IRAQ: SECURITY TRENDS

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Third Review Draft: November 19, 2009
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Iraq has made significant progress in defeating the insurgency and improving its security. The level of violence in Iraq is sharply lower than the levels that peaked in 2007. It is now dropping below the average levels that existed at the beginning of the insurgency in 2004, and most of the violence related to the Sunni insurgency is now concentrated in Baghdad; and in Diyala, Ninewa, and Salah ad Din provinces in central and northern Iraq. Although there have been several extraordinarily bloody bombings – particularly on August 19th and 25th, Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) and other Sunni insurgent and terrorist groups have lost much of their strength, influence, and the ability to carry out frequent operations.

The threat posed by the Sadr militia, various Shiite factions like the Special Groups, and other Shiite militias has been sharply reduced and the Sadr and the Sadrist party are now part of the Shiite political alliance. Fears that the US military withdrawal from Iraq’s cities in June 2009 would trigger new rounds of internal violence have so far proved to be sharply exaggerated.

The Iraq War, however, is anything but “won” if this means reducing violence to levels that allow civil society and the economy to function without bombings and other large-scale incidents of violence, and reducing all of these threats to a level that largely eliminates the risk of new outbreaks of major ethnic and sectarian violence.

**Levels of Violence**

The level of violence in Iraq has dropped sharply since the years of open civil war during 2006-2008. **Figure II.1 to Figure II.5** shows the decline in levels of violent incidents by total and type. The drop in violence is clear since the surge against Sunni insurgents in 2007, and the operations in Basra and against the Sadr forces elsewhere in the country in 2008.

**Figure II.6** show that there were no major rises in violence as the US withdrew from Iraqi cities in June 2009. This figure is particularly important because it shows there is no longer a direct correlation between the size and presence of US forces in Iraq. It should be noted, however, that most US forces did remain in Iraq, became active in securing the perimeter of Iraqi cities, and continued to support the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) in a variety of joint security missions inside urban areas.
Figure II.1: Overall Security Trends, Part One:
Weekly Security Incidents, January 2004 – October 2009 – Part One

Chart includes potential attacks (IEDs/mines found and cleared) and executed attacks.
Source: Adapted from SIGACTS (CF & HN reports) as of 07-Nov-09
Figure II.1: Overall Security Trends Part Two: Significant Security Incidents, 7/1/2009−10/20/2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July 2009</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>At least 31 Iraqis killed or wounded in two bombings in Mosul.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Approximately 52 Iraqis killed or wounded in a series of terrorist attacks in Tel Afar, Mosul, Baghdad, and Kirkuk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>At least 15 Iraqis killed and approximately 100 wounded in a series of attacks in Baghdad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>92 Iraqis were killed and at least 60 were wounded in a series of bombings in Baghdad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 2009</td>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>48 Iraqis killed and 90 wounded in a series of attacks in Mosul and Baghdad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>20 Iraqis killed and 35 wounded in a series of suicide bombings in Sinjar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Multiple bombings partially destroy Iraq’s Ministries of Finance and Foreign Affairs, killing over 100 people and injuring hundreds more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>6 Iraqis killed and 73 wounded in bombings in Babylon and Baghdad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2009</td>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>8 Iraqis killed and 65 wounded during a series of bombings near a shrine in Babylon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>8 Iraqis killed and 18 wounded in suicide bombings in Ramadi, Baghdad, and Mosul.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>1 prisoner was killed and 40 were wounded during a riot at Abu Ghraib prison in Baghdad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Attacks during the Eid were down this year, with one attack in Babylon resulting in 3 Iraqis killed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2009</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>9 Iraqis were killed and 30 wounded during a suicide attack in Falluja.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>9 Iraqis killed and 56 wounded during armed attacks in Baghdad and bombings in Kerbala.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>14 Iraqis killed and 80 wounded during an attack on a mosque in Tal Afar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>13 Iraqis killed and 18 wounded during a series of attacks throughout Iraq.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The numbers represented in the calendar graphic are comprehensive estimates of total Iraqi casualties throughout the entire country on that particular day. The text to the right briefly describes significant attacks on select days and does not purport to comprehensively detail all security incidents that occurred on the specified day.

