IRAQI IDENTITY

Forces for Integration/ Divisiveness

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Iraq as a state is 83 years old. Like many multi-ethnic, multi-sectarian countries established in this century, its nation-building process is incomplete, but it is far more advanced than most observers understand. Most Iraqis do have a sense of Iraqi identity, despite the rich diversity of its population. Those elements of the population who put some other identity first--whether religious, ethnic, or tribal--do exist, but they are a distinct minority. Under previous regimes, and even under the Ba'th regime up until the mid-1980s, creating such an identity was the paramount aim of most governments. In times past, this project was more successful. For example, under the monarchy Iraq had three shi'ah and two Kurdish prime ministers. While shi'ah were not present in great numbers in the military, they dominated the Chamber of Commerce and were among the wealthiest of landholders and merchants. Iraq's growing middle class had substantial shi'ah and Kurdish components, while its educated population produced world class poets, writers, architects, scientists, and diplomats , all of whom considered themselves "Iraqi".

This "nation-state project" has been badly weakened in the last two decades under the repressive and divisive policies of Saddam Husain, and the wars, sanctions and isolation he brought on the country. Tensions between and among Iraq's ethnic and sectarian communities have been exacerbated by 35 years of Ba'thist rule, in part to consolidate Saddam's power by playing one segment of the population against another, and, in part as a result of killings and persecution of Kurds and shi'ah intended to instill terror and strengthen his cult of personality. Tribalism and nepotism replaced more modern bureaucratic structures under Saddam's personal autocracy.

A distince Iraqi identity has also been challenged by "pan-national" identities. In the past, Arab nationalism, a founding principle of the Ba'th Party, was an important component of identity among some Iraqis. Arab nationalism sought to eliminate state boundaries in favor of creating a larger Arab nation. In recent decades, this vision has faded but in its place, various pan-Islamic movements, with appeal to sunnis and shi'ah, have challenged the secular identity of the Iraqi nation-state.

These factors have eroded national unity. But erosion does not mean dissolution. A sense of common purpose and a common future with some promise will soon restore a sense of Iraqi identity which had a greater life earlier. This common purpose also needs

to be nurtured by a new "Iraqi" vision, through intellectual activities and textbooks; in civic and political groups which bring Iraqis of various communities together, and above all, by financial and other support to activities and institutions which support common endeavors .The content and direction of this vision must be decided by Iraqis, but the coalition, which is financing and supporting this endeavor, can set some parameters, such as a reasonable separation of mosque and state; a representative, accountable government; and dedication to the peaceful resolution of disputes, internally and externally. The “silent majority” of Iraqis--including all communities, classes and groups-- would support this vision. It is to this broad majority that US AID efforts must be directed.

This analysis is divided into two main parts. The first deals with the three main ethnic and sectarian communities in Iraq, and the forces within them condusive to integration or, conversely, to disunity. The main issue here is to avoid strengthening these identities to the point where they divide Iraq. The second deals with social structures and changes in Iraq which override ethnic and sectarian identities, and which can be used to strengthen an Iraqi identity and create the building blocks for a more democratic society.In each section strategies are suggested to strengthen unity and weaken divisiveness.

Communal Identities

The Arab Sunnis

The Arab sunnis have recently gotten a bad name as the minority which has dominated political decision making (and the military) in Iraq since its founding in 1920 but the position of the community and the role it has played in Iraq is more complex. Arab sunnis, constitute between 15 to 20 percent of the population and inhabit the so-called "sunni triangle" which, in my definition, begins with Baghdad and includes the smaller cities and towns on the Tigris up to Mosul and on the Euphrates over to the Syrian border. In addition, to the east of Baghdad, Ba'qubah and its environs is largely sunni. Arab sunnis also live in Basra and in Zubair in the south of Iraq on the borders of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia and among dwindling tribal groups in the western steppe and desert. In Baghdad, Arab sunnis are a minority; their major quarter is 'Adhamiyyah but they also inhabit the affluent quarters of Mansur, Sulaykh, and the university quarter. In Baghdad they are dwarfed by Arab shi'ah majority; in Mosul, they are a majority but share the city with Kurds, Turkmen and a strong local Christian community.

Like all of Iraq's communities, the Arab sunnis are diverse; they do not have a unified communal identity derived from religion. Nor do they have strong religious leadership; in fact, their religious leaders have, traditionally been under the domination of the state. At the moment, they may be more unified by fears of losing power and status, and of being tarred by identification with Ba'thism than by any positive vision of who they are and where they want to go. Several groups of Arab sunnis can be differentiated, however, for purposes of analysis. One is composed of rural farmers and small land owners; this is a small and dwindling number of little political importance and hence will

not be dealt with here (Sunni tribal groups are important, but will be discussed below in a separate category).

Two socio-political groups are significant for policy. First are the Arab sunnis of the small and medium sized cities and towns in the provinces of Anbar (pop. 945,000) and Salah al-Din (pop. 689,000), the sunni triangle par excellence.[1] These cities, which range in population from 30,000 to 50,000 to several hundred thousand, spring from farming and trading communities, and exhibit several characteristics. Like small towns everywhere, they have a high degree of homogeneity and parochialism. Although settled and semi-urban, they have preserved tribal traditions, links and customs. They often have strong regional (and town) loyalties and "prejudices" against outsiders (particularly Christians, shi'ah, and Persians). While some may be religious and open to sunni Islamic movements, most are simply conservative.

In the 1950s, these communities were relatively poor and backward.[2] In the intervening decades, especially during the oil boom of the 1970s, these towns and their inhabitants underwent remarkable social mobility. Tikrit, Saddam's home town, is the best example, but growth also took place in Fallujah, Ramadi, and other places. Construction and oil money have brought roads, better housing, cars, TVs, hospitals, schools, government offices and in some cases luxurious villas on the river front, to these towns. It is no secret that Saddam relied on the sons of this region, almost all linked to tribes settled in the area (Albu Nasir, Dulaym, Ubaid, Jubur, etc.) to fill his top security posts. As a result, many sunnis in this region were educated, sometimes abroad, joined the Ba'th Party and moved ahead in social, economic and above all political, status. While some acquired a high degree of competency in their jobs, they often retained the conservative views (and prejudices) derived from their small town backgrounds together with a new sense of entitlement that has come from the privileges and benefits accorded to them--and their region--from the regime.

Many of these Arab sunnis have traditionally been attracted to Arab nationalist ideologies and had strong connections with fellow Arab nationalists across the borders in Syria and Jordan--a sentiment that has been encouraged by their privileged position in the Ba'th Party. Their nationalism has often been tinged with a sunni identity as well as suspicion and distrust of shi'ah and alleged shi'ah leanings toward Iran. Arab tribal traditions also color their nationalism. Not surprisingly, they are also open to fundamentalist versions of sunni Islam, which crept into Iraq in recent years. It is this group of Arab sunnis that feels it has largely been disenfranchised by the change of regime and is fearful of the future. The hard core of Saddam's loyalists are now in open confrontation with the coalition and are irredeemable. But the rest of this group must be moved away from its parochial identity and its sense of entitlement and encouraged to

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[1] Examples include Tikrit, Samarra' and Baiji on the Tigris; Falluah, Ramadi and Hit on the Euphrates. One might also include some of the Arab sunnis in Mosul in this category.

[2] When I visited Tikrit in the late 1950s, its main street was an unpaved mud road with open sewage. A main event was the arrival of the ferry from Baghdad which docked twice a week at a landing on the Tigris. Most houses were mud brick.

join the new Iraq. US strategy needs to overcome the fear among this group of shi'ah-Kurdish domination of the state by giving some a seat at the table. The success of this strategy will depend on separating out the hard core Ba'th loyalists from the rest.

A second core group of Arab sunnis is, as a whole, more urban and "sophisticated" in background. Most of these are situated in Baghdad and to a lesser extent in Mosul and Basra. Traditionally, the population of these cities has lived in relatively homogeneous "quarters" but this has broken down somewhat in the last three to four decades, as Baghdad expanded, and money and social status determined living quarters and life style. The educated Arab sunni --like his shi'ah and Kurdish counterparts--often lives in newer middle class or affluent quarters (like Mansur and Jadriyyah) or sometimes in "professional " areas, such as the university or army quarters, where the population is ethnically and religiously mixed. In schools, jobs and increasingly in social life, there is interaction among communities, and intermarraige is not uncommon. Among this group, identity has been reshaped, not along ethnic and communal lines, but in accordance with political views (party affiliation); professional life (army officers, university professors) and by life styles, many of which are Western. Under Saddam, in recent years, this process was reversed, especially after the upheavals of 1991, which brought distrust among shi'ah and sunnis, Kurds and Arabs.

This more open and cosmopolitan Arab sunnis class was marginalized by Saddam who distrusted intellectuals and anyone with an independent mind. Nonetheless, he succeeded in co-opting some of them by giving them career advancement in return for loyalty. While they had no love for Saddam or the regime--and resented the upstarts from the "country"--they went along for opportunistic reasons. Many were also attracted to "nationalist" causes, although their outlook, in general, was less parochial and their life-styles more Western culturally.

In general they accommodated the regime mainly because Arab sunnis have, on the whole, identified with the state and have been involved with the process of its construction from the first. In their view, Iraq is, to a large extent, their creation. They consider themselves the "glue" which holds it together and of all groups they are the ones least likely to want its break up or even much decentralization. They are likely to favor a strong, independent Iraq, but one that is modern, progressive and open to the outside world. This group, now essentially reduced in power and adjusting to the shock of occupation, needs to come to grips with its declining political status and the need for cooperation with the US.

Integrative Factors

Most of the urban Arab sunnis--from Baghdad, Mosul, Ba'qubah--have a strong identification with the Iraqi state and want to keep it together. A number also espouse pan-Arab identities and harbor aspirations for Iraq to play a greater role in the Arab world. But these visions are impractical and fading. This class probably blames Saddam and his regime for the destruction of the state they have built and resent their marginalization by their country-cousins. But they have been fed a steady diet, over the years, of anti-colonial propaganda and are resentful of the toll taken by sanctions on their

society. They are also fearful of their loss of status in any new regime which will give power to shi'ah and Kurds. US policy needs to wean this group away from its anti-Western cast of thought and to refocus it on its traditional vocation-- building a modern state in Iraq. As earlier pillars of the military, government and educational institutions, these Arab sunnis should constitute a significant component of the new Iraqi state. However, the nature of that state and their position in it is likely to change. They will have to accommodate a more non-Arab policy and a minority role.

Divisive Elements:

The divisive element in the Arab sunni community is likely to be the more provincial elements who have been the main losers in the power struggle. The trick with this group will be to separate those who identify with the old regime from those capable of identifying with the new. This more provincially grounded elite ran much of the government, the military and the security services. Dismantling the entire army, the security system and the upper echelons of the Party has disemboweled an entire governing class and left many who might have identified with the new regime adrift and increasingly alienated. The problem here is weeding out those complicit in regime crimes and too anti-American to accommodate US goals from those able to adjust to a new dispensation of power in a reasonable period of time.

While it is still difficult to pinpoint all those actively engaged in hostilities toward the coalition, they appear to be drawn from sub-sets of this group. Most notable are Saddam loyalists; the tribes and clans associated with him in security and the military; elements of the party still committed to its ideology; and an increasingly frustrated population committed to ending any semblance of foreign occupation. Fed by outsiders, the danger is that this insurgency could spread to the rest of the sunni community that is not loyalty to Saddam or the Ba'th, but is susceptible to their enticements either out of frustration over occupation, or fears of undesirable alternative futures, such as the break up of the state or the establishment of a religious theocracy. Ending or reducing the insurgency will depend on providing an alternative vision for the Iraqi state--along with actual accomplishments--in which the "redeemable" Arab sunnis can play a role. Such a vision will also prevent the more urban Arab sunnis who were not wedded to the regime, from uniting with those Arab sunnis currently opposing the US.

