

**Iraq Literature Monitor  
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**New Report**

Dear Colleague,

Welcome to the first issue of the Iraq Literature Monitor (ILM). This new monthly publication will present articles based on our regular review of unclassified reports and articles from academia, think tanks, the media, Websites, etc., on Iraq-related security, political, and economic issues.

We are very grateful for the support of the ILM provided by the Office of Iraq Analysis within the Central Intelligence Agency's Directorate of Intelligence.

We welcome your comments and suggestions on the ILM. And we salute everyone involved in counterinsurgency, counterterrorism, peace and stability operations, and other activities aimed at supporting the security interests of the United States and of our allies and friends around the globe.

Best wishes,

Jim Miller  
President  
Interaction Systems Incorporated

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[Article 1](#) **“Withdrawing from Iraq: Alternative Schedules, Associated Risks, and Mitigating Strategies,”** by **Walter L. Perry, et al., RAND Corporation, Monograph, 2009.** *In late-2008, Congress asked the Department of Defense to have the RAND Corporation assess the feasibility of two alternative schedules for the drawdown of U.S. forces in Iraq. Since then, the Obama administration has announced a timeline for the drawdown of U.S. forces. This report accordingly looks at three alternative schedules, one matching the administration's intentions, one somewhat faster, and another slower; judges the risks associated with each; and recommends ways to reduce those risks. U.S. drawdown plans and risk-mitigation policies should focus primarily on keeping the major actors in the political process and preventing them from wanting to use force rather than on the more likely but less important threats of extremism and terrorism. This report contains many detailed observations on areas related to the three alternatives for the drawdown of U.S. forces from Iraq.*

[Article 2](#) **“Iraqi Security Forces after U.S. Troop Withdrawal: An Iraqi Perspective,”** by **Najim Abed al-Jabouri, Strategic Forum (National Defense University/Institute for National Strategic Studies), No. 245, August 2009.** *After all the sacrifices made in Iraq, the*

*United States cannot afford to allow the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) to go in the direction of ethno-sectarianism. The best chance for long-term success in Iraq is steering the ISF toward the direction of loyalty to the state. To do this, the United States will need to prepare a strategy using its political, military, and economic ties with regional allies and Iraqi politicians to keep the incumbent ethno-sectarian parties away from the ISF. The three principal ways in which the U.S. government might support a capable and cohesive Iraqi security force in the future are strong and persuasive pressure, transparency, and support.*

[Article 3](#) **“The Battle for Baghdad,”** by **Kenneth M. Pollack**, **The National Interest**, **September-October 2009**. *Iraqi nationalism is on the rise. And it is this force that Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki hopes to unleash if providing basic services is not enough to secure reelection. As always, nationalism is a double-edged sword. It has started to heal the rifts between Sunni and Shia and it has been the most important factor in limiting Iranian influence. But the forces of nationalism are also threatening to Iraq’s minorities and the cohesion of the state, no more so than when it comes to the Kurdish problem. Iraq has made a great deal of progress since 2006 and the evidence indicates it could make a great deal more. But it is not going to make progress if left to its own devices.*

[Article 4](#) **“Preventing Conflict over Kurdistan,”** by **Henri J. Barkey**, **Carnegie Endowment for International Peace**, **2009**. *The consequences of the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq will doubtless be debated for years to come. One result, however, is already clear: the long suppressed nationalist aspirations of the Kurdish people now dispersed across four states—Iraq, Turkey, Iran, and Syria—have been aroused, perhaps irrevocably, by the war. The Kurdistan Regional Government is a reality and a force for further Kurdish empowerment as it seeks to incorporate other Kurdish-majority areas and the oil-rich Kirkuk province in particular into its domain. If ignored or badly handled, Kurdish aspirations have the potential to cause considerable instability and violence in Iraq and beyond at a particularly delicate time.*

[Article 5](#) **“Iraq’s Fracture Lines: Recidivism or Reassertion,”** by **Anthony H. Cordesman**, **Center for Strategic and International Studies**, **PowerPoint Presentation, Revised 3 August 2009**. *This presentation’s “charts” list the critical components that make up Iraq’s fracture lines and categorizes them by headings that include: Iraq “Good Enough” for How Long?; Declining U.S. Influence; Sectarian and Ethnic Divisions, and Political Accommodation; Sectarian, Ethnic, and Tribal Challenges; The Kurdish Problem; Will There Be Arab-Kurdish-Turcoman Violence?; Key Variables re Arab-Kurdish-Turcoman Relations; “Presidentialism” and Military Leadership; Shiite vs. Sunni; Shiite vs. Shiite; Sunni vs. Sunni; Key Tests of Progress and Unity; and Conditions of Life in 2009.*

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## Articles

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1. **“Withdrawing from Iraq: Alternative Schedules, Associated Risks, and Mitigating Strategies,”** by Walter L. Perry, et al., **RAND Corporation, Monograph, 2009.** [KBTSIraq] The other authors of this study are Stuart E. Johnson, Keith Crane, David C. Gompert, John Gordon IV, Robert E. Hunter, Dalia Dassa Kaye, Terrence K. Kelly, Eric Peltz, and Howard J. Shatz. From <http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG882> we *quote* from the monograph’s summary:

**In late-2008, Congress asked the Department of Defense to have the RAND Corporation assess the feasibility of two alternative schedules for the drawdown of U.S. forces in Iraq.** Since then, the Obama administration has announced a timeline for the drawdown of U.S. forces. **This report accordingly looks at three alternative schedules, one matching the administration’s intentions, one somewhat faster, and another slower;** judges the risks associated with each; and recommends ways to reduce those risks.

[Three withdrawal dates studied are 30 April 2010, 31 August 2010, and 31 December 2011]

**We consider three alternatives:** one in which combat units are drawn down in 12 months, one in which combat units are drawn down in 16 months, and a third one that retains some combat units for 32 months. **In each alternative, all U.S. military forces will be withdrawn from Iraq by the end of December 2011, in accordance with the Security Agreement between Iraq and the United States** [Agreement between the United States of America and the Republic of Iraq on the Withdrawal of United States Forces from Iraq and the Organization of Their Activities during Their Temporary Presence in Iraq—signed in Baghdad on 17 November 2008]. **We assume a start date of 1 May 2009 for all three alternatives.**

**The 16-month alternative is our version of how the administration’s August 2010 goal might be achieved.** In addition, we offer two additional drawdown schedules: one faster than the administration’s and another slower. We include these **additional alternatives to consider the feasibility of altering the administration’s withdrawal framework in the event a faster drawdown is desired or if risks to the security of the departing U.S. forces or the Iraqi population require a slower-paced drawdown.**

We recognize, however, that the selected schedule will become the basis for personnel and logistics planning. **Although attempting to substantially alter the selected schedule once a drawdown schedule has been selected is possible, doing so would likely entail major financial and readiness costs.** Abruptly switching from one alternative schedule to another **would also have detrimental effects on security and diplomacy in Iraq and the region,** greatly increasing the probability that some of the risks discussed in [this] monograph will arise. **We did not examine these costs in our study.**

**The force remaining after the drawdown of combat units varies with each alternative.**

**In alternative one, the force is referred to as the residual force.** This force consists of enablers, support personnel, and trainers. **Its mission is to advise and assist the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and to protect ongoing U.S. civilian and military efforts within Iraq.**