Sources: Information presented herein is based on SIGIR’s analysis of open source and official English and Arabic documents, studies, and analyses. All figures based on best available casualty information and represent the sum of killed and wounded for each incident.

Figure II.2: Patterns in High Profile Explosions – Part One: Trend from May 2006 to October 2009

Source: Adapted from SIGACTS (CF & HN reports) as of 07-Nov-09
Figure II.2: Patterns in High Profile Explosions – Part Two: the bilateral Security Agreement (SA), the United Deaths Associated with Multiple-Fatality Bombings in Iraq, by Group Targeted, 1/1/2007–9/20/2009

Figure II.3: Patterns in IED Explosions

Source: Adapted from material provided by JIEDDO and SIGACTS (CF & HN reports) as of 07-Nov-09
Figure II.4 Patterns in Indirect Fire Attacks

Source: Adapted from material provided by SIGACTS (CF & HN reports) as of 07-Nov-09
Figure II.5: Patterns in Caches Found

Source: Adapted from material provided by SIGACTS (CF & HN reports) as of 07-Nov-09

Sources: SIGACTS (CF & HN reports) as of 07-Nov-09
Figure II.6: Patterns in Violence Before and After US Withdrawal from Iraqi Cities

Source: Adapted from material provided by SIGACTS (CF & HN reports) as of 07-Nov-09
Levels of Casualties

As might be expected, there is a close correlation between the levels of violence and the levels of casualties. Figures II.7 to II.10 show that similar patterns emerge in the decline in civilian, ethno-sectarian, and military casualties. This not only is true of the period from 2004 to the fall of 2009, but of the period just before and after the US withdrawal from the cities in June 2009.\(^1\) Overall attacks dropped 85% from 4,064 in August 2007 to 594 in August 2009 -- with 565 attacks in September. U.S. military deaths decreased by 93%, ISF deaths dropped 79%, and ethno-sectarian killings dropped by 88%.\(^2\)

**Overall Assessment**

It should be noted, however, that violence scarcely ended. In fact, the overall levels of violence in Iraq during 2009 have come close to those in Afghanistan – which remains the scene of an ongoing conflict and which has a larger population and more territory. General Raymond Odierno, the commanding general of the Multinational Force-Iraq (MNF-I), testified to the House Armed Services Committee in September 2009, that overall attacks had decreased 85% over the past two years from 4064 in August 2007 to 594 in August 2009— with 563 attacks in September (through September 28th). In that same time period, US military deaths decreased by 93%, Iraqi Security Force (ISF) deaths decreased 79%, and ethno-sectarian deaths decreased 88%. Additionally, improvised explosive device (IED) explosions decreased 74%.

He stated that there were only 19 ethno-sectarian incidents in 2009 to date, compared to 978 in 2006. In fact, there was a noticeable decrease in ethno-sectarian incidents -- specifically during Ramadan when previously this period had always reflected a sharp increase in insurgent and extremist activity – although incidents did rise once Ramadan was over. Other reporting showed that the number of civilians killed during September 2009 dropped to 125, the lowest level since 2003. It compared to 224 deaths in July 2009.\(^3\) It was less than half the total of 393 in August (which was driven by two truck bombings in populated areas), and less than half the total of 359 in September 2008.\(^4\)

General Odierno also stated that,\(^5\)

> While statistics do not paint the whole picture, they help provide some context in understanding the progress made to date. The overwhelming majority of the Iraqi people reject extremism...We have seen no indications of a return to the sectarian violence that plagued Iraq in 2006 and 2007...