One way to approach the Arab sunnis is to appeal to them, not on the basis of cultural and sectarian identity, but on the basis of their middle class status and their commitment to building a modern, Iraqi state in which they can participate. This will have the most appeal for the urban, educated Sunnis but it should also resonate with those in the growing and modernizing sunni towns of the triangle.

Strategy

The most important strategic issue for the US in dealing with this Arab sunni community is how to separate out groups willing to cooperate with the coalition in creating a new Iraq while isolating those who cannot. The former should be given a seat

at the political table. The latter must be employed but in a way that will not harm the state. Several suggestions can be made:

1**) Defeat Saddam loyalists.** Saddam loyalists must be decisively defeated and public trials of past criminal activity conducted to make everyone aware of the gravity of what was done. Truth and Reconciliation processes are needed to generate some deep seated thinking by Iraqis about the past nature of their Iraqi "nationalism" and where it should go in the future. Iraq may not yet be ready for a South African style of Truth and Reconciliation but Iraqis need to judge those who were responsible for crimes under Saddam

2) **Better intelligence**. Better intelligence is needed --from responsible Iraqi sources--to vet the Ba'thist community and reintegrate those willing to work in the new Iraq. Retribution should be avoided and summarily punished. The quicker "redeemable" Arab sunnis can be re-employed, the sooner sunnis will feel an attachment to the state.

3) **Creation of a new national vision by Iraqi**s. A major effort needs to be undertaken by Iraqi intellectuals, policy makers and educators to create a more constructive nationalist vision that stresses the rebuilding of Iraq as a modern state and down-plays ethnic and sectarian loyalties. This effort should be widely publicized and even undertaken as a public debate in think tanks and academia.

4) **Reform education**. A major effort should be undertaken by Iraqi educators, to revise primary and secondary textbooks in civics and history to teach a new, more constructive definition of the state; society, and the role of the citizen within it. There should be a suitable role for civil liberties, equality of ethnic and sectarian groups and religion in this picture.

Arab Shi'ah

Arab shi'ah constitute the majority of Iraq's inhabitants--estimated at some 60 percent. The cities and towns south of Baghdad are solidly Arab shi'ah, except for Basra which has a substantial sunni minority. Baghdad has a shi'ah majority and there is a substantial shi'ah population in Ba'qubah and in Samarra', where two shi'ah imams are buried. In Baghdad, shi'ah are concentrated in several large quarters. The first is Kadhimain, which houses shrines of two shi'ah imams as well as several secular universities. It is a center of pilgrimage and shi'ah learning with Indian, Persian and foreign Arab shi'ah resident there. Other poorer shi'ah quarters in Baghdad include al-Shu'alah and Sadr City. The latter is a city of one to two million inhabitants built in 1960 to house poor immigrants from the south who came to Baghdad looking for work. It has now become major, sprawling slum inhabited by shi'ah who have brought much of their rural southern culture to their new dwelling place. Previously called Saddam City, Sadr City was renamed by Muqtada al-Sadr, son of a cleric murdered by the regime in 1999. But Baghdad also includes many middle and upper class shi'ah who have integrated into the social structure of the city and live in other neighborhoods. They frequently identify

on a class, rather than a communal, basis.

It is also worth noting that minority shi'ah communities exist among the Turkman and the Kurds (the latter are known as "faili" Kurds). There used to be a sizeable Persian shi'ah community in Baghdad and in the shrine cities of Najaf and Karbala, but Saddam expelled most of them in the 1980s.

A sizeable portion of the shi'ah community is rural or lives in provincial towns in the south. These range in size and importance. In 1987, the more important hrine cities, Najaf and Karbala had populations of about 300,000 each while provincial capitals like Hillah and Amarah were over 200,000. But there are many smaller towns in the 10,000 to 50,000 category. These smaller shi'ah towns are only partially modernized and their sense of shi'ah identity is stronger. They practice religious rituals and traditions, which keep alive a shi'ah tradition of disengagement from secular government and a sense of being oppressed by it.[3]

Shi'ah identity in the south is partly countered by tribalism. Among this population, tribal values play an important role in shaping identity. Much of the south is still tribally organized, especially in rural areas. As a result their shi'ism is intermingled with tribal identity and mores. Within the region there are also strong sub-cultures, the most notable of which are those of Najaf and Karbala (See below). The marsh Arabs around Nasiriyyah also have a distinct way of life based on the swamps and high reeds of the area they inhabit which makes their region a refuge for dissidents. Although the marsh areas have now largely been drained by the Saddam regime, the culture of dissidence against the central government remains. Basra is another interesting regional center. As Iraq's main port and now an industrial center, Basra has always looked south to the Gulf for trade and commerce, rather than north to Baghdad. It has a sizeable sunni population and strong family and commercial ties with Kuwait (Many Basra families own property in both countries). It also a cultural and intellectual center. Its industrial work force and its intellectuals have provided support in the past for leftist and Communist movements. It has a strong tradition of tolerance and secularism.

The population living in the south has been neglected since 1991 and has a higher level of poverty than elsewhere in the country. But the shi'ah also have a robust middle and upper middle class as well a numerous wealthy bankers, merchants and contractors. (Ahmad Chalabi is the third generation in such a family).When Iraq's substantial Jewish community left Iraq for Israel in 1951, they were largely replaced, as a business class, by these shi'ah. In fact, because they were largely excluded from the military and politics, in

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[3] A good description of this is to be found in the memoirs of Hani al-Fukaiki, Dens of Defeat (in Arabic) (Beirut: 1993).Fukaiki, a shi'ah and a secular leftist Ba'thist , grew up in Baghdad in the 1960s where his father was a judge. While he felt little discrimination in Baghdad, he describes trips to the south where he felt as though he were visiting a different world. Here, essentially in tribal territory, he felt a strong sense of communal identity with shi'ah together with a deep sense of injustice imparted to the community which depressed him. It took him days to get over it.

the early years of the state, shi'ah often went into new professions, such as science, engineering and economics, giving them a well grounded modern professional and technocratic class.

Although a sense of shi'ah identity is prevalent throughout the community, other identities--national, class and professional-- frequently override it. The most common unifying factor among the shi'ah is a sense of victimization derived from never having achieved adequate representation in power, despite their majority status. In fact, the shi'ah have never been able to field an organization or leadership able to represent them as a unified community. As a result, there are a number of competing "poles" which help shape shi'ah identity.

1) **The hawzah** (the collective term for the religious seminaries), is the most easily identifiable pole. The most notable of these are in Najaf and Karbala. According to the teachings of the usuli religious school to which Iraqi shi'ah belong, shi'ah must follow the teachings of a recognized cleric, known as the *marja' al-taqlid*-- (Source of Emulation). These religious leaders have considerable influence over the community and its actions. Rituals tend to reinforce a sense of identity, and its content, with emphasis on injustice at the hands of sunni governments and the virtue of martyrdom. However, this clerical leadership is itself divided is itself divided, as can be seen in the current array of shi'ah religious spokesmen in Iraq, ranging from the militant Muqtada al-Sadr to the quietist Ali al-Sistani.[4]

2) **Persian influence** and the shi'ah tie to the Iranian state is the second divisive factor. Many Iraqi clerics have, traditionally, been Persian by birth, and they retain close ties to Iran even when they have lived for years in Iraq. For some, Iran is seen as a protector of shi'ah. This tendency made them--and by extension much of the shi'ah community--suspect in the eyes of the Arab sunnis, in their loyalty to the Iraqi state. The Iranian revolution and subsequent calls for the overthrow of Saddam's regime by the Islamic Republic sharpened this feeling and made the "Iranian" tie an important issue in Iraqi identity.

3) **Tribe and Kin.** Shi'ah identity is not only shaped by religion. Arab tribal culture, prevalent throughout the south, has strong norms and values, such as loyalty to one's kith and kin; a strong sense of honor (face); and customs such as hospitality and generosity. There are also strong tribal codes with respect to women who are expected to uphold family honor in sexual matters. Punishment of violations of these norms is considered a family (male) duty. Many Kurdish tribes have similar values and mores.

4) **Secularism and modernization**. Many urban shi'ah, especially in large cities

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[4] Sadr, for example, believes in clerical control of the state (the *wilayat al-faqih* or rule of the religious jurist) as in Iran, which would emphasize the religious--and shi'ah--identity of Iraq. Sistani represents a quietist tradition long common in Iraq which holds that clerics should avoid politics and concentrate on the religious vocations of preaching and good works.

such as Baghdad and Basra, are secular, with strong class identities or ties to their professional life and to political parties. Many joined the communist and Ba'th parties. The egalitarianism of these parties appealed to them, as did their opposition to the government and to discrimination. These secular shi'ah, many of whom constitute Iraq's professional and technocratic class, favor separation of mosque and state, and should be a main pillar of a more modern, democratic state. They would, however, favor a state which gives the shi'ah a majority of political seats.

In sum, although only a guess can be hazarded here, it is likely that only about one third of Iraq's shi'ah could be classified as deeply committed to a religious identity and willing to follow the lead of the *hawzah* in politics: that is, they would be inclined to put a religious identity ahead of a national identity. Another third could probably be described as religious practitioners, who would not put religion ahead of national or perhaps tribal identity--unless they felt endangered or incited. A final third is probably secular--not only identifying primarily as Iraqis but with strong professional and secular political affiliations as well. This indicates that at least two thirds favor a separation of religion and politics and identify mainly as Iraqis. .

Integrative Factors

Except for the minority of the community which is committed to a religious agenda, all evidence indicates that the Arab shi'ah community is comfortable with an Iraqi identity and is not separatist, although talk of "federalism" for the south has increased since the war. In the past, shi'ah have not identified with Arab nationalist causes to the same extent as sunnis and recently have come to resent this orientation as thwarting their aspirations for greater power inside Iraq. Shi'ah fought as well as most Arab sunnis--and far better than the Kurds--during the eight year Iran-Iraq war when Iraq's territorial sovereignty was at stake, indicating that they identified as Iraqis first and shi'ah second. [No one fought with enthusiasm] There is little evidence that many shi'ah in Iraq want to replicate the failing model of Islamic rule in Iran. The chief demand of the shi'ah has always been political--representation in the power structure commensurate with their numbers -- which would give them a dominant say in the state.

On the content and direction the state should take, however, there are differences in the shi'ah community. At issue here is how "religious" the state and society should be and the appropriate role for clerics in government and politics. As indicated, a sizeable majority of the shi'ah community do not want a clerically controlled state and are probably moderates on the degree of religious influence they want in their lives. Secular shi'ah can agree with secular sunnis and Kurds on a modern, democratic state (with some self-government for Kurds). Moderate religious sunnis and shi'ah may agree on a greater degree of religious practice in society, but not on clerical control of the state. (No sunni would countenance shi'ah control or vica versa.). The division of the Iraqi population between shi'ah and sunnis virtually assures that Iraq cannot be a clerically dominated shi'ah state on the Iranian model. Hence it behooves moderate shi'ah to compromise with Arab sunnis and Kurds in a vision--or formula--that gives shi'ah--regardless of political coloring--acceptable representation in power. This is clearly recognized, for example, by

the Hakims who participate in the Governing Council (GC) and in the ministries

Divisive Elements:

Notwithstanding the strong Arab and Iraqi identity felt by the shi'ah, there are numerous divisive elements within the community that could work against shi'ah acceptance of the new order in Iraq and "spoil" the development of a modern nation-state, that was willing to work with the West.

1) **Indigenous extremists**. The most serious "spoiler" is the portion of the community that identifies with a radical shi'ah religious agenda and is currently led by Muqtada-l-Sadr, who relies for support on the poor shi'ah immigrant community in Sadr city. His followers are alienated on economic and social grounds, as well as religious.. He draws support from unemployed youth, and conservative southern shi'ah communities who were loyal to his father. Sadr, an aggressive militant, has called for an "unarmed" army to support his cause. Although Sadr depicts his movement as "Iraqi", he wants a theocracy in Iraq on the Iranian model. He appears unwilling to cooperate with the US and demands immediate withdrawal of US forces. Sadr's faction is dangerous. It
could split the shi'ah community, drawing moderate shi'ah into his anti-American camp and making it difficult for shi'ah to cooperate with the US in constructing a new Iraq with a different vision. Such polarization could lead to civil strife, since few sunnis or Kurds can accept this vision. While such an outcome is unlikely, it is possible and it would end by dividing Iraq.