**In alternative two, the force remaining after combat units have departed is referred to as the transition force.** It is composed of advise and assist brigades (AABs) supplemented by additional training, enabling, and support personnel. **Its mission is to advise and assist the ISF, to conduct counterterrorism missions in coordination with the ISF, and to protect ongoing U.S. civilian and military efforts within Iraq.**

**In alternative three, combat units remain through the end of the Security Agreement period, along with enablers, trainers, and support forces. . . .**

**Two Iraqi organizations are central to Iraq's ability to establish a stable and secure country: the Iraqi military and the National Police (NP).** Therefore, **the projected improvement in their proficiency in the months leading up to December 2011 is central to the drawdown schedule** for U.S. forces engaged in training these forces. As of December 2008, approximately two-thirds of the Iraqi Army was at the upper levels of readiness. The NP's overall readiness is significantly lower. **Several factors can affect the pace of improving and maintaining ISF readiness: the number of U.S. trainers, the presence of U.S. combat units and enablers, and the rate at which the forces improve. . . .**

**[Extremists, armed opposition groups, politicized ISF three principal categories of danger]**

**Three principal categories of dangers may threaten Iraq's internal security and stability during and after the drawdown of U.S. forces:** [a] **Extremists**, who reject the emerging political order and would use violence to drive Iraq back into chaos. [b] **Mainstream armed opposition groups**, who now participate in the political order but have the capability and may be tempted to turn to force to gain political advantage and control of resources. [c] **Politicized ISF**, characterized by the government of Iraq's growing heavy-handedness and potential use of the ISF to crush political rivals or a coup.

**U.S. drawdown plans and risk-mitigation policies should focus primarily on keeping the major actors in the political process and preventing them from wanting to use force** rather than on the more likely but less important threats of extremism and terrorism. The U.S. government will need to make **a sober assessment of the ways in which the government of Iraq (GoI) and the ISF could play harmful as well as helpful roles in improving security and stability in Iraq.**

Extremists have been weakened politically and militarily but will likely continue to attack U.S. forces and others. **Less likely but far more consequential is the risk that one or more of Iraq's main factions may abandon peaceful political pursuit of goals in favor of violence.** U.S. withdrawal of combat units could make this more likely insofar as opposition groups see greater opportunity or need to resort to force, especially if the ruling regime and its forces continue to grow in power. However, **this problem may not disappear by December 2011, and the United States should be prepared to maintain its honest broker/mediator role without a large military force on the ground.**

**A more authoritarian GoI, with a more muscular ISF as its partner, puppet, or puppet-master, would likely be resisted by militias tied to the Sunni, the Kurds, and excluded Shia political factions.** The resumption of armed resistance on the part of the Sunni or stepped-up encroachment by the Kurds could spawn greater concentration and abuse of power by ruling Shia parties. **The likelihood of the ISF being used to oppress**

**or coerce the Sunni population is mitigated by both the fact that the ISF are mixing ethnic groups (at least Sunni and Shia Arabs) in their major formations and the fact that most of the experienced officers are Sunni. This should act as a brake on the ISF coercing the Sunni minority and provoking a violent response.** While not likely, a spiral of more violent opposition and harsher authoritarianism could imperil Iraq's new order and important U.S. interests.

**[Rapid withdrawal could make Sons of Iraq feel and be vulnerable to neglect, oppression]**

**The likelihood and severity of extremist violence is, for the most part, insensitive to the speed of the U.S. drawdown. In contrast, because U.S. forces have helped to moderate the behavior of the main opposition groups and their forces—i.e., Shia militant Muqtada al-Sadr and his Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM), the Sunni and the Sons of Iraq (SoI), and the Kurds and the Peshmerga [Kurdish militia]—and of the GoI and the ISF, the speed of combat force withdrawal could affect the decisions and actions of these organizations.** Moreover, because these actors control significant armed power, the decision to pursue violence by one or more of them would be more consequential for Iraq's security and U.S. interests than would extremist violence. **It follows that drawdown planning should be shaped by how the drawdown could affect these actors' choices.**

**Rapid withdrawal of combat units would likely not increase the danger of JAM violence because al-Sadr is substantially weakened politically and JAM itself is already overmatched by the ISF; under these conditions, reverting to violence would entail major costs. It follows that a rapid withdrawal of combat units from predominantly Shia areas would not markedly increase insecurity and instability in these parts of Iraq.** Moreover, early withdrawal from the Shia south could be welcomed by [Prime Minister Nuri] al-Maliki and [the Shia al-Da'wa Party], who could claim yet another success. Finally, **with a moderate to high risk of direct attack on U.S. forces in areas where Iranian-supported Special Groups operate, and given the fact that the U.S. "occupation" is one of the rallying points for opposition groups, there could be security and political advantages in the early departure of U.S. combat units.**

A slower withdrawal would be indicated for Sunni and mixed-Arab areas. **The SoI trust the U.S. military more than they do the GoI and the ISF. A rapid U.S. departure could make them feel, and actually be, vulnerable to government neglect or oppression.** Moreover, assuming that the Sunni realize that the ISF are steadily gaining a fighting advantage over Sunni fighters, they will be less inclined to resort to force with the passage of time. **U.S. forces could leave western Iraq, which is largely Sunni, fairly rapidly without endangering stability. A more gradual departure of U.S. forces from mixed Sunni-Shia areas could provide the time needed to settle the future of the SoI, continue to promote Sunni-Shia reconciliation, and leave the ISF better positioned to counter a new insurgency. The most important of these mixed-Arab areas are Baghdad and its belts. A small number of U.S. forces should remain in those areas for some time.**

**[Kurds could see next years as best opportunity to secure freedom, safety, and prosperity]**

**The greatest threat to stability would be an Arab-Kurdish conflict, which could arise from a potentially dangerous combination of unsettled issues.** The status of Kirkuk is still contentious. The Kurds regard this important city and oil-rich region to be

traditionally part of their territory. Continued Kurdish encroachment into this and other contested areas **could lead to conflict that could be started by an incident that, though minor itself, unleashes a chain of uncontrollable events** and eventually leads to conflict.

**Tensions could rise to a dangerous level if the Kurds are marginalized in the GoI and in the ISF.** A Sunni-Shia Arab alliance that manifests itself in a federal government that excludes Kurdish parties or in a de facto exclusion of Kurds from ISF units outside of the Kurdish region could create conditions for conflict over the contested areas. **If the Kurds also conclude that their military position relative to the ISF will deteriorate, eventually leaving Kurdistan vulnerable, they could deduce that the next few years present the best, and last, opportunity to secure the long-term freedom, safety, and prosperity of Iraqi Kurds,** including by obtaining Kirkuk and other disputed areas. The departure of U.S. forces from contested areas in the north could leave the Kurds feeling less secure yet less constrained. Accordingly, **maintaining significant U.S. forces in this area for some time, while transitioning to an embedded presence, would be prudent.**

**[Analysis of Iraq's internal security and stability suggests a time-tailored withdrawal]**

**Although violent extremists, such as Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) and Special Groups, have been too weakened to derail Iraq's political process, they can be expected to threaten departing and remaining U.S. military and civilian personnel** during the drawdown. Both groups would like to be able to claim that they caused the United States to retreat. **The AQI threat is likely to be concentrated in Mosul and southward through Baghdad** and to take the form of suicide bombings. **The Special Group threat is likely to be concentrated in Baghdad and southward through Basra** and to take the form of attacks involving improvised explosive devices, rockets, mortars, or small arms.