Odierno did warn, however, that the violence was not over. High profile explosions and bombings have steadily decreased, but, “remain a concern especially following the two bombings in Baghdad on 19 August which targeted the Ministries of Finance and Foreign Affairs. These were horrific attacks, claimed and perpetrated by Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) and aimed specifically against the Government of Iraq (GoI) institutions in order to undermine the public’s faith and confidence in the GoI.” Oderieno also expressed concern over Arab-Kurdish tensions, which he said was now the “number one driver of instability.”\(^6\)

Although security is improving, it is not yet enduring. There still remain underlying, unresolved sources of potential conflict. I call these drivers of instability. From the beginning, security in Iraq has been a complex problem that has required nuanced, evolving approaches—and our strategy has reflected this. In this environment, we cannot focus on immediate and traditional security threats alone, especially as the United States continues to assist Iraq in rebuilding the foundations of their security, civil, political and economic institutions. We continue to assist the Government of Iraq (GoI) in addressing and finding ways to mitigate these root causes of instability.
Current drivers of instability include communal and factional struggles for power and resources, insufficient GoI capacity, violent extremist groups, and interference from external state and non-state actors. Iraq is a nascent democracy emerging from over 30 years of authoritarian rule based on ethno-sectarian privilege. Its future as a stable, multi-ethnic, representative state rests upon its ability to deal with the myriad of these challenges—and some of these issues will take time to resolve.

The national elections in January 2010 are critical to determining the path that Iraq will take into the future. The rules of the game are being debated in the Council of Representatives. Having just returned yesterday from the Eid holiday, they have a condensed timeline to pass an election law and many issues to discuss, including Kirkuk, open versus closed lists and a single versus a multiple district election. There is the potential to build a competent, capable and representative government, but there is also the potential to exacerbate societal divisions by appointing people based on their affiliations rather than their abilities.

Even as Iraqi political system continues to mature, there is not yet consensus on the exact nature of Iraq’s representative government that is accepted across ethnic, sectarian, and regional lines. Issues include the role and power of the central Iraqi government vis-à-vis the provinces, the integration and balance of ethnic and sectarian groups within the government, revenue sharing, and long-standing Arab-Kurd issues.

Iraqi governmental institutions continue to evolve and their ability to provide essential services is improving; yet, it will take time to develop the institutional processes and bureaucratic expertise necessary to sustain programs over time. Also, decades of infrastructural neglect require substantial capital investment, and the recent decline in the price of oil—the mainstay of the Iraqi economy—has resulted in budget shortfalls, negatively impacting the GoI’s ability to fund its many requirements.

Violent external groups and external influences take advantage of seams within Iraq—such as the Arab-Kurd tensions. Al Qaeda in Iraq, Sunni extremist groups, and Shiite militant groups continue to pose threats to stability as they seek to exploit political fissures, destabilize the Government of Iraq and undermine the progress made to date. Interference from external actors continues to exacerbate the security situation within Iraq through either tacit or direct support to extremists and proxy groups. Both enhanced security and diplomatic measures are required to secure Iraq’s borders with Iran and Syria.

Experts like Michael Knights, Vice President for Analysis and Assessments at the security firm Olive Group, have warned that the rate of stabilization in Iraq may be slowing. Until September, the most significant improvements in security had taken place between March and October of 2008. The number of security incidents in Iraq rose slightly between February (1,103) and April (1,242) of 2009, although it was then followed by a sharp drop in attacks from May (1,040) to June (806). The number of attacks stayed at roughly this level through the summer of 2009, with 884 incidents in July and 917 in August – dropping again in September.

These patterns in the month-to-month security incidents in Iraq reflect a continuing level of violence that is designed to divide Iraqis along ethnic and sectarian lines. The numbers are still far lower than they were at the height of sectarian violence between Sunnis and Shiites in 2007 – 1,773 Iraqi civilians were killed in August of that year. Nevertheless, it may be difficult to significantly reduce the current level of attacks without more political accommodation, progress in defeating the remaining insurgents, and establishing an effective, nation-wide rule of law.
Figure II. 7: Patterns in Civilian Casualties in Iraq

Source: Adapted from material provided by SIGACTS (CF & HN reports) as of 07-Nov-09

Figure II. 8: Patterns in Ethno-Sectarian Violence in Iraq – Part One: Nationwide Trends in Deaths – May 2006 to October 2009