Even short of such a dire scenario, Sadr's drive for power could continue to destabilize Iraq and interfere with its going in a moderate direction. Sadr's anti-American, anti-occupation rhetoric, his extreme religious agenda--against secularism and Western life styles--may have some appeal to the newly emerging religious forces in the sunni community. Militant sunni and shi'ah groups cannot agree on theology, they can unite on a broadly Islamic agenda. Most of all, they could cooperate on an anti-American agenda.

2.) **Alliance of moderates and activists.** The portion of the shi'ah who are moderately religious, who may follow the clerics on religious matters but not on politics, constitute a "swing" group, which must be brought into a mainstream consensus. If not, they could ally with Sadr and the forces of militancy, overwhelming the shi'ah population. This middle group is now led by the Hakims (SCIRI) and the Da'wah. Both are apparently willing to work within the Iraqi government. They are interested in a shi'ah majority in the counsels of the state and a larger role for religion in society. but have not raised the issue of clerical control.[5] SCIRI has strong ties to Iran. It was

[5] The Da'wah, historically, has had a stronger Iraqi identity than SCIRI and the party split over the issue of accepting the Iranian formula for a clerically controlled state. The most important Da'wah actors in Iraq repudiate this formula. SCIRI was created by Iran and in Iran and has accepted the *wilayat al-faqih* in the past. For the moment, it has

supported by Iran for years--indeed it was an instrument of Iran during the Iran-Iraq war, and the Badr Brigade, was officered by Iranians, though it was part of the SCIRI structure. While the Hakims would undoubtedly like to loosen these Iranian ties, that may be difficult. In any case, these ties, and Iranian support for SCIRI, are deeply suspect by Arab sunnis and the Kurdish parties, as well as by secular shi'ah. The Da'wah may also constitute a "swing" force, although they are generally more Iraqi oriented. In the past, the Da'wah split between those favoring clerical rule and those opposed. The latter were led, among others, by Muwaffiq al-Ruba'i who has now left the Da'wah and sits on the GC. He, and others like him, (for example, Muhammad Bahr al-Ulum) while religious in orientation favor pluralism and democracy and should be supported in efforts to create a shi'ah voice in a new democratic government. They are opposed to any interference by Iran in Iraq's domestic affairs. In the process of developing a new vision for Iraq, this shi'ah "religious" contingent can be expected to engage in a long, and possibly divisive struggle over how much religious freedom there should be in society. This is now playing out, for example, in the role of women in society; in dress codes; in the sale and consumption of alcohol and in the role of religion in the curriculum. The "swing" group can play a critical role in moderating this process, reducing Iranian influence and preventing a clerical takeover of the state, but only if it is prevented from allying with the militant Sadr faction against the coalition.

3). **The Badr Brigade and Iranian influence.** The Badr Brigade, a force of 7,000 to 10,000 men, consists of exiled shi'ah Iraqis most of whom have now returned to Iraq. These irregulars functioned under the umbrella of SCIRI but were increasingly trained, armed and led by Iranian officers. They have come back to Iraq to cities, towns and villages. They are also in the north in territory controlled by Kurds, mainly the PUK. They may be acting as eyes and ears for Iran with a high potential for destablilization. They are likely to be highly politicized. They are supposed to have been disarmed, but in the aftermath of Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim's assassination, they are now taking up security positions in Najaf and Karbala. They have a potential to act as spoilers if things go wrong, although they are reportedly fed up with Iran and want to play a larger role in the Iraqi arena. They could cooperate with the GC; act independently, or make common cause with Sadr, although this would be difficult, given rivalry between the Sadrs and Hakims. Supposedly disarmed by the CPA, unemployed and potentially alienated, the Badr brigade is a force to keep an eye on.

4) **The Anti-Iranian extremists**. Another key "spoiler" could be the Mujahidin al-Khalq (MEK), an Iranian force opposed to the Islamic Republic and armed by Saddam. Saddam used them to attack Iran and his opponents inside Iraq. The US State Department has officially categorized them as a terrorist group and disarmed them, but how effectively is not clear. Iran regards them as provocateurs. If they engage in any operations against Iraq, under the nose of the CPA, Iran could well retaliate by activating some of the Badr brigade to destabilize conditions in Iraq.

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buried this idea behind more popular democratic slogans but it is not clear whether clerical control of the state would be revived if it should gain power in the future.

Strategy

The chief strategy should be to address the minimum shi'ah requirement for adequate representation in the councils of government, However, this representation should be equitably distributed among various shi'ah groups, secular and religious. No single group, such as SCIRI, can claim to represent the shi'ah as a whole. The role of secular shi'ah can be fortified through strategies that strengthen the middle class as a whole--in civil society; in government; and in the professions (especially academia and the media). (See below) Most important, the CPA should aim to work with the third of the community that is moderately religious (SCIRI; Da'wah) and move it to the center of the political spectrum. Limits should be set on the role of clerics in the state, with open discussion on what role religion should play in society and in education. This will be particularly important with respect to women. Religious moderates should be encouraged in the hawzah where they can exercise a role in reforming shi'ah education. The Badr Brigade and the MEK should be disbanded in favor of state authorized police and security forces; this will help curtail unwanted Iranian intrusion into Iraqi institutions and structures. Iran can express its interests through appropriate foreign affairs channels.

Here are a number of steps that can be taken to implement this strategy:

1). **Strengthen the secular trend among shi'ah by empowering middle class** civic institutions which work across ethnic and sectarian lines and make this a priority in funding. For example, there are Women's Organizations; Human Rights Organizations; and Justice Associations now in operation. Make sure they include both shi'ah and sunnis.

2.) **Work with the shi'ah moderates on the GC**.

3. **Strengthen the quietist tradition in the hawzah**. This will mean quiet support for Ali al-Sistani, and others like him, behind the scenes.Fund their causes and empower them to name Friday prayer leaders and other religious functionaries to keep the extremists out of local positions of authority.

4. **Encourage reform of education in the seminaries** in a more modern, tolerant direction. One excellent vehicle for this is the Khu'i Foundation. Helping the Khu'i's in Iraq, however, needs to be handled carefully since competition with the Sadrs and the Hakims is involved. The CPA probably should not be seen to be playing religious politics, but discreet assistance and encouragement for moderates might help. Working with moderate clerics to advance the cause is better than public posturing on separation of mosque and state.

5. **Encourage Najaf and Karbala to restore their previous intellectual luster as a seat of shi'ah learning.** Najaf will be particularly attractive to the Arab world, which has had to send its youth to shi'ah schools in Qum while Saddam was in power. Najaf could become once again the center of shi'ah learning--more Arab, more Iraqi, more tolerant and more progressive. The quid pro quo here would be to offer more

freedom of religion in Iraq than Saddam, but to encourage clerics to develop a more tolerant vision of Islam. The US could also assist in publication of moderate books and ease access to Najaf by shi'ah students.

6. **Wean SCIRI and others away from Iran** and its leanings toward the *wilayat al-faqih.* Trade influence for SCIRI in government in return for more support for a democratic system. The Hakims and the Khu'is have organizations that work on human rights issues and on justice for Saddam's victims. These can be supported, but they should include Kurds and Arab sunnis as well. Do not support organizations that do not cross the ethnic and sectarian divide.

7. **Marginalize Sadr** by providing services to his supporters in the poorer districts of Baghdad linked directly to the new Iraqi government. These should emphasize hospitals and medical care; schools; and simple courts of justice The Governing Council must wrest control of clinics, hospitals, schools and other welfare associations from shi'ah extremist factions, lest they become like Hizballah in Lebanon. The GC must be seen to provide better services than those run by extremist groups.

Kurds

Because they speak a different language and because they have well developed political and military movements that have successfully fought--over a period of decades--for greater self-government, and because they have been governing themselves in the three northern provinces since 1991, the Kurds will be the most difficult component of the population to reintegrate into Iraq. But this is not an impossible task. Kurds have already integrated into Iraqi society to varying degrees. A number have been thoroughly Arabized. Others, while maintaining a strong Kurdish identity, have worked with and for the central government in the past and would be willing to do so again. The impetus to separatism comes mainly from the two Kurdish national parties now in control in the north.

Kurds are estimated to constitute about 17-20 percent of Iraq's population. The three northern provinces, Dohuk, Irbil and Sulaymaniyyah, are mainly Kurdish. Kurds are also a majority in the province of Ta'mim (Kirkuk) and inhabit parts of the Nineveh (Mosul) province and areas in Diyala (such as Tuz Khurmatu, Kalar and Kifri. A substantial number, possibly 20 percent of the community, lives in Baghdad. There are few Kurds south of Baghdad.

The Kurds speak a different (Indo-European) language which reinforces their sense of separateness and Kurdish identity but Kurds are not homogeneous and within the Kurdish community there are competing identities. One is tribalism, which is particularly strong in the more isolated mountain areas. Various Iraqi governments have used Kurdish tribal contingents to hold the borders with Iran and Turkey and contain the nationalist parties. The parties themselves, particularly the Kurdistan Democratic Party

(KDP) rely on a tribal base in forming their militias.[6] There are also differences between rural and urban Kurds. Until recently more Kurds were rural than urban, but they have always had a settled urban population engaged in middle class pursuits, especially in the cities of Irbil and Sulaymaniyyah. In the past two decades, the majority of Kurds, like the rest of Iraqis, have become urban. Educated urban Kurds have developed a middle class identity.

The Kurds have strong ties with fellow Kurds in Turkey (where they are about 19 percent of the population), in Iran (about 10 percent of the population) and Syria (about 8 perent of the population).[7] Some Kurdish nationalists have always put forth the ideal of a larger Kurdish nation--a notion virulently opposed by Iraq's neighbors. The leading Kurdish movement in Turkey, the PKK, (Kurdish Workers' Party) fought a guerrilla war for years against the Turkish central government, and its leader Abdullah (Apo) Ocalon is now in a Turkish prison. PKK remnants now reside in northern Iraq along its border with Turkey, in KDP territory. The KDPI (Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran), also fought with the Iranian central government; its leader Abd al-Rahman Qasimlu, was assassinated in 1989, and the remnants of this party are also in Iraq, mainly in PUK territory. Of these three countries, Iraq has been most accommodating to its Kurdish population, establishing a framework for local self government, recognizing Kurdish as a separate language, and identifying Kurds as partners in the state, often poorly adhered to in practice. Under Saddam, rebellious Kurds were corralled into settlements, killed and gassed. . The main task of the new Iraqi government will be to strengthen Kurdish ties with the state by providing a future that will make that association more attractive than past governments. Senior Kurdish leaders should be drawn into the government in Baghdad.

Minorities of Turkman and Christian elements areiInterspersed in the northern region. Turkman probably number between 500,000 to 800,000 and date back to the Turkish migrations of the twelfth century. They live in Baghdad, Irbil, Kirkuk (which they used to dominate) Mosul and the smaller cities of Kalar, Kifri and Tuz Khurmatu. They have integrated well in Iraq, often assuming jobs in the bureaucracy. In recent years, however, their sense of ethnic identity has been enhanced and they have formed a Iraqi Turkman Front. The Turks, fearful of Kurdish separatism, have encouraged this identity and try to use the Turkman as a balance against the Kurds, creating tensions between the two communities.

A Christian population, now about 3 percent of the population, lives in northern cities and towns, as well as in rural areas of the north such as Tal Afar. They are also

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[6] The Kurdish language also has several distinctive but mutually intelligible dialects which are geographically concentrated. Bahdinan (Kurmanji) is spoken in the mountain territory of the north and west (and in southeastern Turkey as well); Surani is spoken in Sulaymaniyyah and the southern plains area. These linguistic differences reinforce regional divisions.