**This analysis of Iraq's internal security and stability suggests a time-tailored withdrawal: first from the Shia south and the Sunni west; then from the mixed center in and around Baghdad,** leaving a few forces in key areas; **and finally from the contested north and the few places in Baghdad where forces remain.** Maintaining a presence through either embedded personnel or a stand-alone entity to act as honest broker and mediator will likely prove more critical in the north than maintaining large numbers of combat forces. Arguably, **combat forces play a more critical role in contested areas around Baghdad, and in Mosul** (due to the lingering AQI presence); nonetheless, **they must be out of Iraqi cities by mid-2009. Maintaining some forces as a deterrent in mixed areas until the new government is established seems wise.**

**This analysis suggests that forces in the south and west could be extracted as soon as feasible. Forces in and around Baghdad and Iraq's north could be extracted gradually,** with the pace governed to some extent by events such as continued Sunni-Shia (SoI-GoI) progress. **When combat units are removed from the center and the north in particular, a significant training and advisory mission should replace them.** Noncombat forces would remain through the Security Agreement timeframe (and perhaps longer if the Iraqis so desire).

**[Iraq's regional neighbors present potential challenges, opportunities with withdrawal]**

**Our analysis focuses on five of Iraq's regional neighbors** with respect to how the withdrawal might affect them and vice versa: **Iran, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, and**

**Israel. The first four play the largest roles** in their ability to affect the withdrawal positively or negatively. **Although Israel is not a major player with respect to the drawdown, its regional actions and the effect of the drawdown on Iran's regional role will affect broader U.S. regional interests.**

**Jordan and Kuwait also border Iraq, but we did not single them out for analysis because neither of these countries has the level of capability or motivation to intervene in Iraqi affairs that is possessed by the other . . . states.** To the extent that they do possess these capabilities or motivations, we expect such intervention to largely align with U.S. interests. **That said, . . . the drawdown can exacerbate the Iraqi refugee challenge within Jordan . . . .** Taking our analyses of individual countries into account, we arrive at the following summary conclusions for U.S. withdrawal in general, and not for individual withdrawal alternatives.

The withdrawal's effect on the region need not harm U.S. interests. **While the Middle East will continue to face a number of serious challenges in the wake of the U.S. drawdown from Iraq, many of these challenges will either have existed or grown with the presence of U.S. forces in Iraq or have existed independently of a U.S. presence in Iraq.** Moreover, the withdrawal's effect on key regional challenges, such as the spread of terrorism, is likely to be marginal.

**A U.S. drawdown may even improve the prospects for more extensive regional and international cooperation on counterterrorism efforts.** It could also enhance the development of a regional security structure that could, in time, reduce the requirement imposed on the United States to provide security. The withdrawal **could also improve the prospect of garnering greater regional support, particularly from wealthy Gulf states, to contribute more resources to promote Iraqi stability** and to support international organizations assisting with the Iraqi refugee populations.

**Overt military intervention by Iraq's neighbors (except Turkey) is less likely than covert, unconventional, or political efforts to exert influence.** To the extent that destabilizing scenarios in Iraq lead Iraq's neighbors to intervene, we find an important distinction between the types of intervention we can expect. **While a Turkish intervention, if it occurred, would likely be overt, conventional, and specific to the Kurdish question, the other three critical actors (Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Syria) are more likely to intervene in a manner that is covert, unconventional, and more broadly aimed at cultivating general influence within Iraq.**

[Iraq's neighbors primarily see consequences of drawdown through domestic prisms]

**The nature and future evolution of the GoI and the political reconciliation process in Iraq are more critical than effects produced by the drawdown.** The most critical factor in shaping future regional calculations toward Iraq has much less to do with the U.S. drawdown than with how the Iraqi system itself evolves. **If the Iraqi state is viewed as developing along sectarian lines with a government in Baghdad dominated by Shia, this will likely antagonize the Sunni states that border Iraq.** At the same time, **if Iraq were to be seen as remaining very much subject to U.S. influence, this would antagonize the Iranians and increase their determination to meddle in Iraq.**

Consequently, **the evolution of a politically inclusive yet independent and nationally oriented Iraq that is stable enough to maintain internal security but not strong enough to threaten its neighbors again will be most conducive to (1) maintaining a balance of influence within the region and (2) reducing the risk of external intervention.** Promoting such a balance will be a central consideration for U.S. security assistance to the Iraqi state.

The consequences of a U.S. drawdown from Iraq are understandably viewed by Iraq's neighbors primarily through their own domestic prisms. **The Kurdish risk is a problem because of the significant Kurdish population in Turkey;** to a lesser degree, **Iran and Syria see the Kurds as a potential risk to their own domestic stability.** Similarly, **concerns over the spread of sectarianism worry Arab neighbors because of minority (or, in some cases, majority) Shia populations in their own countries that are perceived as a challenge to ruling regimes and thus are often marginalized and repressed,** whether in the eastern provinces of Saudi Arabia or in small Gulf states, such as Bahrain.

**[Regional security uncertainties call for presence of U.S. military and other assets in region]**

**Continued U.S.-Iranian hostility will significantly increase the costs and risks associated with drawdown,** particularly if the hostility intensifies. **Given Iranian interests in Iraq, a successful U.S. drawdown and a stabilizing outcome for Iraq are more likely to benefit from cooperation or coordination with the Iranians as opposed to their active opposition.** Iran has at times during the U.S. occupation sought to use levers within Iraq—including lethal force—against the United States. This occurred primarily during periods of high tension between the United States and Iran.

**It is worth attempting to reduce such tensions through a U.S.-Iranian engagement process with the aim of inducing Iran to support a reduction of violence in Iraq and the maintenance of stability.** There is no guarantee that Iran would cooperate, although it might do so if it believes it would gain influence by assuming the role of a protector of Shia interests. **Such an engagement process would have to take place across the full range of U.S.-Iranian issues. It is most unlikely that Iran would cooperate with the United States in Iraq if other elements of the relationship were still at a high level of tension,** or if Iran perceived itself to be under imminent threat (e.g., from Israel).

In any event, **uncertainties about regional security on the part of U.S. friends and partners,** notably Israel and Gulf Cooperation Council countries, **call for the continued presence of U.S. military and other assets in or near the region for the purpose of providing security reassurance** and (possibly) security guarantees. In addition, **the U.S. departure from Iraq may provide an opening to launch new cooperative forums and a new security structure for the Persian Gulf region,** although such efforts would be difficult to implement and would require significant investment by the United States and other Western countries.

