote.

The violent component of Sunni unrest is spearheaded by the Sunni insurgent group Al Qaeda in Iraq, now also known by the name Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). The group is conducting attacks against Shiite neighborhoods, Iraqi Security Force (ISF) members, and Sunni supporters of Maliki with increasing frequency and lethality. It also reportedly is increasingly in control of territory in remote areas of overwhelmingly Sunni-inhabited provinces. To date, the 800,000-person ISF has countered the escalating violence without outside assistance. However, the violence has killed nearly 8,000 Iraqis in 2013—more than double the figure for all of 2012. And there are a growing number of reports that some Shiite militias have reactivated to retaliate for violence against Shiites.

U.S. forces left in December 2011 in line with a November 2008 bilateral U.S.-Iraq Security Agreement. Iraq refused to extend the presence of U.S. troops in Iraq, seeking to put behind it the period of U.S. political and military control, and U.S. influence over Iraq has apparently ebbed since. Program components of what were to be enduring, close security relations—extensive U.S. training for Iraq's security forces through an Office of Security Cooperation—Iraq (OSC-I) and a State Department police development program—languished during 2011-2013. However, Iraq continued to press to acquire sophisticated U.S. equipment such as F-16 combat aircraft, air defense equipment, and attack helicopters. During his visit to Washington, D.C. on October 29-November 1, 2013, Maliki pressed for accelerated U.S. arms sales as part of an expansion of U.S.-Iraq security cooperation to help Iraq deal with the growing violence. U.S. officials say they agree that AQ-I/ISIS is a threat to Iraqi and regional security and have expressed inclination to increase cooperation with the Maliki government against the group—although without enabling Maliki to use the cooperation against non-violent opponents.

The Administration and Congress seek to continue to cultivate Iraq as an ally in part to prevent Iraq from falling under the sway of Iran, with which the Maliki government has built close relations. Fearing that a change of regime in Syria will further embolden the Iraqi Sunni opposition, 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, Iraq's efforts to reestablish its place in the Arab world, and Maliki's need to work with senior Iraqi Sunnis 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. There has been a consensus among Iraqi elites since 2005 to give 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 threaten to return Iraq to a period of sectarian conflict.

After Saddam's regime was overthrown, the United Nation established a presence in the form of a 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 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 has been renewed every year since. U.N. Security Council Resolution 2110 of July 24, 2013, renewed the mandate for another year (until July 31, 2014). Its 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).

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 discontinued a tentative political transition process and appointed a non-sovereign Iraqi advisory body, the 25-member "Iraq Governing Council" (IGC). During that year, 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. That date met the TAL-specified deadline of June 30, 2004, for the end of the occupation period, which also laid out the elections roadmap discussed below.

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

Major Factions Dominate Post-Saddam Politics

The interim government appointed by the CPA was headed by a prime minister, Iyad al-Allawi, and a president, Sunni tribalist Ghazi al-Yawar. He is leader of the Iraq National Accord (INA), a secular, non-sectarian faction that had long opposed Saddam Hussein. Allawi is a Shiite Muslim but his supporters are mostly Sunni Arabs, including some former members of the Baath Party.

- *Da'wa Party*. The interim government was heavily influenced by parties and factions that had long campaigned to oust Saddam. These included long-standing anti-Saddam Shiite Islamist parties, such as the Da'wa Party and the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI), both of which were Iran-supported underground parties working to overthrow Saddam Hussein since the early 1980s. The largest faction of the Da'wa Party is led by Nuri al-Maliki, who displaced former leader Ibrahim al-Jaafari in 2006.

- *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.

- *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.

- *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 Constitution[2]

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.

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

- 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.

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

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 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, although permanent defense, interior, and national security ministers were not selected until June 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 empowerment 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]

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[3] "The Iraq Study Group Report." Vintage Books, 2006. The Iraq Study Group was funded by the conference report on (continued...)

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 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 continued attenuated levels of violence.

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.

Local Governance: Provincial Powers Law and 2009 Provincial Elections

In 2008, a "provincial powers law" (Law 21) was adopted to decentralize governance by delineating substantial powers for provincial (governorate) councils. 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. (This law was substantially revised by a law adopted in late June 2013 to give the provincial governments substantially more power, as discussed further below.)

The provincial elections had been planned for October 1, 2008, but were delayed when Kurdish restiveness over integrating Kirkuk into the KRG caused a presidential council veto of the July 22, 2008, draft of the required election law. That draft provided for equal division of power in

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(...continued)

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.

Kirkuk (among Kurds, Arabs, and Turkomans) until its status is finally resolved, a proposal strongly opposed by the Kurds because it would dilute their political 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. That draft was enacted—it provided for six reserved seats for minorities: Christian seats in Baghdad, Nineveh, and Basra; one seat for Yazidis in Nineveh; one seat for Shabaks in Nineveh; and one seat for the Sabean sect in Baghdad. The number of reserved seats for minorities was increased for the April 20, 2013, provincial elections.