[7] For various estimates of the Kurdish population, see Gareth Stansfield, Iraqi Kurdistan: Political Development and Emergent Democracy (London: 2003).

middle class professionals in Baghdad and Mosul. The various Christian Churches in Iraq spring from theological disputes in the Byzantine era which need not concern us here. Some, like the Assyrians, adhere to the eastern rite; others, like the Chaldeans, reunited with Rome in the 16th century. Assyrians in the past have had separatist tendencies and tense relations with the central government, but these problems are now largely past. Chaldeans have integrated better. Tariq Aziz, the leading Christian member of the Ba'th Party and perrenial foreign spokesman, was a Chaldean. Christians are too few in number to play much of a role in politics.

For decades Kurds have been migrating out of the mountainous areas into the plains and cities of the central area, such as Irbil, Kirkuk and Mosul, often displacing Turkman, Arabs and Christians. Irbil is now a predominantly Kurdish city and Kurds claim Kirkuk--and Iraq's northern oil fields--as part of their territory. After 1991, the Iraqi government reversed the process, pushing Kurds and Turkman out of Kirkuk and settling Arabs in their place. This has created a festering ethnic fault-line in the north, with this territory now fought over by Kurds, Turkman and Arabs.

Kurdish ethnic identity and aspirations for separatism are strong, but not necessarily overwhelming. Kurds have had varying experiences with integration in Iraq in the past. Under the monarchy, the Kurds held major posts in the government. After the military revolt of 1958, Qasim made Kurds partners in the state. But a Kurdish revolt began in 1961 and was to last, off and on, until 1991. Despite these tensions, some Kurds continued to occupy posts in the central government. Tensions with the central government reached a high point during the Iran-Iraq war when the opposition parties (KDP and PUK) sided with Iran and the central government depopulated Kurdish mountain villages and used CW against the Kurds.

As Saddam was quelling the 11991 shi'ah rebellion in the south, the Kurds revolted in the north. Fear of Saddam's army and renewed gas attacks led to a mass exodus of the Kurdish population--to Turkey and Iran. This crisis resulted in Western intervention; formation of a safe haven for the Kurds in the north, and a No Fly Zone to protect them from the central government when they returned. This protection, and skirmishes between the Kurds and central government forces, led Saddam to withdraw his army and his government from the three northern provinces.

Since this time, Kurds, freed of central government control--and services--have governed themselves, with help and support from the international community in the north. They held an election and established a Kurdish Regional Government (KRG). However, the two rival parties could not peaceably co-exist and by 1994 a mini-civil war broke out between the two parties and leaders. By 1996, the northern Kurdish area was broken into two. Barzani and the KDP controlled the northern half, including Dohuk and Irbil; Jalal Talabani, the south portion with his headquarters in Sulaymaniyyah. Although a truce, arranged by the US and outside powers, gradually took hold, competition remains.

Despite these divisions, in the last five years, the Kurds have done well,

especially compared to the Arabs in the center and the south. They have set up functioning, pragmatic governments, based on strong party institutions and recognized leaders. They have displaced the tribal contingents (locally known as *Jash,* or donkeys) which had formerly controlled the area on behalf of the central government. Money raised primarily from customs revenues on goods smuggled into Iraq from Turkey and on oil sent out of Iraq through Turkey brought prosperity, a revival of agriculture and urban construction. Health has improved; education spread and more freedom--in the form of satellite TVs and newspapers--has been introduced. But not all the news has been good. The borders of the area have been sealed by Turkey, Iran and Syria, isolating the north. There is widespread uncertainty about the future and younger Kurds are beginning to emigrate. While the Kurds have much to protect, they also know that they need to make an accommodation with Baghdad to keep what they have gained in the north.

There are other sources of instability in the north. In KDP territory, there is still a PKK presence. In the past, the Turks have made constant incursions into KDP territory in hot pursuit of the PKK. In a future power vacuum, they would do so again. While the PKK is quiescent now, if the coalition loses control over the north and the border, the PKK could revive its activities and bring an unwanted Turkish incursion.

The PUK has also had troubles in its border region with Iran where Kurdish Islamic parties have taken root. Most important is the Islamic Movement of Iraqi Kurdistan (IMIK), established mainly in Halabja and several smaller towns in the area. Other smaller parties, all sunni, have an Islamic agenda which challenges Kurdish identity; they are reportedly supported with funds from both Iran and Saudi Arabia

Another important downside of the Kurdish experience has been rapid and forceful urbanization. Now some 75 percent of the Kurdish population is urban, but a high percentage of these are uprooted villagers from the mountains or refugees from Kirkuk. These total 195,000 in Dohuk; 308,000 in Sulaymaniyyah and 177,000 in Irbil. They often live in large settlements on the outskirts of cities, where there are few services and less work. These camps are the Kurdish equivalent of Sadr City. The settlers of these camps, especially the unemployed youth, are ripe for radical movements--especially Islamic.

Integrative Forces:

The two Kurdish parties (KDP/ PUK) have considerable potential for integration in a modern, democratic, Iraqi state under some form of federalism. Although they have a strong Kurdish identity and aspirations for separatism, they are also pragmatic and now have considerable experience in governing and in conducting international relations. They recognize they have no chance of achieving independence at the present time, and will cooperate in a central government that gives them an acceptable measure of local self government. The issue is how much. The trick will be to give them a strong stake in the new central government and make participation in a new Iraq sufficiently attractive to dampen aspirations for separatism in the north.

1. **Experience in governing**. Although not yet democratic, the two Kurdish governments are open, accountable and relatively tolerant. Both Kurdish parties are secular and believe firmly in separation of mosque and state. They could be a strong bulwark against more militant Islamic movements whether sunni or shi'ah, Kurd or Arab.

2. **Pro-Western outlook**. Both parties are also pro-Western politically and to a large extent culturally. They are the strongest supporters of the US presence in Iraq and welcome continued US influence and protection. While they prefer a high degree of self-rule, they can probably be persuaded to make some compromises on this, in return for a greater presence and influence in the central government which would protect their interests. (The PUK is more likely to cooperate on this score).

3. **Federalism as a goal**. The Kurds declare their aim to be "federalism", which they define in an ethnic sense; that is, all territory in which over half of the population speaks Kurdish should be under unified Kurdish self-government. Such an ethnic division will be difficult to achieve territorially (where are the dividing lines?);will cause problems for minorities (Turkman, Christians and Arabs); and above all, will undermine Iraqi unity and the development of an Iraqi identity. An alternative federalist solution could be geographic; that is, based on the eighteen provinces which currently exist. This would put Kurds in charge of Kurdish areas and a mixed population in charge of mixed areas. Kurdish leaders oppose this solution but reality may dictate otherwise. One thing is clear--Kurds will argue for a decentralized federal government based in Baghdad and for most power to be vested in the "states", ie. The Kurdish Regional Government.

4. **The existence of more pro-government Kurdish factions**. Kurdish tribal groups, such as the Baradostis and the Surchis, once formed the militias which defended Iraq and its borders, have been displaced by the Kurdish parties. Some have made their peace with the new order in the north. They have always had a more positive view of the Iraqi state than the larger Kurdish parties and a stronger Iraqi identification. They should be brought into the mainstream of Iraqi politics where possible.

5. **The Kurdish middle class**. The Kurdish middle class, the backbone of the bureaucracy, should be strengthened, and brought within the framework of the Iraqi state. Much of the Kurdish intelligentsia does not want the isolation Kurdistan has suffered in the last decade nor the fate the Palestinians have suffered as a movement struggling for independence. Kurdish youth mustbe convinced of a better future in Iraq than in a truncated Kurdish state. They must be encouraged with educational and training opportunities abroad, seed money for businesses and positions of responsibility in the federal government.

<u>Forces for Division:</u>

There are many divisive forces at work in the Kurdish area; indeed, the Kurds may pose the most serious threat to Iraqi unity and a common Iraqi identity in the future, with several important flashpoints to watch.

1) **Kurdish national aspirations**. The impetus to Kurdish separatism, as a vision and as a power struggle on the ground, could supplant the vision of a unified Iraqi state with benefits to be shared by all its citizens. This separatist vision and the struggle for its realization is the foundation of the KDP and the PUK. The Kurdish parties may have postponed this vision for practical reasons but they will likely try to create facts on the ground by demanding ethnic-based federalism and the teaching of Kurdish language, history and culture while ignoring Arabic in the curriculum. While observing one's culture, faith and traditions are important in our own multi-cultural society, they do not come at the expense of or in place of the state and national culture. Cultural and linguistic separatism will make it more difficult for Kurdish students to attend universities in Mosul and Baghdad with their Arab counterparts or for a new generation of Kurds to participate in a central government. Moreover, the textbooks in the Kurdish north do not reinforce a national Iraqi identity, but rather loyalty to an Iraqi Kurdistan. This issue needs to be addressed and rectified with new textbooks, building confidence that their local and traditional cultures will not disappear, and by establishing a better balance of trust between Kurds and Arabs.

2) **Rivalry between the Kurdish parties** It is unclear how long the current tenuous truce between the KDP and PUK will last. Both Barzani and Talabani aspire to a leadership role in a unified Kurdistan. If the uneasy peace between them breaks down, the north could be split and the US position destabilizedAll sorts of groups could take advantage of the situation--the Turks, Iranians and Syrians--as well as the Islamic forces in the north and pro-Ba'th elements fighting the U.S. This danger can be avoided by encouraging the two leaders and their parties to make alliances with parties and groups of like mind and take up posts in the central government, thus drawing them into Iraqi politics at the center and tying them to the success or failure of central government.

3) **Squabbles between Kurds, Turkmen and Christians**. Divisions between Kurdish and Turkman elements backed by Turkey have broken out into open fighting since the end of the war and could again. If Kurdish ethnic identity, rather than Iraqi identity, is recognized as the legitimating authority in the north, then the Turkman will ask for similar autonomy rights. Struggles for seats on municipal and provincial councils, and over ownership of land and property would be destabilizing. The US must encourage tolerance and power-sharing and refuse to acknowledge or underwrite ethnic nationalism, especially in a federal format.

4) **Land Claims between Arabs and Kurds**. The fault line involved in defining "Kurdish" and "Arab" territory and a peaceful solution to the problem of restoring land taken from Kurds and Turkmen to Arabs is a serious one. In Kirkuk and in Mosul, Kurds are engaged in their own ethnic cleansing by forceably displacing Arabs who have been living there, in some cases for decades. These acts are already generating enmity among Arabs. These disputes should be settled by impartial courts. People may choose to live in communities defined by ethnic or family ties, but this should be a choice and not a law.

5) **Cross-border incursions**. The PKK, while quiet for the moment, could reactivate its campaign against the Turks. This would provide an occasion for the Turks

to intrude into Iraq and cause an international crisis for the US. Islamic parties are growing in the Kurdish north as well as in the Arab areas.. In student elections, Islamic parties frequently win, indicating an erosion of secularism. These Islamic parties have fought with the PUK ; some have established links with Ansar al-Islam some of whose members have taken refuge in Iran. If the border with Iran is not firm, these parties may again gain a foothold and provide an excuse for Iranian intrusion in the north..

Strategy

There is no alternative to supporting the Kurdish parties but they should be encouraged to reduce their efforts at ethnic separatism, in return for a greater stake in the central government in Baghdad. Specifically, the US should:

* **Encourage geographic not ethnic federalism**

* **Set red lines** on issues that would foster Kurdish separatism; for example, a peaceful settlement of property rights with Turkman and Arabs which recognizes the rights of non-Kurds and Arabs to live and work anywhere they want in the country.

* **Create an integrated national military force.** Kurdish militias--the ephemera--should be dismantled or used only as a local police force. This will be difficult but permitting the ephemera to be absorbed into the new military will weaken the unity and cohesion of the new Iraqi army. It will also open the door for access in the military to militias of religious groups.