**[Major findings]**

**This report contains many detailed observations on areas related to the three alternatives for the drawdown of U.S. forces from Iraq.** Here, we list the major findings we drew from our analysis:

- Drawdown timelines. **The United States can meet the drawdown timelines for the 30 April 2010, 31 August 2010, and 31 December 2011 drawdown dates.**
- **There are logistical risks associated with the 30 April 2010 and 31 August 2010 deadlines that can be mitigated.**
- Arab-Kurdish armed conflict. **The greatest threat to Iraqi stability and security comes from an Arab-Kurdish armed conflict over contested areas.**
- Iran. **Iran has limited but significant potential and incentive to destabilize Iraq, regardless of the timing of U.S. withdrawal. Its actions will be significantly influenced by the overall state of U.S.-Iranian relations.**
- The Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). **The development, professionalism, and accountability of the ISF are critical to the country's long-term stability.**
- Reconciliation and development. **The success of the U.S. drawdown will require continued efforts, by the United States and others, to promote reconciliation and development within Iraq.**

#### [Recommendations]

As part of our analysis, **we identified measures that would smooth the drawdown of U.S. forces or mitigate** some of the potentially detrimental consequences of the drawdown discussed in the report's chapters. We group those consequences into **three risk categories**: (1) **risks to U.S. forces** during the drawdown, (2) **risks to Iraqi security and stability** resulting from the withdrawal of U.S. forces, and (3) **risks to regional political and military stability**. The body of the report describes ways to mitigate a number of related issues (e.g., refugees, populations at risk). Below, **we summarize mitigation measures in the form of recommendations focused on issues that pose the most risk in the three categories** just described.

**Arab-Kurdish conflict.** The Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG's) aspirations for greater autonomy and its desire to incorporate more territory into the KRG **endanger Iraq's unity and could spark serious internal conflict or provoke a response from one of Iraq's neighbors.** The future status of Kirkuk and other disputed territories presents the most serious threat to internal stability in Iraq. **These issues are unlikely to be fully resolved by 2011,** and this area is therefore likely to remain a dangerous flashpoint after the last U.S. troops depart. Consequently, **we recommend:**

- **Phasing the withdrawal of combat units so that those nearest the contested areas are the last to leave.** The United States must be careful **not to create false expectations among Kurdish leaders that U.S. troops might remain** after 31 December 2011.

- **Exploring the possibility of a United Nations peacekeeping or military observer force moving into the Kirkuk/Arab border areas once all U.S. troops depart.**
- **Coordinating diplomatic strategies for the region with Turkey and, if possible, Iran and Syria.**

**Iranian subversion.** Iran, operating largely through client organizations or operatives in Iraq, **has the capability to cause considerable mischief.** Whether it has the wish to do so remains a question. **In many ways, its interests in Iraq align with those of the United States, and it is not clear that Iran would wish to delay the U.S. withdrawal in any case.** Consequently, **we recommend** that the United States:

- **Ameliorate this issue by opening a dialogue with Iran,** perhaps making bilateral relations contingent on Iranian behavior in Iraq.
- **Increase its surveillance of Iranian-supported groups in Iraq and bolster efforts to disrupt Iranian clients in Iraq** by stemming the flow of money to them.

**The Sons of Iraq (SoI) return to violence.** The SoI were instrumental in reversing the spiral of violence in Sunni areas and at one point numbered about 100,000 fighters. They remain numerous and well-equipped. **Should the SoI become frustrated with the rate and degree to which they are being incorporated into Iraqi society,** they have the potential to cause serious destabilization in Iraqi society. Consequently, **we recommend that the United States:**

- **Employ diplomatic efforts aimed at ensuring that the GoI meets its commitments vis-a-vis the SoI.**
- **Seek ways to train the SoI and provide them new economic opportunities.**
- **Work with the GoI to forestall any destabilizing local measures,** such as forced disarmament or local discrimination in housing or other benefits.

**The Iraqi Security Forces.** In many ways, the future of Iraq rests on the skill of its security forces, **particularly the Army and the National Police.** **If they are unable or unwilling to preserve the gains made in security and stability, the country could slide back into chaos.** While these forces are much improved, **they still have serious shortcomings,** especially in such enabling capabilities as long-range fires and air support and logistics. Consequently, **we recommend that the United States:**

- **Keep the U.S. personnel embedded with Iraqi security organizations in the country for as long as possible and encourage the Iraqi Army to transfer its operations centers to the Iraqi police organizations** so that they can assume the internal security duties that are properly their responsibility.
- **Consider recasting its rules on foreign military sales so that the Iraqis do not have to deliver full payment up front,** at least as long as oil prices remain low.

- **Consider increasing funding for Iraqi officers to train in the United States** as a way of improving the professionalism of Iraqi military leaders.
- **Encourage the Iraqi Army to shift some of its forces from combat units to logistics** to begin development of the supply capabilities it sorely needs.

The foregoing is Article No. 1 (IM001A01) in the Iraq Literature Monitor (ILM), No. 1, 21 September 2009, prepared by Interaction Systems Incorporated (isincreports@mindspring.com).

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**2. “Iraqi Security Forces after U.S. Troop Withdrawal: An Iraqi Perspective,”** by Najim Abed al-Jabouri, Strategic Forum (National Defense University/Institute for National Strategic Studies), No. 245, August 2009. [KBTSIraq] Major General (Ret.) Najim Abed Al-Jabouri was an officer in the former Iraqi Air Defense. He was also police chief and later mayor of Tel Afar from 2005 to 2008. He is now a senior fellow in the Near East South Asia Center at the National Defense University and is working there with the Institute for National Strategic Studies. From <http://www.ndu.edu/inss/docUploaded/SF245%20web.pdf> we *quote*:

As U.S. armed forces draw down in Iraq, there is increasing concern about the possibility of resurgent ethnic and sectarian tensions. **Many Iraqis believe that the United States may be making a grave mistake by not fully using its remaining leverage to insulate the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) from the political influence of the incumbent Iraqi sectarian political parties.** U.S. efforts to rebuild the ISF have focused on much needed training and equipment, but have neglected the greatest challenge facing the forces’ ability to maintain security upon U.S. withdrawal: an ISF politicized by ethno-sectarian parties. **These ties pose the largest obstacle to the ISF in its quest to become genuinely professional and truly national in character.**

U.S. leaders may not realize that **by not doing more to ensure that incumbent parties stay away from influencing ISF behavior, the United States risks training and arming security forces that will be the instrument for provoking, rather than preventing, future ethno-sectarian conflict.** In the end, supporting and strengthening the national character of the ISF is the best hope for a stable and integrated Iraq. . . .

**[U.S. must bolster ISF with strong and persuasive pressure, transparency, and support]**

**Iraqi leaders can take a variety of steps to further insulate tomorrow’s ISF from potential cleavages across ethnic and sectarian lines.** Here are six possible suggestions for action: [a] **Redouble efforts at national reconciliation.** . . . [b] **The government of Iraq needs to have a plan to remove corrupt leaders in the ISF and enforce term limits.** . . . [c] **The government must enforce laws that prohibit political parties from intervening in ISF responsibilities** and hold accountable those parties that violate this law. . . . [d] **The Ministry of Defense needs to interchange battalions across Iraqi Army divisions.** The majority of these divisions are under the patronage of a political party. . . . [e] **Conscription would be an important step toward mixing the Iraqi army and making them more professional and nationalist.** . . . [f] **The government should reduce the size of the Ministry of Interior,** whose forces have become oversized, cumbersome, and unmanageable. . . .

**There are three principal ways in which the U.S. government might support a capable and cohesive Iraqi security force in the future: strong and persuasive pressure, transparency, and support.**

First, the United States might use its leverage to **directly pressure the Iraqi government to implement the reforms mentioned above. This will require a change in tone.** Nuanced approaches may not be understood in Iraq. **When talking with Iraqi leaders about important reforms, the United States uses a soft rhetoric** of “we advise you to” or “we hope you would.” Although there is a place for approaches that are sensitive to the concerns of Iraqis, avoiding a direct approach about the importance of reforms may not be one of them. **A soft approach simply will be lost on many Iraqi politicians. . . . The United States needs to use its leverage while it still has it.** Iraqis believe that Washington still calls the shots in Iraq. . . .