In the January 31, 2009, 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. The average number of council seats per province was about 30,[4] down from a set number of 41 seats per province (except Baghdad) in the 2005-2009 councils. The Baghdad provincial council had 57 seats. The elections were conducted on an "open list" basis—voters were able to vote for a party slate, or for an individual candidate (although they also had to vote for that candidate's slate). This procedure strengthened the ability of political parties to choose who on their slate will occupy seats.[5] 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 vote totals were certified on March 29, 2009. Maliki's "State of Law Coalition" (a coalition composed of his Da'wa Party plus other mostly Shiite allies) was the clear winner, taking 126 out of the 440 seats available (28% of the seats). ISCI went from 200 council seats before the election to only 50, which observers attributed to its perceived close ties to Iran and its corruption. Iyad al-Allawi's faction won 26 seats, a gain of 8 seats, and a competing Sunni faction loyal to Tariq al-Hashimi won 32 seats, a loss of about 15 seats. 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.

Within 15 days of that (by April 13, 2009) the provincial councils began to convene to elect a provincial council chairperson and deputy chairperson. Within another 30 days after that (by May 12, 2009) the provincial councils selected (by absolute majority) a provincial governor and deputy governors. Although Maliki's State of Law coalition fared well, his party still needed to strike bargains with rival factions to form provincial administrations. The next 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

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[4] Each provincial council has 25 seats plus one seat per each 200,000 residents over 500,000.

[5] The threshold for winning a seat is the total number of valid votes divided by the number of seats up for election.

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 1. Major Coalitions for 2010 National Elections

State of Law Coalition (slate no. 337)	Led by Maliki and his Da'wa Party. Included Anbar Salvation Front of Shaykh Hatim al-Dulaymi, which is Sunni, and the Independent Arab Movement of Abd al-Mutlaq al-Jabbouri. 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, considered 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

While coalitions formed to challenge Maliki, disputes emerged over the ground rules for the election. 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. Because the election law can shape the election outcome by determining voter eligibility, COR size, and other factors, the major Iraqi communities were divided and the COR repeatedly missed self-imposed deadlines to pass it. 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 2** 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.[6] 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. The electoral process was at least partly intended to bring Sunni Arabs further into the political structure. This goal was jeopardized by a major dispute over candidate eligibility for the March 2010 elections. 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, a Shiite who was perceived as answerable to or 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. Among those disqualified was 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. Chalabi, a member of parliament as of the 2010 elections, initially replaced Lami, but Maliki later named the Minister for Human Rights to serve in that role concurrently. The JAC continues to vet candidates, and did so for the 2013 provincial elections.

Election and Results

There were about 6,170 total candidates spanning 85 coalitions that ran in the elections. The major blocs 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 2**, 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:

- Fifteen days after certification (by June 15, 2010), the new COR was to be seated and to elect a COR speaker and deputy speaker. (The deadline to convene was met, although, as noted, the COR did not elect a leadership team and did not meet again until November 11, 2010.)

- After electing a speaker, but with no deadline, the COR was to choose a president (by a two-thirds vote). (According to Article 138 of the Iraqi constitution, after this election, Iraq is to have a president and at least one vice president—the

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[6] Analysis of Iraq expert Reidar Visser. "The Hashemi Veto." http://gulfanalysis.wordpress.com/2009/11/18/the-hashemi-veto/.

"presidency council" concept was an interim measure that expired at the end of the first full-term government.)

- Within another 15 days, the largest COR bloc is tapped by the president to form a government.

- Within another 30 days (by December 25, 2010), the prime minister-designate is to present a cabinet to the COR for confirmation (by majority vote).

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. With talks on forming a government deadlocked through the summer, on October 1, 2010, Maliki received the backing of most of the 40 COR Sadrist deputies. Despite Maliki's reliance on Sadrist support, 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";[7] and (3) de-Baathification laws would be eased.

Second Full-Term Government (2010-2014) Formed[8]

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 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 as 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 Shahristani, 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).

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[7] Fadel, Leila and Karen DeYoung. "Iraqi Leaders Crack Political Deadlock." *Washington Post*, November 11, 2010.

[8] The following information is taken from Iraqi news accounts presented in http://www.opensource.gov.

- 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.

Post-U.S. Withdrawal Political Unraveling

The power-sharing agreement only temporarily muted, but did not resolve, the underlying differences among the major communities. Maliki's opponents have accused him of undermining the Irbil Agreement and seeking to concentrate power in his and his faction's hands. Critics assert that he has monopolized control of the key security ministries—Defense, Interior, and National Security (intelligence)—by appointing allies as acting ministers of those ministries. 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. 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 has 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.[9] In March 2012, Maliki also asserted governmental control over the Central Bank.

Political Crisis After U.S. Withdrawal/Arrest Warrant for Vice President

Political disputes among the major factions intensified as U.S. forces left Iraq. In November 2011, security forces arrested 600 Sunnis for involvement in an alleged coup plot. 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

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[9] Parker, Ned and Salar Jaff. "Electoral Ruling Riles Maliki's Rivals." *Los Angeles Times*, January 23, 2011.