* **Review textbooks and curriculum in the north**, with a view to strengthening Arabic so that Kurdish students can interact with Arabs. Strengthen Kurdish language skills in the rest of Iraq

"Pan-National" Identities

The previous section dealt with sub-national identities challenging Iraq's cohesion, but two ideologies which come from outside Iraq's borders also challenge the Iraqi state identity and can act as a divisive force. One is pan-Arabism; the other comes in various forms of political Islamic ideologies, both shi'ah and sunni.

Pan-Arabism

One reason that Iraqi identity has not been stronger lies in the fact that it has been challenged by various forms of Arab nationalism, advocating the dissolution of state boundaries and the formation of a larger Arab nation. This ideology had great appeal to the countries of the Fertile Crescent and Egypt in the post World War II period and the Ba'th Party itself was founded largely on this vision of "one Arab nation". In the 1960s Iraq was deeply involved in unity schemes with both Syria and Egypt. These schemes all

failed. State centered policies won out in Iraq--as well as elsewhere in the Arab world--but the vision still lingers to an extent and an "Arab" identity exercises strong influence on a number of Iraqis.

The broader Arab --as opposed to a limited Iraqi--identity appeals more to the Arab sunni population, especially in the sunni triangle. Iraqis in this area have ties to their Arab neighbors in Jordan and Syria as well as trading relations which strengthen this sense of common Arabism.. It also resonates with some of the educated middle class in Baghdad and Mosul. The vision also appeals to some Arab shi'ah who are secular, and who saw the Ba'th Party as a, modernizing force. (In the early 1960s the leadership of the Ba'th Party was largely shi'ah). However, it was rejected by most Arab shi'ah because they feared being swallowed up as a minority in any larger Arab state which would inevitably be mainly sunni. Of course, it had no appeal to Kurds.

How much of this "Arab" identity is alive today in Iraq is a question. In practice the idea of a greater Arab nation is dead and recognized as such throughout the Arab world. State oriented policies and identities predominate everywhere. Iraqis also feel neglected by the Arab world during their decades long tribulations in war and sanctions. Many resent the attention the Palestinians are getting. However, some of this sentiment does still resonate with some communities. Saddam used it to rally support within the Ba'th and the larger Arab middle class; it was taught in textbooks (although Iraqi identity predominated). Arab nationalism also strongly emphasized anti-imperialist, anti-Zionist themes and played to the plight of the Palestinians and US "support" for Israel. It also emphasized Iraq's potential role as an Arab world leader and model and Iraq's struggle to "contain" Iran on behalf of the Arab world.

Integrative Forces

Pan-Arabism, particularly as it was taught and propagated in Ba'th Party ideology, is not likely to be a positive integrative force in the new Iraq. However, it may have a few positive elements that can be drawn on. It is essentially a secular ideology that can act as something of a bulwark against extremist religious forces, although in recent years Iraq's Ba'thism has incorporated much religion. Ba'thists are also committed to building modern, state structures and understand how they operate. A moderate Arab nationalism could be used to generate cooperation--rather than confrontation--with Iraq's Arab neighbors and elicit support from them in Iraq's reconstruction effort. At least 80 percent of Iraq's population is Arab speaking and Arab cultural and linguistic ties are bound to exercise a pull on their identity.

Forces of Divisiveness

These positive attitudes of Arab nationalism, especially as defined by the Ba'th, do not outweigh its negative attributes. Several of these could be very divisive in Iraq and hamper--perhaps greatly--the American effort there. The chief divisive element arises from the fact that Iraq is now surrounded by Arab states whose populations (if not regimes) are increasingly antagonistic--even hostile--to the US and its interests.. As is

well known, “anti-Americanism” in the Arab world, especially among educated Arabs and “the street” is at an all time high. This is reflected in the new, popular media, especially al-Jazeera and al-’Arabiyyah TV, which broadcast anti-American material to its audiences on a constant basis. (Al-Jazeera is essentially run by Arabs--men and women--who are manifestly committed to a secular Arab nationalism). There are three themes in this media message that resonate with key groups of Iraqis:

Palestine and the Arab-Israeli problem. Daily images of Palestinian deaths and deprivation fill the screen, along with relentless anti-Israeli discourse. The US ties to Israel and its support for Israel are excoriated. The US and the Israeli side scarcely get a hearing. Whatever the merits of the case, the impact of this media blitz in Iraq is to reorient the population away from its own domestic reconstruction and focus it on the Arab-Israeli problem. If the Arab-Israeli situation continues to deteriorate, these images will increasingly affect attitudes of the Iraqi population toward the US--negatively.

The Occupation of Iraq. Much of the Arab world opposed the occupation of Iraq and regards it, not as liberation, but as a humiliating reoccurrence of Western imperialism they fought against for over a century .This theme affects the issue of legitimacy of the current Iraqi government and Arab cooperation with it. Emphasis on occupation and US withdrawal, rather than on cooperation with the US on reconstruction, will affect our ability to win over the middle class, as well as those elements in the sunni triangle and in Baghdad giving us trouble.

Isolation of Iraq from the Arab world. Another, less apparent, theme is the isolation of Iraq--and especially its current government, largely composed of opposition to Saddam’s regime--from mainstream Arab politics. The dominant Kurdish and shi’ah components of this leadership have never been enamored of Arab nationalism and may be less willing to “rejoin” the Arab mainstream, now mired in problems with the US. But the theme of isolation from the Arab world is one that will affect the Arab population.

These themes will resonate with several groups in Iraq. First, they will appeal to the Arab sunnis of the “triangle”, already a source of trouble for the coalition. Second, they may appeal to former members of the Ba’th Party, including those marginally committed ,whom we are trying to win over, by reviving a past ideology they may have agreed with. Third, it may stir the Arab middle class, including some shi’ah, with strong Arab tendencies whose support we need. Fourth, it may widen dissatisfaction with the occupation and the course it is taking, contributing to demonstrations and public expressions of discontent. Lastly, it may encourage recruitment of “fighters” from neighboring countries, especially Ba’thist Syria, to cross the border and join the battle against the US and its occupation. Motives for doing so may be mixed but the Arab themes stressed in these broadcasts are creating a climate which encourages this kind of action.

<u>Strategy:</u>

Better control of borders and better intelligence. The most likely entry points

for such fighters are Syria, Jordan and Saudi Arabia. Getting better border control from these governments is essential, along with better intelligence from Iraqis on intrusions.

A major media effort. The main counter to this Arab media effort must be a major media effort by the coalition--and more importantly--the Iraqis to counter it. Iraq's technical capacity needs strengthening, as does the employment of well qualified media personnel to broadcast a new Iraqi vision. Whether this comes in the form of a public broadcasting station (BBC or PBS) or independent channels or both is less important than the need to fund and support such an effort. Positive news on events inside Iraq, by Iraqis, and a new Iraqi vision must be put into effect immediately. Otherwise, the Arab vision presented by neighbors will undermine our effort to mobilize support in Iraq. (Iran is also a powerful media voice but that is dealt with below.)

Pan-Islamic Ideologies

In recent decades Islamic ideologies of various kinds have superceded Arab nationalism as the main challenge to an Iraqi identity and to secularism. Some originate in the shi'ah community and have been supported by the Islamic Republic of Iran. Others have their roots in the sunni Islamic world. The sunni movements have a variety of origins and some have been around for decades. Despite a multiplicity of origins, however, these movements all have a few common themes. One is a return to the Quran and the early sources of the religion--those of the first generation of Islam. A second is a desire to "purify" Islam of numerous accretions it has acquired over centuries (such as sufism). A third is a desire to install shari'ah (Islamic law) as the law of the land. A fourth is a strict adherence to Islamic rituals and practices. The latter includes such issues as dress and the status and treatment of women.

As in other Arab and Muslim countries, a sunni Islamist identity has begun to take root in Iraq, particularly among the young and educated. Some of this is a genuine turn to piety, but much of its is a shift in cultural identity similar to the rest of the Islamic world. The upsurge in religion is evident in increased mosque attendance; in the growth of beards by young men, and by the increased use of the hijab (head covering) by women.

In Iraq, the propagation of this sunni version of Islamism appears to be emanating from three general sources. One is the Muslim Brotherhood, which originated in Egypt in 1928 but came into Iraq in the 1950s. It briefly came to the surface after the 1958 revolution but was soon pushed underground. Little was heard from the movement under the Ba'th. A branch of the party surfaced in the Kurdish area in the 1990s, and it has, apparently, developed a following in the center and south of Iraq as well. Books and tapes put out by the Brotherhood circulate in Iraq and influence youth, in particular. These emphasize the same line taken by the Brotherhood in Egypt--a peaceful evolution of society in an Islamic direction until the shari'ah can triumph. The movement emphasizes education and persuasion and does not advocate open clashes with authority.

A second source is the *Salafi* movement. This is not an organization, as is the

Muslim Brotherhood, and is only a "movement" in the most general sense. It is best defined as a collection of ideas, taking its name from the *salaf* (ancestors). It emphasizes a return to the ideas and practices of the first generation of Islam. These ideas have been most closely adopted by Saudi Arabia, following the teachings of Muhammad ibn al-Wahhab; hence, those who have adopted these ideas and practices are often called "Wahhabis". The Saudis have long funded an "outreach" program in other Muslim countries and communities, building mosques, establishing madrassahs (Islamic schools), and distributing Qurans and other religious material. These materials propagate their own strict *salafi* version of Islam. In the north of Iraq, there are numerous mosques and schools built with Saudi money and there is little doubt that their materials are reaching other areas of Iraq, particularly the conservative sunni triangle. But Saudi Arabia is not the only source of such teachings; they also emanate from other Gulf states and probably from Jordan and Egypt as well. The *salafi* teachings are the basis of the MB as well.

A third source of such teaching is the Islamic Movement of Iraqi Kurdistan (IMIK), which established itself in northern Iraq in the 1980s. It was originally pan-Islamic, but under pressure from Kurdish nationalism, it gradually limited its efforts to Iraqi Kurdistan. Its ideas and practices did not differ from salafis. Established in eastern Kurdistan, it eventually fought with the PUK and gained control over a slice of territory on the Iranian border including the town of Halabjah.. It undoubtedly received support and funds from Iran, although it is sunni, and probably from the Gulf as well. Eventually the IMIK split up into factions, one of which became the Ansar al-Islam, an even more radical group committed to jihad. As PUK control over this territory collapsed, the Ansar took in refugees from terrorist groups fleeing Afghanistan after the collapse of the Taliban. They then established a terrorist enclave on Iraqi soil The coalition now controls this territory, but the Ansar forces have scattered and reentered Iraq from Iran to take up arms against the coalition. The IMIK itself was a source of salafi teachings and its material filtered down from the north to Baghdad and elsewhere. The Ansar is now a source of fighters as well.

The teachings of all of these groups are so similar that there is little to distinguish them. Indeed, those who are reading their materials and adopt their principles may not themselves be aware of the source. Differences lie mainly in degree of enforcement, and a willingness to take up arms to achieve their goals. The Muslim Brotherhood (MB) is dedicated to peaceful pursuit of its goals mainly through education. Salafis, in general, do not believe in armed struggle, but a radical minority within these movements, like Usama bin Ladin, have adopted the principle of jihad--armed struggle for their cause. The IMIK had a militia and fought with its rivals in the north. The Ansar is a full fledged jihad movement dedicated to fighting its opponents, including the coalition.

Saddam attempted, not without some success, to co-opt these movements. He built mosques; he put an Islamic inscription on the flag; and he incorporated religion into Ba'thist ideology where it was mixed with a nationalist, anti-Western identity. This Islamized version of Ba'thism was apparently taught in an Islamic faculty of Saddam University; it was also strong in the provincial sunni towns of the triangle as well as among youth in Baghdad's universities.

As this experiment indicates, the new sunni Islamism can easily be mixed with nationalism. It is part of the new politics of cultural identity. Both Arab nationalism and the new Islamist movements are strongly anti-imperialist and anti-Zionist; Islamic movements go further than Arab nationalism in being opposed to Western culture as well. But both reinforce one another.