**Improvements in U.S. strategic communication would help the United States both pressure the Iraqi government and communicate effectively to Iraqis. Another great U.S. asset for leverage is regional allies.** For example, the United States can exert leverage through its strong relations with Arab Gulf countries, Turkey, Egypt, and Jordan, all of whom finance and support Arab Sunni parties in Iraq. **These allies are reluctant to support an Iraqi government that has a strong ethno-sectarian agenda because they fear that they might indirectly support Iranian and Kurdish ambitions.** At the same time, the United States has leverage with individual Iraqi politicians who represent these ethno-sectarian groups . . . . **The United States needs a strategy that plays to the interests of its regional allies and key Iraqi leaders to put pressure on the Iraqi government to ensure that there is no ethno-sectarian party meddling in the ISF.**

Second, **the United States should make better use of the media, particularly the U.S.-sponsored al-Hurra, to enhance transparency.** Television can be an especially effective way to influence Iraq’s political parties. There is ample evidence to suggest that **the United States can use the media to help shape Iraqi public opinion and political behavior. . . .**

Finally, **the new Iraqi state needs to look beyond the current focus on internal threats and security to include foreign threats and external security.** Of course, there is a matter of sequencing and priorities, and the immediate priorities of the ISF are properly centered on internal security. But to maintain internal security and protect it from external threats, **the ISF will need support in logistics, arms, and training for at least the next five years.** For the ISF to defend itself from foreign threats, **it will have to develop a modern and professional air force. . . .**

**The ISF still lacks a clear military doctrine defining the national enemy or potential enemy.** Military doctrine is fundamental to building a national military because it coordinates training and acquisitions. **The United States could support Iraq with conferences that discuss and shape the future military culture of the ISF.** While this will mainly be an Iraqi affair and will not need a

large U.S. footprint, **America can help as a coordinator**, since it still plays a role of arbiter and maintains effective modes of transportation in Iraq.

**[Attacks in Iraq in next few months will gauge ISF fault lines, strengths, and vulnerabilities]**

. . . Upon withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraqi cities, the ISF will be at a crossroads. **In the next two years, the ISF can continue either in the direction of divisive ethno-sectarianism or more in the direction of unifying nationalism. There are tradeoffs for both directions**, and the Iraqi army and police will develop at different paces because of the different nature of their missions and proximity to political parties. **The direction of ethno-sectarianism provides a temporary balance of power among the disparate incumbent political parties**, who will attempt to strengthen their ties to the ISF to continue pursuing their interests.

**Iran will retain influence over the Shia parties, which will make Iraqis believe that Washington still calls the shots in Iraq; in turn try to gain more influence over the ISF in their areas; Kurdish aspirations will retain influence over the Kurdish parties, but the Kurdish parties' influence over the ISF will decrease** as the government of Iraq integrates the Iraqi Army in their areas; and **Arab states and Turkey will retain their influence over the Sunni parties**. On the other hand, **the direction of nationalism provides a long-term balance of power between the competing countries in the Middle East, but will include short-term political risks**, as it will be difficult to separate the incumbent ethno-sectarian political parties from their entrenched ties to the ISF.

**Over the next few months, Iraq will witness an increasing number of attacks.** Terrorist organizations, militias, and even military factions of ethno-sectarian political parties will be behind these attacks. **The attacks will be conducted in different ways, but each will be gauging ISF fault lines, strengths, and vulnerabilities.** The incumbent ethno-sectarian political parties, which do not gain political power from the growing nationalist movement, will benefit the most from these attacks. **They will use the attacks to prove to their constituencies that the nationalist movement will not bring security and that the al-Maliki administration has failed.**

**[Best chance for long-term success in Iraq is steering ISF toward direction of state loyalty]**

As security again becomes the main priority for Iraqi voters, **the incumbent ethno-sectarian parties will delay the politically difficult and sensitive short-term reforms needed to achieve national reconciliation and fight corruption and government mismanagement.** In its oversight capacity, **the United States must pay close attention to political party meddling in the ISF and use [its leverage] to pressure the government of Iraq to decrease such interference.** Acting passively to counter—or even justifying—ethno-sectarian party meddling in the ISF as a temporary means for a graceful U.S. exit from Iraq risks decreasing the likely success of political nationalism in the upcoming elections.

After all the sacrifices made in Iraq, the United States cannot afford to allow the ISF to go in the direction of ethno-sectarianism. **The best chance for long-term success in Iraq is steering the ISF toward the direction of loyalty to the state.** To do this, **the United States will need to prepare a strategy using its political, military, and**

**economic ties with regional allies and Iraqi politicians to keep the incumbent ethno-sectarian parties away from the ISF.**

The foregoing is Article No. 2 (IM001A02) in the [Iraq Literature Monitor](#) (ILM), No. 1, 21 September 2009, prepared by Interaction Systems Incorporated (isinreports@mindspring.com).

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3. **“The Battle for Baghdad,”** by Kenneth M. Pollack, [The National Interest](#), September-October 2009 (<http://tniprod.nationalinterest.org/Article.aspx?id=22018>). [KBTSIraq] Kenneth M. Pollack, a contributing editor to [The National Interest](#), is the director of the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution. *We quote:*

**. . . Iraqi nationalism is on the rise. And it is this force that [Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki] hopes to unleash if providing basic services is not enough to secure reelection. As always, nationalism is a double-edged sword. It has started to heal the rifts between Sunni and Shia. And it has been the most important factor in limiting Iranian influence.** The more Iraqis feel confident in themselves, the more they push back on the mostly despised Persian interlopers. **But the forces of nationalism are also threatening to Iraq’s minorities and the cohesion of the state, no more so than when it comes to the Kurdish problem.**

**[United States is increasingly becoming an impediment for Prime Minister al-Maliki]**

**Since late-2008, al-Maliki has been deploying more of Iraq’s nascent military power to the north and goading the army into regular provocations with the Kurdish militia—the peshmerga. The prime minister has a legitimate reason: the Iraqi government’s security forces have a right and a need to control all of Iraq’s territory. But no one with any sense believes that now is the time to resolve this issue, or that marching army battalions into Kurdistan without an agreement with the Kurds is the right way to do it.**

**Predictably, the Kurds have just as regularly risen to the bait. In August 2008, an Iraqi army operation in the ethnically mixed city of Khanaqin in northeast Iraq nearly resulted in a firefight. Only the timely intervention of the American soldiers accompanying the Iraqi units prevented bloodshed. Since then, Iraqi army and peshmerga formations have continued to maneuver against one another constantly, and again it is only the presence of American soldiers that averts violence.**

**On the streets of most Iraqi cities outside of Iraqi Kurdistan, these near clashes have cast the Kurds as villains seeking to dismember Iraq, something no Iraqi Arab will countenance. Stoking this rivalry allows al-Maliki to cast himself as the nationalist champion of a unified Iraq, a very popular position everywhere outside of Kurdistan. It’s also not a secondary consideration that the two main Kurdish parties are key allies of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, al-Maliki’s most dangerous political opponent. Thus, discrediting the Kurds also discredits his Shia political rivals.**