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," and U.S. officials attempted to contain the crisis by intervening with the various political factions. The effort produced some results when Maliki arranged the release of some of the Baathists arrested in early 2012 and agreed to legal amendments to give provinces more autonomy over their budgets and the right of consent when national security forces are deployed.[10] (These concessions were included in a revised provincial powers law adopted by the COR in June 2013.) The concessions prompted Iraqiyya COR deputies and ministers to resume their duties by early February 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 durable solutions to the outstanding fundamental Sunni-Shiite-Kurdish issues. 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 threatened a vote of no-confidence against Maliki. By June 2012, these critics had collected signatures from 176 COR deputies to request a no-confidence vote. 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 to proceed with that vote.[11] The failed effort might have been due, at least in part, to Maliki's convincing the Sadrists to back out of the campaign, as well as to Maliki's simultaneous outreach to Sunni leaders. He reinstated deputy Prime Minister Saleh al-Mutlaq, for example.

Political Crisis Contributes to Reopening Sectarian Rift in 2013

Political disputes flared again after the widely respected political mediator President Talabani suffered a stroke on December 18, 2012. The day he 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. That action touched off anti-Maliki demonstrations in the Sunni cities of Anbar, Salahuddin, and Nineveh provinces, as well as in Sunni districts of Baghdad. Talabani remained in Germany for rehabilitation, and second Vice President Khudayr Khuzai has served as acting President, although there are indications Talabani might return to Iraq in early 2014 to resume his duties.

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 number 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

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[10] Tim Arango. "Iraq's Prime Minister Gains More Power After Political Crisis." *New York Times*, February 28, 2012.

[11] "Embattled Iraqi PM Holding On To Power for Now." Associated Press, June 12, 2012.

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.[12]

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 believe that the protest movement was emboldened by the Sunni-led rebellion in neighboring Syria.

Politically, the escalating Sunni unrest caused further rifts at the leadership level. The COR passed a law limiting Maliki to two terms (meaning he could not serve again after 2014 elections), although Iraq's Supreme Court struck that law down in mid-2013. Issawi resigned as Finance Minister and took refuge in Anbar province with Sunni tribal leaders, some of whom Maliki ordered arrested. In March 2013, Kurdish ministers suspended their participation in the central government. Maliki tried, without success to date, to mollify the Sunni leaders and protesters by forming a committee, headed by deputy Prime Minister Shahristani, to examine protester grievances and suggest reforms. He released some imprisoned Sunnis, including 300 released on January 14, 2013. On the other hand, he signaled that he might formally abandon the power-sharing arrangement and further reduce Sunni participation in the central government.

Escalation of Violence Since April 2013 Hawijah Incident

On April 23, 2013, three days after the first group of provinces voted, 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. In May 2013 Maliki shuffled his top security forces command, in part to sideline figures that Sunnis blame for ordering attacks on protesters.

Death Toll in 2013. Even as the major factions have tried to restore mutual trust, Sunni Arab attacks on government forces, Shiite gathering places, and even against other Sunnis cooperating with the government have escalated. Many of these attacks—particularly the simultaneous multiple-target attacks—are carried out by Al Qaeda in Iraq and affiliated militant groups, which appear to be deriving some measure of popular support from Sunnis resentful of Maliki's perceived efforts to marginalize the Sunni community politically and economically. According to the U.N. Assistance Mission-Iraq (UNAMI), about 8,000 Iraqis have been killed in 2013, of which all but about 1,000 were civilians, and the remainder were members of the ISF. This is more than double the death toll for all of 2010, and it is the highest total since the height of the

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[12] Author conversations with Human Rights Watch researchers, March 2013.

sectarian conflict in 2006-2007, although casualties are still about 60% below those levels. Still, some observers assess that the escalation and the character of the violence could lead to a reversion to the earlier period of sectarian conflict.

Tentative signs have emerged since the summer of 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.[13]

The violence has continued despite efforts at compromise. In June 2013 the COR revised the 2008 provincial powers law to give the provinces substantially more authority relative to the central government, including some control over 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.[14] In July 2013, the cabinet approved a package of reforms easing the de-Baathification laws—a key demand of the Sunni protesters. The reforms, if they become law, would allow many former Baathists to hold government positions. In addition, Maliki reportedly has sought to engage some of the Sunni leaders he formally sought to marginalize, including deputy Prime Minister Mutlaq and some members of Allawi's Iraqiyya faction. 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.[15]

April 2013 Provincial Elections Occur Amid the Tensions

The escalating violence affected, but did not derail, provincial elections scheduled for early 2013. 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. The deadline for party registration for the provincial elections was November 25, 2012, and 261 political entities registered. By a deadline of December 20, 2012, 50 coalitions registered to run. By a deadline of December 25, 2012, about 8,150 individual candidates had registered. The JAC excluded about 200 candidates for alleged Baathist ties, but that figure was lower than the number many Sunnis expected. The campaign period started on schedule on March 1, 2013.

The escalating violence affected the provincial elections. On March 19, 2013, the government postponed them in two Sunni provinces, Anbar and Nineveh, until June 20, 2013. The KRG set

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[13] Duraid Adnan. "18 Are Found Shot to Death After Abduction in Baghdad." *New York Times*, November 30, 2013.

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

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

September 21, 2013, to vote for Kurdistan National Assembly elections, but not a vote for any other posts, as discussed below.