Source: Adapted from material provided by SIGACTS (CF & HN reports) as of 07-Nov-09
Figure II. 8: Patterns in Ethno-Sectarian Deaths in Iraq – Part Two: Trends in Violence in Baghdad – May 2006 to October 2009

Source: Adapted from material provided by SIGACTS (CF & HN reports) as of 07-Nov-09
Figure II.9 Patterns in ISF and US Military Deaths in Iraq

Source: Adapted from material provided by SIGACTS (CF & HN reports) as of 07-Nov-09
Figure II. 10: Patterns in Casualties Since US Withdrawal from Iraqi Cities in June 2009

Source: Adapted from material provided by SIGACTS (CF & HN reports) as of 07-Nov-0
Violence by Province and Ethnic and Sectarian Impact

National trends are only part of the story and can sometimes disguise as much as they reveal. Figure II.11 shows the patterns in violence by province between January 2004 and June 2009. It highlights just how much the patterns in Iraqi violence have, and continue to, vary by area. It also shows the areas where improvements in security have been most striking and the areas that are now relatively secure and where development and outside investment face the least risk.

Figure II.12 shows that the of levels of violence have fallen in each province over the past year – with the decline ranging from 48 percent in Tameem to 77 percent in Diyala. Security incidents in Baghdad and Salah al-Din decreased by 78 and 79 percent, respectively, indicating a decline in Sunni-Shiite violence. These trends reflect an overall improvement of security in Iraq but there are some provinces in which the number of average monthly security incidents has risen from 2007 to 2009.

Most of the violence in Iraq remains concentrated in provinces with mixed ethno-religious demographics, particularly in the areas surrounding Baghdad and in Northern Iraq, in territories shared by both Arabs and Kurds. Shiites and Kurds have been the most frequent targets in these attacks, most likely carried out by Sunni insurgents or AQI. The trends in the number of violent incidents in Figures II.11 and II.12 can also disguise the fact that some incidents are far more important than others.

If Figures II.12 and II.13 are compared to the data on the ethnic and sectarian distribution of the population in Figure II.14 below, it becomes clear that the provinces where the number of security threats remains highest tend to be the most ethnically and religiously diverse regions, or ones tied to the presence of significant insurgent activity. The incidents are not the result of random violence or of an insurgent search for “visibility.” Most reflect a pattern directed at creating a broad climate of insecurity, efforts to discredit the government, and attacks that probe at ethnic and sectarian fault lines in an effort to provoke reprisals and new outbreaks of major ethnic and sectarian violence.

Insurgent groups like AQI have tried to exploit tensions between Arabs and Kurds in Northern provinces like Ninewa, Tameem and Diyala by deliberately targeting ethnic minorities to spark some type of sectarian violence. In the Ninewa province an average of 6 to 8 incidents were reported per day in 2009, most of them in the areas surrounding the main city of Mosul. In the province of Tameem crime, corruption and ethnic disputes also contribute to daily reports of violence. Largely Sunni provinces like Salah al-Din and Anbar, past centers of Sunni insurgent activity, also experienced a relatively high number of attacks over the past few months. Again, these have mostly been attacks by Shiite insurgency groups and AQI trying to incite large-scale ethnic violence, although so far these attempts have not been successful.

The average number of monthly security incidents did rise in four other provinces: Karbala, Najaf, Sulaymaniya and Missan from 2007 to 2009. However, in each of these cases the number of incidents rose by fewer than eight attacks and each province reported fewer than 10 attacks per month in 2009. Therefore, the main areas of concern in Iraq remain provinces in which the number of violent incidents ranges in the hundreds, particularly in Baghdad and Ninewa.
Although parts of these provinces have calmed down and experience relatively little turmoil, security conditions still vary by neighborhood in cities like Baghdad and Mosul.

If one examines the incidents involved in detail, most attacks tend to occur in regions where two or more ethno-religious groups share the same territory. These areas have been prime targets for insurgent groups trying to destabilize the government and reignite ethnic violence. This is especially true of high profile attacks in areas where different ethnic groups lay claim to the country’s valuable natural resources. Political and social disputes over oil sharing contracts and foreign contracts are still the driving force behind ethnic tensions, particularly between Arabs and Kurds and groups like al-Qaeda have tried to exploit these political divisions through their use of targeted attacks.