Shi'ah Islamic movements have been dealt with earlier. A return to Islam as the guiding principle of the state was a fundamental tenet of the shi'ah Islamic movements which arose in Iraq, starting with the Da'wah, in the late 1950s. While the Da'wah was pan-Islamic in the beginning--attempting to appeal to sunni Islamists as well as shi'ah--it made little headway in this endeavor and gradually came to appeal, essential to Iraqi shi'ah as a persecuted minority. The same was true of SCIRI, established among Iraqi shi'ah exiles in Iran in 1982. Both of these groups adopted violence against the regime and SCIRI formed a militia, the Badr Brigade, to carry out military operations against Iraq. There have been other, smaller, shi'ah Islamic movements founded in Iraq as well.

Under the Ba'th these movements were severely persecuted and many of their members were scattered. Da'wah members dispersed throughout the Arab world, the Gulf, Iran and Europe. Other movements went to Lebanon and Syria where they received some protection from Syria because of its alliance with Iran. The most important source of support for these movements came from Iran which used SCIRI, as an instrument of policy against Iraq during the Iran Iraq war. Both the Da'wah and SCIRI now have seats on the GC and aspirations for participation in a new government.; hence they are cooperating with the coalition, although disarming the Badr Brigade has been a sensitive issue. If this cooperation breaks down, the Badr Brigade could be a disruptive element.

These more moderate shi'ah religious parties have now been outflanked by a militant shi'ah leader, Muqtada al-Sadr, using the network of in 1999. He has also mobilized the poor and alienated population of Sadr City, which he has renamed after his father and established a base there, and in Kufah in the south, taking charge of mosques, hospitals, clinics and schools, following the model of Hizballah in Lebanon. Thus far Sadr has stopped short of using violence to challenge the US, but if the state begins to unravel and a real struggle for power takes place, he could resort to this. He could also urn to outsiders for support--Iranian hardline elements; al-Qa'idah and Ansar fighters, and even ex-Ba'thists, with whom he is said to be collaborating.

Forces for Integration

An Islamist ideology is not, per se, a threat to the identity of the Iraqi state. While most of these movements do not believe in the primacy of any nationalist ideology, they do accept the Iraqi state and in fact are competing for political control within it. However, they would change dramatically the content of Iraqi identity. Instead of being secular, Iraq would become religious. Given the strength of Islamist movements in the last two decades, it is almost a given that the new Iraqi identity will be more religious. However, strong secular forces in Iraq and the moderation of many practitioners of Islam,

will limit how much religion will be introduced into the constitution and into society. The main problem in dealing with these movements will be in the social sphere-- freedom and equality for women; family law; dress; and behavior.

Forces for Divisiveness:

While sunni and shi'ah religiosity can be incorporated into a new Iraqi identity, there are several elements of divisiveness in this religiosity that bear close watching.

Involvement in pan-Islamic movements. Both shi'ah and sunni Islamic movements could drag Iraq into the vortex of regional Islamic politics (just as it was previously dragged into pan-Arab politics.) This would weaken an Iraqi identity. Worse, these movements provide an opportunity for radical, even terrorist, organizations to gain a toehold in Iraq. One such group is Ansar al-Islam. Another is al-Qa'idah and its offshoots. Among the shi'ah, it could attract elements from similar groups in Lebanon and Iran. These groups will use an Islamic ideology to make Iraq a magnet for terrorist groups.

Interference by neighbors. Islamic movements provide an opening for neighbors to interfere in Iraq and, if they desire, to use their leverage to destabilize the situation. This is particularly true of Iran and Syria/Lebanon, with its ties to shi'ah groups but it may also be true of Saudi Arabia with its funding for sunni groups.

Anti-Americanism. Many of these movements have strong anti-foreign, anti-American ideologies, which will make cooperation with the coalition difficult. They already appear to be feeding the insurgency in the Arab sunni areas. They also have strong anti-Zionist/ anti-Israeli feelings which they are propagating.

Splits between Iraqi communities. The new religious vision for Iraq will create tensions with more secular elements in the Arab sunni community and make separation between mosque and state more difficult to achieve. The two differing versions of Islam--sunni and shi'ah--may also make accommodation between these two communities more difficult to achieve.

New alliances. Islamic movements could create two dangerous scenarios for the West. One, already underway, is the creation of a new "sunni" front of ex-Ba'thists, new Islamists and outside terrorists--all united against a foreign occupation. These groups can unite on a nationalist and religious agenda which can get support not only from Islamic groups outside of Iraq, but neighbors, like Syria, who want to use leverage against the US for their own aims. If the Arab-Israeli problem gains intensity, this might come to include Palestinians as well. Even more dangerous would be a situation where more militant sunni Islamists link up with shi'ah extremists, such as Muqtada al-Sadr, to oppose the coalition. While such an alliance would be fragile at best because of theological and political divisions between these communities, a temporary alliance between the two aimed at ousting the foreign occupying power cannot be ruled out. Iran might support such an alliance . In the worst case, Iran and Syria could team up to oppose the coalition

and the governing structures it is establishing.

Strategy:

Border Security and Intelligence: Border control must be exercised to prevent intrusion of foreign "fighters" and hostile Islamic elements. Pressure should be put on neighbors to exert this control. Intelligence is critical but difficult to get. This requires penetration of mosques, religious institutions and other cultural centers which are difficult to penetrate and culturally sensitive. This is a job for Iraqis. But the only way to deter Islamists who advocate violence against the coalition authorities and the Iraqi governing council is to have information, from inside, about possible perpetration of violence.

Moderating the Shi'ah Hawzah: Support moderate shi'ah clerics and their establishment, many of whom favor the "quietist" tradition. Contributions to institutions for education and charity is one way to encourage a new, more liberal, Iraqi shi'ah view, using the Khu'i foundation and quietist clerics like Ali al-Sistani.. Work with shi'ah to modernize their clerical education.

Encouraging a new vision among sunnis. The Arab sunni community presents a special case. As the previous dominant political group, they have now been reduced to the status of a minority. Their anxiety is palpable. Sunni Islamic groups are making inroads in this community strengthening anti-Western feelings. This is difficult to deal with since much of the message is delivered in mosques and other establishments off-limits to the West. A concerted effort to develop a strategy to deal with this problem has to be made. In the meantime, Arab sunnis, as part of Iraq's middle class, must be approached on that basis. This approach will resonate among some, who are anxious to maintain their social mobility. These sunnis usually send their children to public schools. Special attention must be paid to the curriculum and the textbooks, encouraging these sunnis to participate in the new Iraq and its new government.

Social Structure

Demographics

The next two sections look at Iraq from an entirely different perspective: that of identities formed through shifting demographics and changing social structures, rather than ethnic and sectarian backgrounds. The first part will concentrate on the urban-rural and geographic distribution of the population and its age profile as forces shaping identity. The second will look a changing social structure--in particular the emergence of classes; tribalism and the role of women. In general, these factors cut across ethnic and sectarian lines, tending to blur ethnic and sectarian identities; in some cases, however, demographic patterns reinforce communal identities. It is these cases which are likely to prove divisive.

The Urban-Rural Divide.

In 1957, Iraq was still a rural country with 63 percent of its population living in rural areas. Today, it is "over urbanized", with 75 percent living in areas defined as urban. One Iraqi development study points out that this is higher than many industrialized nations.[8] Much of the urbanization has been recent and rapid, although the process has been going on since the 1930s. The oil boom of the 1970s, for example, produced much rural to urban migration from the south to the center In the Kurdish area, forced resettlement by the government urbanized the Kurdisprovinces. Wars, rebellion and sanctions have drained the countryside in Iraq, leaving less than a quarter of the population on farmland or in settled village communities. The biggest growth has taken place in Baghdad, which has become a metropolis of over five million people. Basra and Mosul are over a million.

There are several consequences of this trend for Iraq's economic and social development, and its cultural and political integration. One is the loss of agricultural potential and population, and the skewed economic distribution of the population. Agriculture has been in constant decline for decades, in terms of GNP and population employed. Although Iraq has rainfed territory (much of it in the north) and river systems for irrigation, today agriculture produces only 6 percent of GNP and employs only 13 percent of the population. Industry, large and small, has generally been concentrated in cities and was encouraged by the previous regime but fared badly under wars and sanctions; it does not take up the slack from declining agriculture and it employs only about 7-9 percent of the population. Thus, the overwhelming majority of the population--65-70 percent-is employed in services, essentially an urban phenomenon. While some of this service employment is "productive"--in finance, banking, tourism and trade--most is not. Rather, most Iraqis were employed by the government--in the military, the bureaucracy, education and in government owned and controlled industries paid for by oil revenue.

This government-led service sector did help strengthen a sense of identity with the Iraq state which paid salaries and provided benefits, but this skewed employment profile also helped to strengthen an autocratic central government. The new Iraqi government will undoubtedly try to break that mold. The problem in doing so is two fold First, the urban service class is used to subsidized living based on oil revenues, rather than in producing its own wealth. Oil revenues will take some time to flow and an urban society requires numerous services which cannot yet be paid for. **AID's economic plan for Iraq will, of course, have to address this fundamental problem as it seeks to privatize the economy and provide jobs for the population.** But the high degree of urbanization and the dependence of the population on government as the main source of employment has conditioned the outlook of the Iraqi population. Its sense of Iraqi identity is, in some measure, geared to entitlement; to government provided services and a relatively high standard of living; not to productive enterprise which would support this

[8] The Iraqi Economists Association, The Human Development Report, 1995 (Baghdad: 1995).

urban life style.

Second, there is little interest in agriculture or livestock raising in Iraq, except for some Kurdish communities. It will be difficult to get Iraqis back on the farm--or even into factories or "blue collar" work, which may mean a reduction in benefits and status. In the meantime, urbanization without services or jobs to support it, will be a constant source of instability and discontent, much of which will be focused on the occupying authority. It also makes for a more difficult security situation, since cities are harder to police than rural areas.

The answer to this problem in the short term is more security, more jobs and restoration of services. In the long term, the solution will require a more market-oriented economy, more investment in productive sectors (agriculture, industry, productive services) and encouragement of small and medium sized businesses--especially for export. In thinking of productive services, tourism comes to mind, especially in the north where there is an excellent environment for recreational facilities and in the south, where antiquities abound. Such an industry would open the country to the outside world; spread regional development, and provide employment for smaller cities and towns.

Urbanization has also resulted in the rise of provincial towns. While this has spurred social mobility, in some cases it may have had a negative effect on on Iraqi identity. Provincial cities have often been more ethnically homogeneous, reinforcing, rather than reducing, sub-national identities. The smaller cities of the sunni triangle--Tikrit, Samarra', Fallujah, Ramadi--reinforce a distinct sunni identity. In the Kurdish north, urban migration has been mainly to regional cities--Sulaymaniyyah, Irbil, Dohuk--reinforcing their Kurdish character. In the south, the distinctly shi'ah character of Najaf and Karbala is clear. These cities also reinforce a sense of regionalism and strong local identities, rather than a broader, national identity.

Even within these larger cities, where a more cosmopolitan culture can be expected to take root, rapid urbanization has often led to a "ruralization" of the city, which cannot absorb all of the migrants. While living standards do improve and many migrants do move, eventually, into the middle class, many do not. Instead, they congregate in settlements and quarters in which they retain their rural, tribal and religious affiliations. They recreate their traditional environment in the city. Two areas, in particular, stand out as examples of this phenomenon. One is Sadr City, a shi'ah quarter now comprising at least a third of Baghdad's population. The other is the urban collective settlements in the Kurdish north.

The Geographic Shift

A second, perhaps even more important demographic shift has been geographic. There has been an increased concentration of the population in the center of the country. Baghdad province, always a dominant population center--now has some 33 percent of Iraq's population. If one adds the four central provinces (those included in the so-called sunni triangle--Salah al-Din; Anbar, Ninevah and Diyala), this area comprises 50 percent

of the population. The three northern provinces, dominated by Kurds (Dohuk, Irbil and Sulaymaniyyah) constitute 13 percent of the population. Kirkuk, fought over by Kurds and the central government, constitutes 3 percent. The nine provinces to the south of Baghdad, almost wholly shi'ah, make up only 32 percent. In fact, through wars, rebellion and emigration (sometimes to Baghdad) the Kurdish provinces of the north and the shi'ah provinces of the south have lost population to the central provinces, especially Baghdad, in recent decades.