The elections were postponed in some provinces because of the security situation but 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 shaped up as 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" (the name of its bloc in the COR), 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 Nujaifis (COR speaker and Nineveh governor), Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi, and Rafi al-Issawi. A third Sunni coalition is 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 a total of about 75 seats. Sadr's slate won a reported total of about 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. However, in Salahuddin, a local coalition headed by the governor of the province won a plurality.

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 expresses interest in working with the Maliki government. In Nineveh, where the Nujaifis 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.[16]

April 30, 2014, COR Elections

The escalating violence has the potential to disrupt the COR elections planned for 2014. However, Iraq is moving ahead with its preparations. 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 of which are in the KRG. The Kurdish factions are debating whether to compete as one alliance, as they have

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

in past elections; doing so would, according to many Kurdish experts, likely increase the number of seats won by Kurds.

Maliki reportedly has given indications to his allies and other senior Iraqis that he will seek to retain his prime ministership. In contrast to the 2010 elections, his strongest challenge appears to come from rival Shiite factions rather than from a large Sunni alliance such as Iraqiyya. Since 2010, the Iraqiyya bloc has largely fragmented into components led by various Sunni and other leaders, as discussed above. The Shiite faction of Moqtada Al Sadr, on the other hand, plans to try to mount a strong challenge against Maliki's State of Law slate and deny Maliki a third term. Sadr himself, in recent interviews, has criticized Maliki for failing to take adequate steps to heal the rifts with Sunni leaders and the Sunni population.

Sunni Insurgents: Al Qaeda in Iraq and Others

The 2012-2013 Sunni unrest is providing "political space" for long-standing violent Sunni elements to escalate attacks on the political system. The violent elements might be seeking to reinforce peaceful Sunni protesters; to undermine confidence in the ISF; to force Shiite ISF personnel out of Sunni areas; or to reignite the sectarian war that prevailed during 2006-2008. All of these motivations, in the view of the militants, could have the effect of destabilizing Maliki and his Shiite-led rule. To try to 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 primary Sunni militant group is Al Qaeda in Iraq, which currently operates under the name of the Islamic State of Iraq and Sham (Syria, ISIS). The leader of AQ-I/ISIS is Abu Bakr Al Baghdadi. U.S. officials estimated in November 2011 that there might be 800-1,000 AQ-I/ISIS members, of which some are involved in media or operations finance.[17] An antecedent of AQ-I/ISIS was named by the United States as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) in March 2004 and the designation applies to AQ-I/ISIS. AQ-I/ISIS appears primarily focused on influencing the future of Iraq and increasingly also Syria, although some past attacks in Jordan have been attributed to the group. In October 2012, Jordanian authorities disrupted an alleged plot by AQ-I/ISIS to bomb multiple targets in Amman, Jordan, possibly including the U.S. Embassy there. AQ-I/ISIS is extensively involved in the Syria conflict, as discussed later, and Baghdadi reportedly has relocated to Syria full time. 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/ISIS have escalated significantly since the Hawija incident of April 23, 2013. According to some experts, AQ-I/ISIS 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/ISIS attacks now span multiple cities.[18] As of late 2013, experts say that AQ-I/ISIS also has been asserting control of territory, particularly in restive and overwhelmingly Sunni Anbar province.[19] Press reports and Iraqi officials say the group maintains some training camps in the province,

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[17] Michael Schmidt and Eric Schmitt. "Leaving Iraq, U.S. Fears New Surge of Qaeda Terror." *New York Times*, November 6, 2011.

[18] Michael Knights. "Rebuilding Iraq's Counterterrorism Capabilities." *Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, July 31, 2013.

[19] Ben Van Heuvelen. "Al Qaeda-Linked Group Gaining Ground in Iraq." *Washington Post*, December 8, 2013.

particularly in areas close to the Syria border. A stark indication of AQ-I/ISIS's increased freedom of action came 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 about 800 prisoners, including several hundred purported AQ-I/ISIS members. Iraq recaptured or killed about 20% of those who escaped, but 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/ISIS is the strongest it has been since its peak in 2006.[20]

It is not known the extent to which Sunni oppositionists who have taken up arms against the government in April 2013 are working with AQ-I/ISIS, if at all. Doing so could tarnish the image of the demonstrators. Some experts say that AQ-I/ISIS is increasingly building alliances with Sunni tribal leaders and has adjusted its message in 2013 to try to win more Sunni political support. Other experts say that many Iraqi Sunni tribal leaders continue to shun AQ-I/ISIS and senior Sunni Iraqi political leaders, even those most opposed to Maliki, tend to forcefully denounce AQ-I/ISIS attacks. 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/ISIS, and downplayed the broader political perceptions of Sunnis as a source of unrest.[21]

Naqshabandi Order (JRTN)

Some groups that were prominent during the insurgency against U.S. forces remain allied with AQ-I/ISIS 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."[22] It is based primarily in Nineveh province. Prior to the escalation of Sunni violence in 2013, the JRTN was responsible 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 the Sunni demonstrations, 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.