At the same time, violence in cities like Baghdad has taken place mainly between Sunni insurgents and the predominantly Shiite police. Although the number of security incidents increased from 181 in July to 231 in August, this increase came mainly from Insurgents and Sunni civilians reacting to the Iraqi Army’s counter-terrorism operations and to Shiite police patrolling predominantly Sunni neighborhoods. There have been far fewer incidents of civilian-on-civilian violence, indicating that the chance of a return to large-scale sectarian violence remains low. (Figure IV.2, shown later in this report, shows this general downward progression of ethno-sectorian violence, comparing four different months from 2006 to 2009.)

Furthermore, unlike many of the suicide bombings from earlier in 2009, the most serious attacks in Iraq after the US withdrawal from the cities, including the October 25th bombing of government ministry buildings that killed over 155 people, seem to be aimed directly at the government and not at a particular group of civilians. Rather than attack Shiite mosques or Sunni marketplaces, bombers are now targeting government offices and police outposts with increasing regularity.

Iraqi officials suspect that neighboring Syria is harboring a lot of these insurgents, both al Qaeda operatives and former Ba’athists still loyal to Saddam Hussein’s regime. The two countries recalled their ambassadors in August in response to Iraq official’s allegations that Syria played a part in the August 19th and 25th bombings – another set of bombings targeting government facilities. Iraq has not shut down trade with Syria or placed further restrictions on travel to and from the country, nor does it have the number of security personnel necessary to completely secure the border, even if it were to shut down trade routes. Either way it seems that the ISF are in need of greater funds to hire and train additional troops and police to ensure that bombers targeting the government cannot sail through checkpoints as easily as they have.

Attacks on Iraqi security forces continue with some frequency but have not had a major impact on Iraqi politics and governance. Moreover, the transfer of power from coalition forces to the new Provincial Councils has gone relatively smoothly – without large-scale violence or a renewed threat of civil war. Although there was an initial spike in violence after the first mass withdrawal of US troops it does not seem to have sparked a broader conflict. Instead the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Baghdad has been able to turn its attention to more mundane issues like recycling, garbage landfills and funding for a trash-collection program.
At the same time, the level of violence has not shown any consistent trend towards further reductions since April 2009. Groups like AQI still have the capacity to carry out large-scale attacks like the truck bombings at government ministries that killed 95 people on August 19th. The United States needs to continue funding reconstruction efforts, as well as help the Iraqi government provide salaries and additional training for its security forces to quell the day-to-day violence that still exists in a number of Iraqi cities.
Figure II.11: Trends in Violence by Province - Part One: Overall Trends: 2004-2009

Annual Security Incidents per 10,000 People, by Province

1. ERBIL

2. DAHUK
3. SULAYMANIYA

4. NINEWA

5. TAMEEM
6. SALAH AL-DIN

Total Security Incidents, by Month

7. ANBAR

Total Security Incidents, by Month

8. DIYALA

Total Security Incidents, by Month
9. BAGHDAD

10. WASSIT

11. BABYLON
12. QADISSIYA

13. KERBALA

14. NAJAF
15. MUTHANNA

AVERAGE MONTHLY SECURITY INCIDENTS

Total Security Incidents, by Month

16. THI-QAR

AVERAGE MONTHLY SECURITY INCIDENTS

Total Security Incidents, by Month

17. MISSAN

AVERAGE MONTHLY SECURITY INCIDENTS

Total Security Incidents, by Month
18. BASRAH

**Total Security Incidents, by Month**


**Average Monthly Security Incidents**

Figure II.11: Trends in Violence by Province - Part Two: Overall Trends: July to October 2009

Security Incidents in the Kurdistan Region
(Results in Two or More Deaths)

Security Incidents in Tameem
(Results in Two or More Deaths)

Security Incidents in Salah Al-Din
(Results in Two or More Deaths)

Security Incidents in Anbar
(Results in Two or More Deaths)