As is well known, the center is the repository not only of power but of many of the benefits and services of government--a higher standard of living, education and medical facilities, and modern amenities (electricity, TV, better housing, etc.). This concentration of benefits was particularly pronounced under Saddam. After the rebellion of 1991, Saddam neglected both areas and in fact governed by using the center and the Arab sunni population in this area to control the rest of the country. To a considerable extent, much of this population worked for the government and was economically dependent on it. While Saddam used propaganda to manipulate the identity of Iraqis, traditionally the center and the mixed population within it, has always considered itself the stronghold and repository of the nationalist ideology and the upholder of the Iraqi state. Hence some of his propaganda resonated with this group.

The removal of the regime and the policy followed by the US since the war has reversed this situation. The coalition has not only removed the previous government and its military underpinnings; it has largely disenfranchised the Arab sunnis--by outlawing the Ba'th Party; and it has decentralized government to a considerable degree. While such decentralization was essential to prevent a new authoritarian regime from taking control, these actions represent a radical reversal of previous trends and must be recognized as such. In attempting to empower the Kurds in the north and the shi'ah in the south, in establishing new municipal and provincial councils, the coalition has dismantled the center. To some extend this strategy needs to be reversed or the Iraqi state may itself dissolve, to say nothing of an Iraqi identity. A functioning national government must be restored and democratized. The sense of Iraqi identity that was strongest in the center should be nurtured and spread throughout the country without destroying the good beginning made in decentralizing administration.

The Age Profile

The third major trend in demographics is the youth of the population. Iraq's population is very young--even for most developing countries. Some 56 percent is below the age of 19. In addition to the implications of this youth bulge for economic development, it also has implications for the issue of cultural and political identity. Essentially, this demographic profile needs to be thought of in terms of generations and their experience. Only an older generations--those over 40, can remember a time before Saddam, war and sanctions devastated the country. An even smaller number of these can recall the monarchy regime when government and society were more integrated, at least in Baghdad, and when some democratic institutions existed. A middle generation, now in their 40s or 50s, lived through a period of military rule and the economic boom of the

1970s when things were better in Iraq. Many were educated abroad and hence have a greater sense of the outside world. But the majority of Iraqis who have come of age after 1980 have known no other regime but that of Saddam. Few have been educated abroad. Most have served in wars; all have endured over a decade of sanctions. This generation--the future of the country--is isolated not only from the outside world, but also from other areas of their own country. The Kurds have remained in their own region; Baghdadis have seldom traveled south. In the aftermath of the 1991 revolt, tensions between and among the various ethnic and sectarian communities intensified. A sense of common destiny among this generation is far weaker than among the middle and older generations. The authoritarian culture under which they have been raised has also sowed much distrust and has not prepared them for a more open, democratic future. This damage needs to be repaired, and their sense of a future in Iraq, restored.

Integrative Forces

Cities can be forces for integration but they need to provide services for their citizens and establish civic institutions which bring people together rather than driving them apart. Over urbanization and refugee displacement need to be addressed. Modern education and employment, usually a feature of urban life, bring people of diverse backgrounds together and teach them tolerance and intercommunication skills. It is in the larger, mixed cities (Baghdad, Basra, Mosul) and in their middle classes that a sense of Iraqi identity is strongest. The US should concentrate on strengthening the middle class and the civic and educational institutions that bring people together at all levels.

The center, most specifically Baghdad, and the government and academic institutions that employ a large portion of Iraq's middle class, is also a force for integration. Though corrupted by an authoritarian regime, the central government, by definition and in spirit, represents Iraq. A representative government at the center of Iraq, able to deliver services to the periphery, is one of the most powerful forces for integration and can convey a strong--but appropriate--sense of Iraqi identity. Replacement of the regime has weakened the center and with it a sense of Iraqi identity; the center needs to be strengthened in an appropriate way to restore a sense of balance.

The youth bulge in the population is a neutral factor with respect to Iraqi identity. Too little is known about their ideas and aspirations to draw conclusions about how their views have been shaped by years of totalitarianism. However, there is considerable anecdotal evidence of distrust, cynicism and isolation. There is also evidence of an upsurge in religious identity among youth, sunnis as well as shi'ah. Iraq's rising generation, if properly trained, motivated and put to work, could be an extremely productive element in producing a new Iraq and taking it in a new direction. But their faith in the country and a new direction needs to be created, almost from scratch.

Forces of Divisiveness:

Poor integration of migrants. Several factors in these demographics could act as divisive forces in Iraq's integration. One is the poor integration of migrants into the

cities where large slums or refugee settlements allow alienation--and ethnic, sectarian and tribal identities--to fester and grow. In particular, the large, poor, distinctly shi'ah areas of Baghdad--such as Sadr City--pose a continuing threat to stability. This quarter has the potential to be mobilized by extremist shi'ah forces, such as the Sadrites, on several grounds, including a radical shi'ah identity; an anti-US and anti-occupation program; and a sense of alienation from the state. It is here that Sadr can find the foot soldiers for a movement against the US and any new government established.

Collective settlements. In the north, there are several comparable flashpoints. The poorly integrated collective settlements, while not yet posing similar problems for the Kurdish parties, could be a danger to order in the north. A new religious identity is growing in Kurdish areas that could turn hostile, to the US, the new Iraqi government, and to the traditional Kurdish parties as well.

Ethnic displacement. A third tinderbox--directly related to the identity isssue--is the displacement of Arab and Turkman population in cities along the ethnic fault line in the north. Land and property disputes in Kirkuk, Tuz Khurmatu and elsewhere in the north, where Kurds have been displaced in the past and Arab settled, and where Kurds are now, in turn, replacing Arabs and Turkman, are likely to be a dangerous cause of instability. Such claims need to be settled by courts of law based on records and peaceably.

Local power struggles. Lastly, as politics and government become more decentralized in Iraq, a power struggle may well ensue in various municipalities and provinces, which could also be divisive. This may even now be shaping up in Najaf and Kufah as various shi'ah clerical factions compete for power, possibly seeking allies in other shi'ah communities and even in Iran. Such struggles could engulf much of the rest of Iraq.

Strategy:

Integrate urban areas. US strategy should be, in the first instance, to better integrate urban areas through economic programs which bring services and jobs to poorer areas. It is essential to fund and strengthen practical services, such as clinics and health care, especially in poor areas like Sadr city to compete with the services set up by Sadr or other religious extremist forces. The clinics, schools and social services should be better, easily available and the funds for them channeled through the Iraqi government or local government offices. Practical, functioning judicial services should dispense quick and fair justice; their decisions should be recognized and implemented. At the same time, the urban middle class communities which have learned to live in a multi-ethnic, multi-sectarian environment, and who normally have a well-developed sense of Iraqi identity, need to be expanded and strengthened, through civic organizations, educational services and government programs which emphasize Iraqi, not sub-national--identities.

Strengthen the central government. Baghdad is the nerve center of Iraq and its most integrated city. It has been weakened by the regime change and the resulting

instability, and it needs to be resuscitated. It also needs to be linked with the provinces. through the extension of services to the provincial governments and by making sure the provincial governments are well represented in Baghdad. Iraqi identity and a stake in an Iraqi future depends on a functioning central government which represents the entire country.

Outreach to youth. Youth needs to be reached, especially through education and through opportunities to study and travel abroad. The baleful influence of the Saddam Husain regime needs to be undone. Youth must be given a stake in the future to assure an Iraqi identity and their views shaped through reform of the education system in a more open, democratic system. This means money now for training and for education, especially schooling abroad, whether for a few months or a few years. Scholarships to higher educational institutions should be given to promising students. Vocational education should be provided for poorer areas. Sports clubs; internet cafes and other activities should be encouraged.

Strengthen civic institutions which integrate ethnic and sectarian communities. Create and strengthen civic institutions in Baghdad and other cities which bring mixed ethnic and sectarian groups together. Funding priorities should go to associations with mixed participation, not to those limited to Kurds, shi'ah or any other ethnic or sectarian group. Strengthen civic associations with a national reach or that function in several cities and towns in different regions, not just one area.

Social Structure

Still another way to look at Iraqi identity is through the lens of social structure--or "class". In earlier periods of Iraqi history, identification with class was stronger among many components of the population than ethnicity or sect. In fact, it was this identity which shaped politics in the period from 1950 to 1980. It is only in recent decades that ethnicity and sectarianism have superceded class identity.

The revolution of 1958 can de described in large part as a revolt of the middle class and it put that class in power from then on. (Unfortunately it also put the military, the most powerful component of that class, in power as well.) Post-1958 regimes dismantled the old upper class, ended the power of the rural landholders, and nationalized industry, banks and insurance companies, weakening the old business class. At the same time, money was spent on expanding the middle class. Education, at all levels, saw a phenomenal explosion. For example, in 1958, there were only 1,100 university graduates. By 1990, there were 43,000. In the intervening years, Iraqi higher education produced graduates and professionals of all kinds numbering in the hundreds of thousands. [See appendix 1] Most of these were educated in modern secular subjects. Graduates of religious studies virtually disappeared while those in science, technology, economics and administration burgeoned. So, too, did those in the humanities and the social sciences. Urbanization also expanded this class as oil wealth created new jobs in the city. The oil boom of the mid to late 1970s spurred this development, creating remarkable social mobility in Iraq in all areas--the center, the south and the north. The

new middle class included Arabs and Kurds; shi'ah and sunnis; men and women. Many moved from poverty to the middle class as they moved from rural areas to the city. Most of this class was salaried or professional.

Most of this middle class was professional and salaried and many worked for the government--in the military, in the bureaucracy, in education and in state-owned factories or businesses. A study of the middle class in 1977 shows that there were about 185,000 professionals; almost 200,000 middle and upper level civil servants; and almost 300,000 employed in the service and business sectors. Together with their dependents, they constituted 35 percent of the urban population; 22 percent of the total. A lower middle class of lower level civil servants; small businessmen and skilled workers and technicians constituted 20 percent of the urban population; 13 percent of the total. [Appendix 2] an employment profile of the population by economic sector between 1967 and 1987 shows a dramatic change. Those engaged in agriculture (farmers) dropped from 53 percent to 13 percent; those engaged in services rose from 13 percent to 53 percent. [Appendis 3]

Only a minority was engaged in business or could be considered an independent economic middle class. There were many small retailers, restaurateurs and merchants, but these were generally at the lower end of the scale. By the 1990s, the state had taken over large portions of the industrial and service sectors and even much of trade. The oil industry also swamped the ability of small and medium industry to compete, although contractors flourished. An independent economic middle class existed, but it was weak in comparison to those working for the state. Nonetheless, the tradition of enterprise is there and could flourish if encouraged.

The middle class also produced a vibrant intellectual component of writers, poets, artists and academics. Iraqi artists and poets, in particular, experimented with modern forms and themes and achieved wide acclaim in the Arab world. For a time in the late 1950s and early 1960s, they flourished in a relatively vigorous civic society. They were still operating in the 1970s, although their productivity declined. By the 1980s, much of this group had either gone into exile or been Ba'thized. They created a sense of pride in Iraqi culture and a distinct Iraqi identity. This group included Kurds and Arabs, shi'ah and sunnis, Christians and Muslims. .

Under the wars and sanctions brought by the Ba'th in the 1980s and 1990s, this middle class shrank, as did its income and social status. At the same time, the exodus of Iraqis produced a large exile class, including large numbers of its professional middle class. Some have put the number of Iraqi exiles as high as four million, but two to three million is more likely, and only a portion of these were middle class. A high percentage (over 500,000) are in Iran. A number have sunk roots in the West (especially in England and the US) where they have been successful financially and professionally. Their success in the West shows what educated Iraqis can accomplish in an appropriated environment. This community is a valuable resource for the new Iraqi state--in terms of assets it can invest, expertise and skills it can bring and attitudes and values it can infuse into a country which has been isolated for decades. While some tensions may exist between insiders and outsiders, these should not be so severe that they cannot be

reconciled to the benefit of a new Iraq.