Other Armed Sunni Groups: Sons of Iraq Fighters

One Sunni grievance aside from those discussed above 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/ISIS. The Iraqi government later promised them integration into the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) or government jobs. To date, about 70,000 have been integrated into the ISF or given civilian government jobs, while 30,000-40,000 continue 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 as an opponent—rather than supporter—of AQ-I/ISIS, in early 2013 the government increased their salaries by about 66% to $500 per month. The effort

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[20] Eileen Sullivan. "Official: Al-Qaida in Iraq Strongest Since 2006." Associated Press, November 14, 2013.

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

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

appears to have succeeded somewhat, in that few Sons of Iraq fighters have joined AQ-I/ISIS or other Sunni insurgent groups since Sunni anti-government activities escalated.

KRG-Central Government Disputes[23]

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. 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. The issues dividing the KRG and Baghdad include not only KRG autonomy but also disputes over territory and resources, particularly the ability of the KRG to export its oil.

Although mostly unified in their dealings with Baghdad, the Iraqi Kurds are divided between two main factions—the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, PUK, and the Kurdistan Democratic Party, KDP. The two have abided by a power sharing arrangement formalized in 2007. 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 in which the post was held by PUK senior figure Barham Salih. Masoud Barzani's son, Suroor, heads a KRG "national security council."

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.

KRG-Baghdad tensions have at times verged on boiling over. 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.[24] 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, calming tensions to some extent. Maliki made his first visit to Irbil in two years on June 10, 2013 and Barzani visited Bagdhad on July 7, 2013, Barzani's first since late 2010. The two sides subsequently established seven joint committees to try to resolve the major disputes between them.[25] 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 comes close to major conflict. In November 2012, a commercial dispute between an Arab and Kurd in

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

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

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

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. In June 2013, a mixed Arab-Kurdish unit of the ISF—"Brigade 16"—split and the KRG assumed de-facto control of the territory controlled by the Kurds of the brigade.

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.[26]

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 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.

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

However, 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 about $900 million in arrears due the international firms. However, that pact held only until late December 2012. The national budget adopted by the COR on March 7, 2013, allocated only $650 million to the companies exporting KRG oil; the Kurds had sought $3.5 billion for that purpose. Because of this provision, Kurdish members reportedly boycotted the budget vote.

As a consequence, the KRG is exporting well below its potential—it sends about 200,000 barrels per day by truck and a small pipeline to Turkey. The KRG currently has 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,[27] if export routes are available.

Related to the disputes over KRG oil exports is a broader disagreement over foreign firm involvement in the KRG energy sector. The October 2011 KRG signing of an energy development deal with U.S. energy giant Exxon-Mobil represents a further dimension of the energy row with Baghdad. The central government denounced the deal as illegal, in part because the oil fields involved are in or very close to disputed territories. The KRG has sought to defuse this consideration by saying that if the territory of the oil fields is subsequently judged to be part of central government-administered territory, then the revenues would be reallocated accordingly. The central government threatened to cancel the firm's existing contract to develop the West Qurna oil field near Basra, but decided instead on February 13, 2012, to prevent Exxon Mobil from bidding for new work in Baghdad-controlled Iraq. On March 17, 2012, Baghdad claimed that Exxon-Mobil had frozen the KRG contract, but the KRG denies the company has stopped work in the KRG region, and Exxon began production in the KRG in late 2012.[28] Further disputes occurred over a July 2012 KRG deal with Total SA of France; in August 2012 the central government told Total SA to either terminate its arrangement with the KRG or give up work on the central government Halfaya field.

Turkish Dimension

The growing energy relationship between Turkey and the KRG energy sector adds tension to the KRG-Baghdad relationship, and causes strains between Turkey and Baghdad. In March 2013, the KRG and Turkey discussing a broad energy deal that would include Turkish investment in drilling for oil and gas in the KRG-controlled territory, and the construction of a second oil pipeline linking KRG-controlled fields to a pumping station on the Turkish side of the border.[29] That latter pipeline is said by energy experts to be near completion, and Baghdad reportedly questions Turkey's assertions that any proceeds from oil exports through that route would go to the central government for distribution. In response to the "second pipeline" project, the Iraqi government has blacklisted Turkey's state energy pipeline firm (TPAO) from some work in southern Iraq. The broader KRG-Turkey energy deal reportedly also envisions a natural gas pipeline under which the KRG would export 10 billion cubic meters of natural gas to Turkey per year, enough to meet more than 20% of Turkey's current consumption.[30] The Obama Administration has generally

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[27] Jane Arraf. "Iraq's Unity Tested by Rising Tensions Over Oil-Rich Kurdish Region." *Christian Science Monitor*, May 4, 2012.

[28] Iraq Oil Report. Exxon to Start Drilling in Disputed Kurdish Blocks. October 18, 2012.

[29] International Crisis Group. "Iraq and the Kurds: The High-Stakes Hydrocarbons Gambit." April 19, 2012.

[30] Ben Van Heuvelen. "Energy Drives an Unlikely Partnership: Turkey and Iraqi Kurds." Washington Post, November (continued...)

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.

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 would be delayed, most likely to coincide with Iraq-wide parliamentary elections in 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 a breakaway faction of President Talabani's PUK, called "Change" ("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. As a consequence of the vote, Gorran won 24 seats—coming in 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 likely mean that Gorran will hold one of the leading positions in the new KRG government, most likely KNA speaker.