**Of course, the Kurds aren’t blameless. Sometimes in response to Baghdad’s moves and sometimes for reasons of their own, they too are taking increasingly provocative actions.**

**The Kurds are threatening to promulgate a constitution for the Kurdish region which diverges from the national constitution on key issues like oil and security, which could trigger nationalist outbursts on both sides.**

Kurdish elements also continue to stir up trouble in places like Mosul and Diyala, and **both sides treat the status of the oil-rich northern city of Kirkuk like a political football, rather than the kind of powder keg that could bring them all to ruin.**

Against this backdrop, **the United States is increasingly becoming an impediment for al-Maliki. American soldiers prevent the clashes he seems to desire** between peshmerga and Iraqi forces. **This not only complicates his election strategy, but is an affront to his own nationalist desire to see the writ of Iraq's central government run everywhere in the country—including Kurdistan.**

[U.S. focused on long-term interests of Iraq, not short-term fortunes of prime minister]

For the United States, **the reemergence of Iraqi nationalism has created two challenges. It produces new incentives to violence that American forces need to prevent. But it has also led many Iraqi politicians, including the prime minister, to take public positions unsupportive of the American presence,** even though most know that America's role as peacekeeper, mediator, adviser, and capacity-builder remain critical to Iraq's stability and progress. . . .

. . . [Prime Minister al-Maliki] seems to have, at best, **mixed emotions regarding the American presence. On the one hand, his popularity is based on the improvement in security across Iraq,** which he recognizes was caused in large measure by the change in American military strategy and tactics (coupled temporarily with the increased numbers of American troops) beginning in 2007 under the leadership of Generals David Petraeus and Raymond Odierno.

If the American troops leave and the security situation worsens, his reelection prospects will dim accordingly. **He recognizes that the average Iraqi wants to see Iraq stand on its own, but also wants to know that the Americans are still there in the background to prevent his country's problems from mushrooming into another civil war.**

But the fact remains that the United States remains a powerful force in Iraq and not every action we take redounds to al-Maliki's personal or political benefit. **The American military and political leadership is focused on what is in the long-term best interests of Iraq, not necessarily the immediate fortunes of the prime minister or his party.** And this irritating American predilection seems to weigh ever more heavily in his thinking.

**Many Iraqis (and many Americans) believe al-Maliki intends to make himself a new dictator.** Although none of us can know what lies in his heart, **I suspect that this is not his deliberate aim, but may end up being his unintentional goal. Al-Maliki is said to be deeply suspicious by nature—**itself not surprising for a longtime member of an underground terrorist movement relentlessly hunted by Saddam Hussein's minions. Moreover, he is impetuous and appears to react emotionally when he faces serious resistance. **He lashes out at his political rivals and his actions often seem to reflect a frustration and a desire to rid himself of all opposition. . . .**

[Countries that experience major civil wars historically have very high rate of recidivism]

In May 2009 [in Washington, D.C., I] attended **the annual U.S. government conference on Iraq**. Perhaps the most powerful panel of the whole two days was the one most of the participants expected the least from. **The first panel of the conference consisted of three of the leading academic experts on civil war**. These were not specialists on Iraq or even the Middle East, but scholars who had spent decades looking at major internal conflicts—what causes them, what propels them, and how they end. **Their central message was a chilling one: countries that experience major civil wars like the one Iraq went through in 2004-2006 have a terrifyingly high rate of recidivism, and the one factor that provides any hope of preventing such a recurrence is the willingness of an external great power (typically the former colonial power) to make a long-term commitment to serve as a peacekeeper and mediator.**

**Iraq has made a great deal of progress since 2006 and the evidence indicates it could make a great deal more. But it is not going to make progress if left to its own devices.** If the United States walks away from Iraq or if we are evicted too soon, the old patterns of Iraqi politics will subvert the new patterns of democratization and the country could easily become yet another data point on the academic graphs that demonstrate how pitifully few countries can escape the civil war trap.

**In 2002, the United States turned away from Afghanistan prematurely to focus on Iraq. The result was a tragedy for us and for the people of Afghanistan. In 2009, we are courting the risk of turning away from Iraq prematurely to focus back on Afghanistan.** Should we do so, the result could be a disaster—for us, for the Iraqis, for the entire Middle East, and potentially for the world.

The foregoing is Article No. 3 (IM001A03) in the [Iraq Literature Monitor \(ILM\)](#), No. 1, 21 September 2009, prepared by Interaction Systems Incorporated ([isinreports@mindspring.com](mailto:isinreports@mindspring.com)).

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**4. “Preventing Conflict over Kurdistan,” by Henri J. Barkey, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2009.** [KBTSIraq, KBTSTurkey] Henri J. Barkey is a nonresident senior associate in the Carnegie Middle East Program and Bernard L. and Bertha F. Cohen Professor and Chair of the International Relations Department at Lehigh University. He served as a member of the State Department’s Policy Planning Staff, working primarily on issues related to the Middle East, the Eastern Mediterranean, and intelligence from 1998 to 2000. *We quote* from the summary, a recommendation concerning Kirkuk, and the conclusion section in this report available in full at [http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/preventing\\_conflict\\_kurdistan.pdf](http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/preventing_conflict_kurdistan.pdf):

### Summary

**The consequences of the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq will doubtless be debated for years to come. One result, however, is already clear: the long suppressed nationalist aspirations of the Kurdish people now dispersed across four states—Iraq, Turkey, Iran, and Syria—have been aroused, perhaps irrevocably, by the war.** Already in Iraq, Kurdish regions, which have benefited from Saddam Hussein’s overthrow, have consolidated themselves into a federal region.

**The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) is a reality and a force for further Kurdish empowerment as it seeks to incorporate other Kurdish-majority areas and the oil-rich Kirkuk province in particular into its domain.** The KRG's existence and demands have already alarmed all of Iraq's neighbors and the Baghdad government. The issues are far from being settled. **If ignored or badly handled, Kurdish aspirations have the potential to cause considerable instability and violence in Iraq and beyond at a particularly delicate time.**

For the United States, **the Kurdish issue touches on many vital concerns—the future unity and stability of Iraq and the ability of U.S. combat forces to disengage responsibly; its relations with Turkey, a key NATO ally and aspirant for European Union membership; and more generally, the stability of an oil-rich region during a period of considerable uncertainty over energy security.** This report argues that Washington must pay close attention to the many intertwined dimensions of the Kurdish question and, in particular, to the very real potential for conflict and outside intervention. **Washington must develop a comprehensive approach that recognizes and, where possible, leverages those linkages to help usher in a stable and prosperous future.**

This report does not suggest that the many facets of the Kurdish issue can only be solved simultaneously, but rather that **Washington has to be sensitive to how potential progress—and setbacks—in one area can affect movement elsewhere. Of primary importance should be settling Kirkuk's future and consolidating the legitimacy of Iraq's federal structure.** Closely related is the development of a working relationship between Ankara and the KRG. . . .