Security Incidents in Diyala
(Results in Two or More Deaths)

Security Incidents in Baghdad
(Results in Two or More Deaths)
SIGIR, Quarterly Report and Semi-Annual Report to the United States Congress (30 October 2009)
Figure II.12: Security Incidents by Province: From January 1, 2009 to June 30, 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Sect</th>
<th>Security Incidents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Shia</td>
<td>Sunni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dahuk</td>
<td>895,000</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erbil</td>
<td>1,409,000</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sulaymaniayah</td>
<td>1,574,000</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nineva</td>
<td>2,826,000</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tameem</td>
<td>1,129,000</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salah Al-Din</td>
<td>1,158,000</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anbar</td>
<td>1,427,000</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diyala</td>
<td>1,323,000</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baghdad</td>
<td>6,995,000</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wassit</td>
<td>1,056,000</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Babylon</td>
<td>1,574,000</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qadissiya</td>
<td>1,033,000</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>1%</td>
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<td>Kerbala</td>
<td>902,000</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<td>Najaf</td>
<td>1,113,000</td>
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<td>Muthanna</td>
<td>650,000</td>
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<td>Thi-Qar</td>
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<td>0%</td>
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<td>944,000</td>
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<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basrah</td>
<td>2,408,000</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: adapted from SIGIR, Quarterly Report and Semi-Annual Report to the United States Congress (30 July 2009)
Figure II.13 – Part I: Ethnic Makeup of Iraqi Provinces

Source: USCENTCOM, September 28, 2009)
Figure II.13 – Part II: Ethnic Makeup of Iraqi Provinces

Iraqi Perceptions of Security

Iraqi perceptions of security are improving, but mixed. The results of an August 2009 poll are shown in Figure II. 14. US government reporting indicates that Iraqis generally believe the security situation is better locally than nationally. Surveys in August 2009 revealed that 72% of Iraqis described the security situation in their neighborhoods as calm, marginally lower than 77% in January 2009. When asked the same question about their government and Iraq as a whole, 58% said the situation was calm in their government, and 31% of Iraqis said the situation was calm nationwide. This showed a three-percentage point increase in perceptions of security at the governorate level and a two-percentage-point increase nationwide since January 2009.

The majority of Iraqis (91%) felt that the security situation has remained constant or improved in their neighborhood over the last six months. This was nearly unchanged when compared to January 2009. When asked about the security situation in the country as a whole, 87% felt it had either stayed the same or gotten better. This also was unchanged since January 2009. The August 2009 survey indicated that 43% of Iraqis feel safe traveling outside of their neighborhoods, basically unchanged when compared to the last report. Although many Iraqis felt safe traveling, 66% reported that their movements were sometimes restricted.

When asked about their perceptions of whether the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) could now perform the security mission, 72% of Iraqis said they felt secure when they saw the Iraqi Army (IA) in their neighborhoods, and 68% said they feel secure when they saw the Iraqi Police (IP) in their neighborhoods. This showed a two-percent increase in trust in the IA and a four percentage-point increase in trust of the IP since January 2009. Nationwide, Iraqis had a substantially higher regard for the IA than the IP.

The August 2009 poll indicated that 64% of Iraqis believed that the IA was winning the battle against terrorists and that 57% of Iraqis believed the IP was winning the battle against crime. Some 64% of Iraqis believed that the IA was defeating terrorists. Additionally, 57% of Iraqis believed the IP was controlling crime. This was a significant drop in perception for both the IA and IP since April 2009.

When asked who they would go to first to report a serious crime, 47% of Iraqis said the IP, while 29% stated the IA. When asked who was most responsible for providing security in their neighborhoods, Iraqis responded that the IA (39%) and the IP (40%) are most responsible for providing security in their neighborhoods. In an earlier poll in April 2009, relatively few Iraqis said the SoI (3%), people from their tribe (6%), neighbors (2%), militias (0%), religious leaders (2%), or Multi-National Forces (2%) were most responsible for providing security.