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, but PUK officials say he is improving and might return at the beginning of 2014. Barham Salih, mentioned above, is said to be pressing to replace Talabani as president, in part because the Kurds do not want someone of another ethnicity to become president. Another PUK 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.

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12, 2013.

The Sadr Faction's Continuing Ambition and Agitation

Within the broader Shiite community, the faction of Shiite cleric Moqtada Al Sadr sees itself as the main representative for Iraq's Shiites, particularly those who are on the lower economic echelons. The large Sadrist constituency has caused an inherent rivalry with Maliki and other Shiite leaders in Iraq. 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, only to then abandon that effort. Sadr has supported some Sunni protests against Maliki on the grounds that the Sunnis are demonstrating for democracy and Sadr openly opposes Maliki serving a third term subsequent to the April 30, 2014 elections.

Sadr's shifts against Maliki represent a continuation of a 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 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 too 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 does plan to run candidates in the

2014 national elections.[31] 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.

The State Department report on terrorism for 2012, referenced above, said that Shiite militias have been adhering to a ceasefire that went into effect upon the U.S. withdrawal in December 2011. Experts had maintained that the militias were not becoming embroiled in sectarian conflict with Iraq's Sunnis despite the escalation of AQ-I/ISIS and other attacks on Iraqi Shiites. However, as of the summer of 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.[32] Iraqi Shiite militiamen are reportedly increasingly involved in Syria fighting and protecting Shiite shrines in support of the government of Bashar Al Assad.[33]

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. Some believe that slow action on laws governing investment, taxation, and property ownership account for the slow pace of building a modern, dynamic economy. Others say the success of Iraq's energy sector is overriding these adverse factors.

As far as one major indicator of effective governance, the State Department human rights report for 2012, released April 19, 2013, contains substantial detail on the continuing lack of progress in curbing governmental corruption. The State Department report assesses 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). 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. Even though anti-corruption efforts have often been derailed, the State Department report stated that, during the first 10 months of 2012, over 1,100 government officials had been found guilty of misappropriation of public funds.

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

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[31] Liz Sly. "Iran-Tied Group Is On Rise in Iraq." Washington Post, February 19, 2013.

[32] Michael Knights. "Iraq's Never-Ending Security Crisis." BBC News, October 3, 2013.

[33] Abigail Hauslohner. "Iraqi Shiites Take Up the Cudgels for Syrian Government." *Washington Post*, May 27, 2013.

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 3.3 million barrels per day by September 2012. It has remained at about that level since. 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 prodcution facilitiy 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. Iraq's GDP grew by about 12% in 2012, according to the World Bank. Iraqi officials estimated in February 2013 that growth would be about 9% for 2013. Press reports in 2012 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, and that GDP will reach $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 of mid-November 2013, Iraq's cabinet and COR have begun debating a $150 billion budget for 2014.

General Human Rights Issues

The State Department human rights report for 2012, released April 19, 2013, largely repeated the previous years' criticisms of Iraq's human rights record and the attribution of deficiencies in human rights practices to the overall security situation and sectarian and factional divisions.[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[35]—including some unlawful killings; 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.

Use of Coercive Force

Iraq's government has come under criticism when it has used force against peaceful demonstrators. Such criticism was leveled when 20 Iraqis were killed by security forces in the large February 25, 2011, "Day of Rage" demonstrations called by Iraqi activists. Maliki has also been criticized for the April 2013 Hawijah assault, discussed above, and for occasional subsequent use of force against demonstrators. On the other hand, visiting Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari said in August 2013 that the ISF has used substantial restraint, and that incidents such as the Hawijah assault have been few. Other experts say that the ISF's actions in the Hawijah and the earlier Day of Rage events have been investigated by the COR and within the government, suggesting efforts to establish accountability and instill restraint.

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.

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[34] http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2012&dlid=204362#wrapper

[35] One notable example in the State Department report for 2012 cites the death in April 2012 in a KRG intelligence prison of the mayor of the KRG city of Sulaymaniyah; the KRG concluded he committed suicide but the family of the mayor alleged he had been tortured to death.

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 a license. 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,"[36] and the COR revoked it February 2013.

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.[37] 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.

Concerns about religious freedom in Iraq tends to center on government treatment of religious minorities—an issue discussed extensively in the State Department International Religious

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[36] Human Rights Watch. "Iraq's Information Crimes Law: Badly Written Provisions and Draconian Punishments Violate due Process and Free Speech." July 12, 2012.

[37] http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2012&dlid=208390#wrapper

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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 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. Some Iraqi Christians blame the various attacks on them on Al Qaeda in Iraq, which is still somewhat strong in Nineveh Province and which associates Christians with the United States. 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.

Some Iraqi Christian groups advocate a "Nineveh Plains Province Solution," in which the Nineveh Plains would be turned into a self-administering region, possibly its own province but affiliated or under KRG control. 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. 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.

Funding Issues. The FY2008 consolidated appropriation earmarked $10 million in ESF from previous appropriations to assist the Nineveh Plain Christians. A supplemental appropriation for 2008 and 2009 (P.L. 110-252) earmarked another $10 million for this purpose. 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.