#### **Recommendation—First Priority: Preventing Kirkuk from Becoming a Flashpoint**

**The longer discussions on a timeframe for U.S. withdrawal from Iraq go on, the more American influence will wane. Therefore, time is of the essence and the process of reconciliation in Kirkuk (and disputed areas around Kirkuk) must be speeded up to prevent a major conflagration that would engender bitter fighting between Kurds and Arabs in Iraq that could bring in Iraq's neighbors. Washington has already enlisted the United Nations Special Representative for Iraq, Staffan de Mistura, to work with the parties. This is not enough at this stage.**

Whereas continued open U.S. support for the de Mistura process is absolutely necessary, **the new U.S. administration must become more engaged in Kirkuk, primarily because Washington must not appear to be totally abandoning its responsibility, and secondarily, it increasingly appears that United Nations clout without U.S. involvement would be limited.** U.S. engagement also signals the various parties, including the Kurds, of Washington's commitment to the de Mistura process as well as to a future United Nations role. In turn, **this will compel different Iraqi parties and allies in the region to engage with this process and accept the need to compromise.**

With a high-level coordinator to be appointed at the State Department, **Washington should help draft new proposals designed to break the deadlock and share them with de Mistura.** In conjunction with these, **the United States should initiate a thorough and comprehensive accounting of Saddam Hussein-era population displacement to help guide the settlement process.** Although a thorough and impartial

accounting is critical to resolving the issues and the U.S. government lacks all the data, **it must proceed, since the Iraqis have been slow in making progress on their own.**

**The lack of trust and heightened tensions among parties in the region will worsen as U.S. plans for withdrawal become more concrete.** In order to improve their bargaining power down the road, **all parties on the ground have an incentive to game the U.S. withdrawal by ratcheting up the pressure** on Baghdad, the United Nations, neighboring states, and, of course, Washington.

To prevent such headwinds, **the United States should establish two parallel tracks of confidence-building measures (CBMs).**

**The first track would be a working group with the KRG and the Iraqi government beyond the services the U.S. embassy in Baghdad already provides.** This group would include the senior members of the intelligence community, the Department of Defense, and the State Department. **Designed to respond quickly and cut through the bureaucratic maze, this group would work to quickly carry out any CBMs that the parties agree to.** Beside Kirkuk, the oil and gas law, which has become hostage to the internal politics of the Iraqi parliament and the oil ministry, is another area where a quick compromise is needed, so as to facilitate investments in exploration and the building of new transport infrastructure. **An important component of the CBMs is an assurance to the KRG that the U.S. government will continue to support it, provided the KRG reaches a legitimate settlement of the Kirkuk issue and puts into practice a democratic form of government.**

**The second CBM track should be an approach to the members of the different and conflicting communities in the contested areas.** Unlike the other CBM initiative, **Washington should enlist the help of the Europeans.** Since America's presence in Iraq is controversial, the more neutral Europeans are more likely to obtain results. The Europeans could be of particular help in finalizing the KRG constitution; **the more democratic and inclusive of minority rights the constitution is, the easier it will be to institute the de Mistura suggestions on border adjustments.**

**For the most part, Kirkuk has been ignored by the central government in Baghdad;** neither has it benefited from the economic boom in the Kurdish north. **The United States should put more pressure on the Iraqi government to begin investing of money in the city's infrastructure and its public services,** including paying the salaries of public employees.

Additional steps to facilitate a resolution of the Kirkuk problem should include the provision of funding for housing and technical assistance for the speedy resettlement of refugees. **The longer legitimate refugees seeking to resettle in Kirkuk and elsewhere are kept in makeshift camps, the harder it will be to prevent violence down the road.** Already, much time has been lost without significant movement on this issue.

## **Conclusion**

Not every problem has a clean, distinct solution. **Avoiding a major conflagration over Kirkuk that leads to civil war or worse is clearly the most important goal for the**

**United States.** This report has tried to argue that how **to get there requires a great deal more than just working on Kirkuk itself. The Kurdish question is first and foremost a remnant of empires that disappeared long ago.** Where empires have ruled, the geographical and geopolitical confusion left in their wake has yet to be resolved in many parts of the world.

**For most of the twentieth century, Kurdish issues in Iraq, Turkey, Iran, and Syria were, for the most part, isolated from each other. A snapshot of today is remarkably different** from one in the late-1980s and early 1990s; links between the different Kurdish societies and their diaspora extensions have thickened.

**The diaspora has acted as a catalyst for the development of intersocietal bonds.** It matters little that you are an Iraqi or Iranian Kurd when you join Turkish-Kurdish organizations in Germany and mobilize to demonstrate against the Turkish government.

Similarly, **the most potent weapon that the PKK [Kurdistan Workers' Party, a Turkish insurgent group with approximately half of its fighters based in northern Iraq] has deployed is not its "fighters" but its satellite television network, which broadcasts from Europe and is picked up just about everywhere in Kurdistan and in Turkey.**

**Iraqi Kurds will tell you that they dream of independence but understand that this is not realizable,** hence their strategy of remaining part of a federal Iraq. **Turkish Kurds, it is said, have no inclination for independence.**

Why should they try to become independent or join northern Iraq when Ankara is on the pathway to European Union membership? **But who is to say where these links and convictions will be 15 or 25 years from now?**

What seems to be clear, however, is that **states can forcibly obstruct their evolution only at a tremendous cost. What they can do is manage them so as not to make the developing linkages a threat.** In the absence of a process that promises improvements for all concerned, the United States and the regional states may find themselves worse off than they had ever envisioned.

The foregoing is Article No. 4 (IM001A04) in the [Iraq Literature Monitor](#) (ILM), No. 1, 21 September 2009, prepared by Interaction Systems Incorporated ([isinreports@mindspring.com](mailto:isinreports@mindspring.com)).

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**5. "Iraq's Fracture Lines: Recidivism or Reassertion,"** by Anthony H. Cordesman, **Center for Strategic and International Studies, PowerPoint Presentation, Revised 3 August 2009** (<http://www.csis.org/burke/reports>). [KBTSIraq] Anthony H. Cordesman is the Arleigh A. Burke Chair in Strategy at the Center. We *quote* from some of the presentation's "charts" which we have edited slightly:

**Iraq "Good Enough" for How Long?**

- **The illusion of control:** Does Iraq revert to past norms?
- Fifty percent recidivism in United Nations peacekeeping missions in five years.

- **Kurdish issue only one and most visible well-established fracture line.**
- **Can U.S. influence and Iraq “good enough” credibly pass the five-year test?**
- Anti-US “backlash” effects; U.S. back-out effects.
- **Regional “presidential syndrome.”**
- Military coup, strong leader.
- **Sectarian/ethnic fragmentation plus internal power struggles and low-level jihadist violence.**
- **Impact of outside powers.**
- **Demographics vs. economics vs. income distribution.**
- Major clashes versus micro-clashes.
- **Oil dependence without effective governance and development.**

### Declining U.S. Influence

- **U.S. had marginal popularity**, even among those who saw invasion as desirable.
- **Vast majority of Iraqis want U.S. out.** Many as soon as possible.
- **No longer major source of aid.**
- Not a major funder of Iraqi security forces.
- **No clear U.S. exit strategy beyond an exit. No clear operational civil and economic dimension to the Joint Campaign Plan.**
- Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki and others prepared to take substantial risks to lower U.S. profile and influence.
- **Strong leader, strong candidate must run against the U.S.**
- **Cannot be seen as bowing to U.S. on key sectarian and ethnic issues.**
- **Even Kurds losing faith.**

### Sectarian and Ethnic Divisions, and Political Accommodation

- **Accommodation cannot be legislated, but tensions can be eased—particularly with money and power sharing. Neither currently working well.**
- **De facto segregation:** Shiite vs. Sunni divisions have tended to become “islands” rather than “blobs.”
- **Rising, but still fragile, sense of Arab identity.**
- Failures of Shiite governance and Sunni extremism have limited support for Islamic governments, but is still strong.
- **Kurd vs. Arab vs. Turcoman have divided into rival ethnic areas along a broad and indeterminate fault line.**
- Year of elections both distracts and polarizes, as does economic crisis and unemployment.
- **Data on refugees and displacements uncertain—peaked more than two million internally and two million driven outside country in nation of 28 million.** Some estimates reach five-plus million, but some evidence indicates may be far too high.