Iraqis had mixed confidence in the Government of Iraq (GoI). When asked if they believed the GoI was effective at maintaining security, 46% of Iraqis said the GoI was effective; this represented no change from the January 2009 data. When asked to rate the level of peace and stability of the country, 56% of Iraqis said Iraq was stable, a five-percentage-point increase since January 2009.

When asked in August 2009 if they had confidence in specific groups to protect them and their families from threats, Iraqis had the highest confidence in the IA (87%). When
asked about other groups, 83% of Iraqis had confidence in the IP, 72% had confidence in their provincial government, 64% had confidence in their local government, and 74% had confidence in the national government. Confidence in the Multi-National Forces was much lower at 26%. In a continuation of trends from November 2007, Iraqis placed their highest trust and confidence in the IA, the IP, and the GoI to protect them and to provide security.
Figure II.14: Iraqi Perceptions of Security: August 2009

- **Neighborhoods are Secure**: Nationwide average = 72%
  - Percent Who Agree: 0% - 100%

- **Travel is Safe**: Nationwide average = 43%
  - Percent Who Agree: 0% - 100%

- **Government Security Efforts are Effective**: Nationwide average = 49%
  - Percent Who Agree: 0% - 100%

- **Iraq is Stable**: Nationwide average = 53%
  - Percent Who Agree: 0% - 100%
The Role the US Can Play

There are sharp limits to what the US can now do to address the challenges of political accommodation and governance. Two key sets of problems are the underlying causes of the remaining violence and fracture lines in Iraq. Iraqi elections are now leading to destabilizing political struggles, competition, and coalition building at every level. The provincial elections early in 2009 led to broad upheavals in Shiite Arab, Sunni Arab and mixed ethnic areas like Ninewa. In many cases the incumbent leaders were voted out, and there are still political struggles for gaining control and reshaping the structure of regional and local governance.

As the following chapters describe, the competition to win the national elections in early 2010 has led to major splits in the Shiite coalitions. Maliki, his supporters in Dawa, and some other Shiite leaders split from the other major Shiite parties in early October 2009 to form the “Rule of Law” coalition. The political faction led by Moqtada Al Sadr, however, rejoined the Iraqi National Alliance along with another leading Shiite Party, the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) – it is the largest political party in the Shiite Coalition and the Iraqi Council of Representatives.

Maliki has sought support from Sunni parties, Kurdish groups, and secular political elements in forming the “Rule of Law” coalition, but his success has so far been limited. At the same time, the Shiite coalition that Maliki left must now deal with the fact that Sayyed Abdul Aziz al-Hakim the leader of Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI), the largest political party in the Shiite Coalition and the Iraqi Council of Representatives, died in August 2009 – leaving ISCI leadership unsettled. It must also deal with all of the uncertainties raised by a political alliance with Moqtada al-Sadr.

The Sunni Arabs have had their own political splits at almost every level, and have not yet developed strong, cohesive political parties. The rise of tribal political power in Anbar has given Ahmed Abu Risha, the brother of a leader who helped form the Sons of Iraq, a new role, but one whose real political power is uncertain. The Iraq Islamic Party, the main Sunni party that emerged during the previous national election, has also fragmented. The provincial elections in early 2009 replaced the Kurdish government of Ninewa Province with a Sunni government led by al-Hadbaa National List, and has made the new governor, Altheel al-Nujayfi, a potential force in Sunni politics.

The more secular, “nationalist” parties, led by figures like Ayad Allawi, do not seem to have increased their support. In fact, some of their leaders have aligned themselves with Maliki rather than pursue a multi-ethnic coalition. There also are signs that neo-Ba’athist elements are gaining visibility and popularity. While these are largely Sunni, they do include a significant number of more secular Shiites, and create the possibility that Iraqi nationalism may gradually emerge with a significant neo-Ba’athist element.

The Kurds have preserved the ruling coalition between the Barzani-led Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) and the Talabani led Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). They have shown notably more cooperation during the past year. They have strengthened the central Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) in the Kurdish zone in the north although their recent provincial elections saw the first serious opposition emerge to both parties. Tension between the Kurds and Arabs remains high, however, and Maliki’s dialogue with
Barzani has so far achieved few tangible results. Iraq’s minorities have so far been volatile and opportunistic without achieving much political leverage.