Executions

The death penalty is legal in Iraq. In June 2012, Amnesty International condemned the "alarming" increase in executions, which had by then put 70 persons to death. U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay also expressed shock in 2012 over the high number of executions in Iraq. On August 28, 2012, the government executed 21 people, including 3 women, convicted of terrorism-related charges.

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 began in April and May 2013, respectively.

Regional Dimension

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. That motive mitigates, to some extent, Iranian influence in Iraq because the Arab world is primarily composed of Sunni Muslims.

Iraq's reintegration into the Arab fold 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 during the gathering. 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 participated in the regional Eager Lion military exercise in Jordan in mid-2013, and in an international mine countermeasures exercise off Bahrain. 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.

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.[38]

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, and that evidence of Iranian influence is Iraq's refusal to join U.S. and allied efforts to achieve a transition from the rule of President Bashar Al Assad in Syria. There are no indications that U.S. efforts to limit Iran's influence in Iraq have diminished because of the accession of the relatively moderate Iranian president Hassan Rouhani in August 2013. Rouhani and President Obama talked by phone on September 27, 2013—the first leadership level contact between the two countries since the 1979 Islamic revolution—capping a weak of diplomatic overtures between the two mainly over the issue of Iran's nuclear program.

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 stress 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 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.

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

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 who will align with other Sunni powers. Maliki and his close associates reportedly see the armed rebellion in Syria as aggravating the political unrest in Iraq by emboldening Iraqi Sunnis to Assad of Syria to escalate armed activities against the Maliki government.

Iraq has refrained from sharp criticism of Assad for using military force against protests and Iraq 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.[39] Iraq has searched a few of

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

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 of over $20 million 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. In addition to becoming emboldened by the Syria rebellion, AQ-I/ISIS members—who are active in the Iraqi regions that border Syria—have reportedly entered Syria to help the mostly Sunni opposition to President Assad.[40] On March 4, 2013, suspected AQ-I/ISIS members 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 AQ-I/ISIS. However, AQ-I/ISIS's ambitions for a larger role in the Syria rebellion have prompted some tensions with the Syrian radical Islamist groups and intervention from Al Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri, who is believed to be in Pakistan. At the same time, as noted above, Iraqi Shiite militiamen from groups discussed above—and who generally operate far from the border with Syria—have gone to Syria to fight on behalf of the Assad regime.

The KRG appears to be assisting the Syrian Kurds, who have mostly joined the revolt against Assad. KRG President Barzani has hosted several meetings of Syrian Kurds to promote unity and a common strategy among them, and the KRG reportedly has been training Syrian Kurdish militia forces to prepare them to secure an autonomous Kurdish area if and when Assad falls. On November 6, 2012, Barzani warned the two major Syrian Kurdish factions—the Democratic Union Party (PYD) and the Kurdish National Council—to avoid discord after the two had been clashing inside Syria. 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. The threat was later tempered to the sending of KRG envoys to Syria to investigate the fighting, and no Iraqi pershmerga have been sent to Syria. 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.

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

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 is building an increasingly close political relationship with the KRG as well, as discussed above.

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 as of late 2013. 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 Davotoglu visited the disputed city of Kirkuk, prompting a rebuke from Iraq's Foreign Ministry that the visit constituted inappropriate interference in Iraqi affairs. And, tensions have been aggravated by their differing positions on Syria: Turkey is a prime backer of the mostly Sunni rebels there whereas Baghdad is leaning toward the pro-Assad position.

In an effort to improve relations, Davotoglu 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. 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. Davotoglu 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 was mitigated on February 20, 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. However, it did not announce the opening of an embassy in Baghdad. The Saudi move came after a visit by Iraqi national security officials to Saudi Arabia to discuss greater cooperation on counterterrorism and the fate of about 400 Arab prisoners in Iraqi jails. 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, such as an October 30, 2011, statement by Iraqi Army

Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Babaker Zebari that Iraq would be unable to execute full external defense until 2020-2024, reinforced those who asserted that a U.S. force presence was still needed.[41] 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.[42] 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).[43] 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.[44] 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.[45] 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.

Structure of the Post-Troop 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

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

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

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

[44] Author conversations with Iraq experts in Washington, DC, 2011.

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

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) and Major Arms Sales

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). OSC-I plans to transfer its facilities to the Iraqi government by the end of 2013.

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.[46]

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, are calling 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.

Another large part of the arms sale program to Iraq is for 140 M1A1 Abrams tanks. Deliveries began in August 2010 and the last of them were delivered in late August 2012. The tanks cost about $860 million, of which $800 million was paid out of Iraq's national funds. Iraq reportedly is also seeking to buy up to 30 Stryker armored vehicles equipped with gear to detect chemical or biological agents—a purchase that, if notified to Congress and approved and finally agreed with Iraq, would be valued at about $25 million. On December 23, 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 plans to sell Iraq equipment that its security forces can use to restrict the ability of insurgent and terrorist groups to move contaband across Iraq's borders and checkpoints (RAPISCAN system vehicles), at a cost of

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[46] 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.

about $600 million. Some refurbished air defense guns are being provided gratis as excess defense articles (EDA), but Iraq reportedly resented that the guns did not arrive until June 2013.