### Sectarian, Ethnic, and Tribal Challenges

- **Sectarian challenges:** 60-65 percent Shia, 32-37 percent Sunni, and three percent Christian or other.
- **Ethnic challenges:** Arab 75-80 percent, Kurdish 15-20 percent, and Turcoman, Assyrian, and other three percent.

- **Tribal challenges:** Confederations, broad area, heavily urbanized.

### **The Kurdish Problem**

- **Seen as the most likely near-term source of fragmentation.**
- **Both sides have powerful reasons to compromise, but this is the Middle East.**

### **Will There Be Arab-Kurdish-Turcoman Violence?**

- **Some low-level clashes are occurring; more are inevitable.**
- United Nations efforts have done as much to map exact areas of contention as to ease the situation: The ethnic fault line extends from Mosul through Kirkuk to Iran with islands further south.
- **Jihadist target. Problem for counterinsurgency effort.**
- Kurdish elections have had polarizing debate as are politics of coming national elections.
- **Al-Maliki needs to be the strong Arab leader; [Iraqi Kurdish leaders] Barzani and Talibani unwilling to compromise.**
- Unclear a referendum will help.
- **Oil, gas, and petroleum revenues critical. Both Kurdish and Iraqi central government face serious economic problems.**
- Growing tensions over purges in Iraqi security forces; Kurdish desire for Kurdish divisions and funding of peshmerga [Kurdish militia].
- **Kurds have nowhere to go: Syria, Turkey, Iran.**

### **Key Variables re Arab-Kurdish-Turcoman Relations**

- **Flashpoints like Kirkuk.**
- UNAMI [United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq] report impact.
- **Conflicting Arab-Kurdish-Turcoman narratives at every level.**
- **Petroleum resources, sharing income, hydrocarbon laws, actual practice.**
- Sharp demographic pressure.
- 40,000 land and property disputes, 12 months to resolve a dispute.
- **Worst drought in 50 years, canal problems, water conservation.**
- **Kurdistan Regional Government vs. the governor of Ninewa.**
- Al-Qaeda in Iraq/Islamic State of Iraq, Jaysh Rijal Tariq al-Naqshahbandi, Sons of Iraq transition.
- Divisions along “prosperity line”; perceived inequality in Arab areas.
- **Real world lack of investors, 40 percent unemployment, drop in public works.**
- **Perceived corruption, power brokering, lack of legitimacy.**

### **“Presidentialism” and Military Leadership**

- **The longer-term source of disruption may not be fragmentation but centralization under a strong man.**
- Not necessarily a clash if “President” co-opts the military.
- **Many Iraqis who say they want democracy want strong leadership, security, government help, and services more.**

- **The Iraqi constitution creates over-centralized paralysis without empowering provinces and true representative government. Recipe for popular anger** [with] corruption, failure to act, lack of security.
- **Not possible to really characterize al-Maliki's ambitions at this point, but clearly wants more presidential powers**, to appear strong leader, use the U.S. as political foil.
- Unclear al-Maliki can build a strong enough coalition to act; time and national elections may weaken, not strengthen.
- **Cannot discount military coup if government and/or economy fail.**

### Shiite vs. Sunni

**Still possible to trigger a new wave of divisive violence in Arab population, but less likely with time.**

### Shiite vs. Shiite

- **More likely to be a political than a violent power struggle**, but Sadrists and splinter groups still a problem.
- **Deep and growing divisions in former Shiite coalition. Al-Maliki rising above al-Da'wa Party, competing with the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq.** Smaller national parties face serious competition; struggle to survive.
- **Sadr movement has fragmented, but the end result is independent elements of the Jaysh al-Mahdi Army and hard-line splinter groups.**
- **Still see Iranian help in arms and training.**
- Questions about influence of top Shiite cleric **Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani** and senior clergy; what happens after Sistani dies.
- **Are significant numbers of secular and quietist Shiites.**
- Most likely case is a Shiite victory, perhaps in coalition with non-Shiite or secular groups.
- **Election campaign will set the stage for defining who really has power, but the winning coalition and not the winning candidates are likely to shape the result.**

### Sunni vs. Sunni

- **Fragmentation of both supporters and opponents of the political process.**
- **Significant numbers of secular Arab nationalists.**
- At this point, still jockeying to establish real Sunni political parties, and influence/control at the local and provincial level.
- **Syria still plays a serious spoiler role**—supporting neo-Baathists and tolerating Al-Qaeda in Iraq.
- **Islamic State of Iraq/Al-Qaeda in Iraq still have operating areas in Ninewa and Mosul, and operate in Diyala.** Will be able to play major spoiler role for some years to come.
- **Proto-Baathist groups** like Jaysh Rijal Tariq al-Naqshabandi emerging as more serious threat.
- **No unifying clergy or clear leader.**
- **Sons of Iraq, tribal groups, secular leaders, Islamic leaders fragmented and inexperienced. . . .**

- **Much depends on coming election;** sharing of power, oil wealth, and positions in government and Iraqi security forces.

### Key Tests of Progress and Unity

- **Quality, integrity, and equity of government services:** education, medical services, water, electricity.
- **Sharing of state budget and oil wealth by region, sect, ethnicity.**
- **Volume of oil revenues, development of petroleum sector.**
- **Agricultural reform.**
- Reform of state industries sector and employment.
- **Employment and income distribution;** who gets government jobs and key appointments.
- **Limits to excessive corruption and power brokers.**

### Conditions of Life in 2009

- Underemployment (less than 35 hours of work per week) fell to 29 percent from 38 percent in 2007, and **the national rate of unemployment decreased to 12.5 percent in the fourth quarter of 2008 from 17.6 percent in 2007.**
- **An estimated population of 930,000** (3.1 percent of the households sampled) **were classified as food insecure.** The findings of this survey also indicate that **an additional 9.4 percent of the population** (2.8 million) **is extremely dependent upon the Public Distribution System food ration,** without which they could be expected to become food insecure.
- **Agriculture produces approximately 12 percent of Iraq's GDP and employs 25 percent of Iraq's work force.**
- **In April 2009, nearly 68 percent of Iraqis reported being able to get safe, clean drinking water at least some of the time, indicating no significant change from January 2009.**
- Although the majority of Iraqis can get safe drinking water, **only 34 percent are satisfied with the availability of drinking water.**
- **Only 46 percent of Iraqis state that they have a working sewage disposal system at least some of the time.**

The foregoing is Article No. 5 (IM001A05) in the [Iraq Literature Monitor](#) (ILM), No. 1, 21 September 2009, prepared by Interaction Systems Incorporated ([isinreports@mindspring.com](mailto:isinreports@mindspring.com)).

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