Despite a loss of population and a decline in living standards, a middle class still exists in Iraq. However, its income, its self confidence, and its skills have declined. Per capital income, which reached a low point--about $600 in the early 1990s , rose to about $1,000 just before the invasion, about 25 to 30percent of what it was at its height in 1980. Education also declined as students dropped out of school to work and cynicism grew as degrees no longer led to good jobs. Professionals either left the jobs for which they were trained to work in the market place (driving taxis, selling trinkets) or took extra jobs to make ends meet. The middle class on salaries suffered from hyper inflation, often selling their books and household goods to subsist. All this has been well documented. The upshot is that a once affluent, dynamic middle class has become poorer, smaller, and demoralized as it has been cut off from intellectual and professional advances abroad. Nonetheless, a professional, technocratic, intellectual and business class still exists in Iraq. In 1994, in the midst of sanctions, there were 203,000 students in Iraqi higher education institutions and 1.1 million in secondary schools, indicating that the educated middle class is replenishing itself. Obviously, it needs employment for its talents and intellectual rejuvenation from outside .It is eager for both.

Under the Ba'th, a new upper class also took shape, in spite or because of sanctions. While the Ba'th regime did not, in general, encourage an independent private sector, they used the oil wealth that came into their hands to fund development and construction projects through their supporters. Contractors, financial dealers, and smugglers, flourished under the patronage of Saddam and his sons. Corruption was rife, with members of Saddam's family reaping profits from kickbacks. By 2003, a well established economic "mafia" had taken shape, all tied in some way to the government and contacts with it. These included shi'ah, Arab sunnis, Kurds and Christians. Among the 41 multimillionaire contractors who made wealth in the last two decades, half had close ties to senior state officials. In any new economic order, care must be taken to broaden the base of the economic middle class.

Under sanctions, the lower class also grew. Although rural farmers, whose produce was needed, did fairly well for a change, the urban poor and the working class, which had lived off the proceeds of the oil economy, fared poorly as jobs vanished. In general, sanctions took a toll on the salaried classes; those who could live off the market economy, whether workers or merchants, did better.

Integrative Forces:

The greatest force for integration and the creation of a distinctly modern, Western oriented identity for Iraq lies in its middle class. This includes the salaried professionals, the entrepreneurial sector, and the cultural and intellectual elite. There are several reasons for this. As a whole, this middle class cuts across ethnic and sectarian communities and is inclusive of all Iraqis. There are still a number who have traveled and studied abroad and have a different view of the world. Most of this education has been in modern, secular subjects. Almost all are urban, with a high concentration in Baghdad and

most have worked, in one way or another, for the government and been obliged to join the Ba'th party. All these factors give the middle class a major stake in the creation of a modern, progressive Iraqi nation. Strengthening the middle class and bringing it into contact with the outside world is the best way to strengthen an Iraqi identity and to define that identity in a modern, progressive direction. This task should be a major focus of any US AID strategy.

Divisive Elements

There are also a number of divisive factors in Iraq's social structure which could work to spoil the nation-building project. .

The Ba'thist economic mafia. One is the existence of an economic upper class created largely by the Ba'th and beholden to government for contracts and hand-outs. This class is resented by most of the population and discredited by its ties to the Saddam regime. (This situation is similar to the new economic mafia in the USSR). As Iraq shifts to a market economy; as the US seeks to prime the economic pump and to reconstruct Iraq, it must be careful not to empower the very same mafia once again. Nothing would be easier, since these groups and families are ready to step in and provide experience. While legitimate investors should not be discouraged, the playing field must be kept level enough to allow for upward mobility for the general public.

The Ba'thization of the middle class. A second, more significant factor is the degree to which the middle class was Ba'thized under the Saddam regime. The technocratic class, the administrators, the media and the educators, all had to join the party to get ahead. While not all were believers, many were. The Ba'th did inculcate a relatively secular, non-sectarian vision of the nation-state, but its content was excessively authoritarian, militaristic , chauvinist and anti-Western.[9] Separating the true believers from the careerists, and redirecting the vision of former Ba'thists will be a major task. Much of this class is needed in the new Iraq, as is their sense of national identity--but not the other attitudes. In particular, the strong, anti-imperialist, anti-American orientation passed on to several generations must be addressed. The Ba'th encouraged a fierce sense of Iraqi independence. Unless this can be superceded by a new national vision, it will make cooperation with the US difficult. Here, efforts in the media and in the education system are essential. Unless this is done, the "new" middle class and the structures it creates, may return once again to an authoritarian tradition and an anti-US stance.

Impoverishment of the working class.The poorer classes in Iraq have grown under sanctions, and the stalemate in the economy since the occupation has made their position difficult. Joblessness and massive unemployment, particularly in urban areas, will be a real threat to stability. As already indicated, these groups could be mobilized by radical, anti-occupation forces. .In the longer term, the new Iraq must provide a social network for the lower classes together with education and a path for social mobility out

[9] A good example of this is found in the elementary and secondary text books in civic and history, meant to shape the next educated generation.

of poverty.

Tribalism

A second feature of Iraq's social structure is tribalism. Outside the larger cities, tribal, clan and extended family ties have always been strong in Iraq and they remain strong today. Tribal identity provides a counterpart both to Iraqi national identity and to ethnic and religious identities. Under the monarchy, tribal organization and tribal loyalties dominated most of the country, but as the central government built roads, schools and hospitals; collected taxes and trained an army "tribalism" eroded. However, while loyalties to kin and clan--and to local regions of origin--declined, they did not disappear. Rather, they were submerged and superceded by more modern ideologies--nationalism, communism and egalitarian reform movements. In the 1960s and 1970s, tribalism and tribal identity was considered backward and not politically correct. In the 1980s and 1990s, Saddam revived tribalism and the identity associated with it. As Saddam Husain got into wars which eroded his administrative structure, he came increasingly to rely on tribes for support in the center and for administration in the countryside. By 2000 Iraq had been detribalized.

At the same time, tribal values were stressed in the new formulation of Ba'th ideology. People once again were allowed to use tribal names. This policy not only reinforced the importance of kinship ties and loyalty, but strengthened regional ties as well. .

Integrative Factors

Tribal and family ties are not a wholly negative factor with respect to national identity, provided they do not become the primary identity. In periods of rapid transition, particularly when government structures break down and services are reduced, tribal structure in Iraq can, and does, fill a vacuum. Tribal leadership can provide services and keep order. And tribes have always been a mediating force with the central government. Clan and tribe have also provided a social security network of mutual help to sustain society. In modern times, tribal leadership has also proven to be a good background for political leadership, providing skills in mobilizing people and mediating disputes. This is particularly true in the Kurdish north. In modern times, tribal families have often gone into business, providing a strong component of the business and entrepreneurial class.

In filling leadership positions, particularly in local areas, tribal leaders have recently emerged as natural choices. Many are now educated professionals as well. But tribal leadership must be used and selected with care. Relying on one tribal group can generate feuds with others and in many--most--cases tribal leaders will favor their own tribal clients, leading to a culture of nepotism.

Divisive Factors:

The problem with tribalism and tribal identity is that it undercuts a broader national identity and is not a sound basis for a modern nation state. It puts loyalty to

family and kin ahead of national interest. It encourages patrimonial politics, rather than a dynamic which focuses on parties and programs. Throughout much of Iraq's history, it has been difficult, whether in the formation of governments or political parties, to break away from this patrimonialism. The patrimonial system also functions in the economy as well, with business often kept in family hands and jobs and perquisites given to relatives. This system of patronage and reliance on kin (wasta) undercuts the idea of merit and achievement, a fundamental value in modern society. While patrimonialism will remain in Iraq, more needs to be done to wean Iraqis away from tribalism and patrimonial politics toward a system based on merit and achievement.

Women:

Iraq, even under the Ba'th, had a good record on gender issues and Iraqi women have made consistent and substantial progress in education, the professions and in personal freedom. Traditional, more conservative elements in Iraq, particularly in rural areas, remain bound by practices which tend to segregate women, keep them at home and under the "protection" of male members, and reduce their opportunities for education and mobility. But increasingly these practices have changed in the cities and among the urban middle classes. This progress however suffered under the sanctions regime, when education and employment declined. .

In recent years, among religious elements in Iraq, both sunni and shi'ah, there has been some pressure to reverse this process. Since the coalition invasion, the emergence of extremist religious factions among shi'ah and sunnis has put the status of women in question. Some of these groups favor a more conservative position on gender--separation of the sexes; strict dress codes; and restrictions on behavior and mobility. It is not clear how strong these tendencies are, but they may impact the progress women had made in education and the professions as well as increased freedom in their social life.

Deference to religion and religious proclivities should not be equated with backwardness. Nonetheless, Iraq, at official levels, has usually followed a policy of encouraging female education and equality in the pursuit of jobs and careers, although few women rose to the top of the political system. . Nor has there been any attempt at segregation in the work place. Among the educated middle class, it was not unusual for women to meet and select their future partners themselves. These gains, already achieved, should be preserved. It would be a step back to lose the advances already made, and steps should be taken to preserve them. Women's organizations should be supported and funding given to organizations and associations which have good records in hiring and promoting women.

Strategy:

Strengthen the educated middle class. To strengthen national cohesion and create a modern, Western-oriented national identity, the single most important strategy the US can follow is to strengthen Iraq's educated middle class The strategy should focus on improving their social and economic status (prosperity and mobility) rather than on

accommodating narrow ethnic and sectarian identities. The intellectual and cultural component of the middle class has, in the past, played a vigorous role in social and cultural life which should be revived. As a whole, the middle class in Iraq has always had the strongest identification with the creation and building of the Iraqi state. Identification with modern, middle class goals will further the kind of Iraq that the US wants to see emerge. There are a number of ways in which this can be undertaken to enable the middle class to play a constructive role in the development of an Iraqi identity and in the democratic political process.

Open economic opportunities to all. In strengthening the economic basis of this class the US should make certain economic opportunities are open to all, establishing commercial rules that provide a level playing field and prevent the strengthening of the economic mafia created by Saddam. Loans to small and medium sized business as well as teaching modern business practices will support and develop these sectors and help them become independent of the state.

Develop civic institutions.The US should fund and encourage professional associations that cut across ethnic and sectarian lines, especially those like jurists, lawyers, and journalists, which can encourage professional standards. Make certain funding goes to integrated institutions, not those limited to one ethnic or sectarian group. Labor unions should be encouraged and strengthened.

Strengthen education at all levels. Improving, expanding and upgrading educational institutions at the higher level, together with exchange programs, will strengthen the professional classes and help tie them to the west. Emphasis should be put on social sciences and humanities, particularly in the revision of textbooks and development of the curriculum at the high school level, along with teacher training.

De-Ba'thification. De-Ba'thification will present one of the greatest challenges in efforts to strengthen the middle class and move it toward democracy. Appropriate procedures, which avoid personal retribution, must be established and every effort should be made to employ "nominal" parties members and give them a stake in the system.

Strengthen issue based political organizations. To encourage issue based politics, rather than the politics of cultural identity, civic and political organizations devoted to public exploration and advancement of issues and programs should be supported. These would include think tanks and their programs, and possibly even "interest groups", such as those involved in the environment; human rights; the status of women, and others.. While funding political parties would not be appropriate, the Republican and Democratic Institutes could be used to teach such organizations how to mobilize public opinion and advance their causes in the legislature.

Reduce Tribalism. While some tribal leadership and networks can be used in the short term to maintain security and social services, they should not be made the basis of the new social and political structure. Tribalism should be reduced in favor of a system of achievement based on merit, not kinship.

Preserve women's gains. Women have enjoyed increasing social status in Iraq, with access to education and jobs. The US should try to preserve these gains.