To help secure its air space and military capabilities, Iraq has 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.[47] Iraq argues it cannot, for example, stop Iranian overflights to Syria without the equipment. 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.

Although Administration officials reportedly favor providing the Apaches to Iraq, that sale has not been notified to Congress.[48] There reportedly is congressional opposition to providing that system on the grounds that it could be used against Sunni demonstrators, other opponents, or the PMOI members still in Iraq. In a joint U.S.-Iraq statement at the conclusion of Maliki's November 1, 2013, meeting with President Obama, the Obama Administration asserted that Iraq urgently needs additional equipment to combat AQ-I/ISIS, but no specific U.S. commitments were announced in that statement.[49]

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.[50] 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.[51]

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.[52]

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[47] John Hudson. "Iraqi Ambassador: Give Us Bigger Guns, And Then We'll Help on Syria." July 17, 2013.

[48] http://www.military.com/daily-news/2013/10/30/us-approves-sale-of-apaches-to-iraq.html?comp=700001075741&rank=1

[49] http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/11/01/joint-statement-united-states-america-and-republic-iraq

[50] Adam Schreck. "Iraq Presses US For Faster Arms Deliveries." Yahoo.com, October 18, 2012.

[51] Defense News. December 12, 2013.

[52] Tim Arango. "U.S. May Scrap Costly Efforts to Train Iraqi Policy." *New York Times*, May 13, 2012.

2013: Iraq Rededicating to U.S. Security 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. If a SOFA is agreed, some of these missions could be performed by U.S. military personnel, presumably augmenting the effectiveness of the programs.

The Sunni-led violence that began in late 2012 and has since accelerated has apparently prompted the Iraqi government to reemphasize 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."[53] Aside from accelerated delivery of U.S. arms to be sold,[54] Iraq reportedly expressed interest in expanded U.S. training of the ISF and joint exercises.

After the Dempsey visit, reflecting the Iraqi decision to reengage intensively with the United States on security, 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/ISIS.[55] (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 have, as of late 2012, largely taken over some of the DOD mission of helping Iraqi counter-terrorism forces (Counter-Terrorism Service, CTS) against AQ-I/ISIS in western Iraq.[56] Part of the reported CIA mission is to also work against the AQ-I/ISIS affiliate in Syria, the Al Nusrah Front, discussed above.

Reflecting an acceleration of the Iraqi move to reengage militarily with the United States, 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
- professional military education cooperation
- counter-terrorism cooperation
- the development of defense intelligence capabilities
- joint exercises

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

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

[55] Tim Arango. "Syrian Civil War Poses New Peril For Fragile Iraq." New York Times, September 25, 2012.

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

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 as the United States sought to prevent the violence in Syria from affecting neighboring states, including Iraq. In late June 2013, General Martin Dempsey, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said that the United States was looking for ways to improve the military capabilities of Iraq and Lebanon, two countries extensively affected by the Syria conflict. According to General Dempsey, 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. The attack, in which several hundred prisoners were freed, 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.[57] 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/ISIS 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.[58]

Regional Reinforcement Capability

Since the withdrawal from Iraq, the United States has retained a significant capability in the Persian Gulf region to demonstrate continuing U.S. interest in Iraq's security as well as to deter Iran. However, experts and U.S. officials have made clear that the reintroduction of U.S. combat troops into Iraq is not under consideration in response to the deteriorating security situation there. 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, as of mid-2012, combat ready rather than purely support forces. There are also 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 remainder 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.

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

[58] Author conversations with congressional staff and outside experts. October 2013.

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.[59] 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 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 than 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

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[59] Remarks by the President on Ending the War in Iraq." http://www.whitehouse.gov, October 21, 2011.

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 close at the end of July 2012 in part due to security concerns and 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 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.[60] Of the U.S. personnel in Iraq, about 1,000 are U.S. diplomats or other civilian employees of the U.S. government.[61] There have been no U.S. casualties in Iraq since the troop withdrawal.

As shown in **Table 3** 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

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[60] Ernesto Londono. "U.S. Clout Wanes in Iraq." *Washington Post*, March 24, 2013.

[61] Tim Arango. "U.S. Plans to Cut Its Staff by Half at Iraq Embassy." *New York Times*, February 8, 2012.

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.

Table 2. 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	Iraqiiya: 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 3. U.S. Assistance to Iraq: FY2003-FY2013

(appropriations/allocations in millions of $)

	FY '03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	Total 03-12	FY13	FY14 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**	262.9	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**	30.3	25.6
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**	850	23.1
FMF	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	850	**850**	900	500
IMET	—	1.2	—	—	1.1	—	2	2	1.7	2	**10**	2	2
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**	**2,045.2**	**573.2**

Sources: State Department FY2014 Executive Budget Summary; SIGIR Report to Congress, October 30, 2012; and CRS calculations.

Notes: Table prepared by Curt Tarnoff, Specialist in Foreign Affairs, May 2013. This table does not contain agency operational costs, except where these are embedded in the larger reconstruction accounts. About $3.6 billion was spent for those functions in FY2012, and another $2.7 billion was requested by State Department for these costs in FY2013. The FY2014 request is for $1.18 billion in such costs. IG oversight costs estimated at $417 million. 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.

Table 4. 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 5. 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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