No one can now predict how this shifting political kaleidoscope will change between now and the national elections – tentatively scheduled for January 17, 2010 – or how it will alter once results are clear and the new government is in place. There is still no election law nearing the end of the year, and so far there is much more competition among factions than creation of stable coalitions, parties, and leadership structures. This means that the election is the central focus of most political efforts, not counter-insurgency or effective governance. It also means that any US action that is seen as “political interference” could do more harm than good, and any US alignment with a given faction – real or perceived – is likely to alienate the others and produce a major backlash from the Iraqi people.

These political struggles favor ethnic and sectarian politics, rather than pragmatic and lasting compromises. They also lead to the politicization of the government through favor seeking, promotion, position awarding, and the allocation of funds. This has affected the quality of Iraqi governance at every level, including the leadership and structure of Iraqi security forces. This process is likely to continue through the election. If the elections are successful, it will continue for at least several more months as a new government is formed, and then until some stable pattern of political compromise makes effective governance possible. If they fall into the pattern set in Iran and Afghanistan, Iraq’s stability may be seriously damaged by new sectarian and ethnic tensions, and infighting within each faction.

At the same time, Iraqi politics and nationalism increasingly restrict the role the US can play in dealing with the problems in Iraqi governance at every level, including the rule of law. Figure II.15 shows that the Iraqi central government has made significant progress, but also that many ministries still have serious problems and limited effectiveness. The same is true in many provinces, key urban areas, and at the local level. These problems in governance interact with Iraq’s unstable politics and present a further major challenge to Iraq’s security and stability.

This does not, however, mean that the US cannot play a useful role at many levels. The US can and should seek to make sure that the elections are honest and successful and encourage the UN and international community to provide every possible support to this end. As the following chapters suggest, the US can continue to work quietly with each faction to reduce tensions, lay the ground work for future political accommodation, and selectively provide civil and security aid where it serves Iraq’s interests, without being seen as interference or taking sides. This will be a critical role for American diplomats and US military advisors both now and in the future.

As the following chapters also suggest, the US can reduce the level of violence in Iraq by maintaining aid and advisory programs to promote governance, key sectors of the economy, and achieving a rule of law. It can do this by showing the strategic patience necessary to sustain its advisory and aid programs to the Iraqi security forces, and by implementing the SFA and SA in ways that build both Iraqi unity and trust in the US. Over time, these roles may do as much, or more, to achieve the true meaning of victory as the US occupation and fighting against the insurgents.
**Figure II.15: The Trends in the Quality of Iraqi Central Governance: 2006-2008**

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<th>Output</th>
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<th>Long-term Plans and Processes</th>
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<th>Civil Service</th>
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*Review of Ministry of Transportation conducted only in 2008*
Estimates of total casualties remain uncertain. Iraq Body Count has done credible analysis, but the best current figure seems to come from the Iraqi government. Iraq’s Ministry of Human Rights issued a report on October 13, 2009, based on a study of casualty data from 2004–2008. It estimated that 85,694 Iraqi citizens were killed during this period and another 147,195 injured. The totals included 269 journalists and 263 university professors. The report’s conclusions were based on the number death certificates issued by the Ministry of Health and did not include data from 2003 because of the difficulty in obtaining accurate information about violent deaths that occurred those initial chaotic months after the US-led invasion.


iii Tim Cocks, “Iraqi Civilian Deaths are Highest Since April” Reuters (1 Sept 2009)


viii ibid

ix SIGIR, Quarterly Report and Semi-Annual Report to the United States Congress (30 July 2009)


xi Ben Lando “Q&A: Security Snapshots” Iraq Oil Report (24 Sept 2009)

xii Ana Maria Luca “Eyes on Syria” Lebanon News (27 Oct 2009)

xiii ibid

xiv ibid


xvi The survey data came from: Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq, June 2009, Report to Congress In accordance with the Department of Defense Supplemental Appropriations Act 2008 (Section 9204, Public Law 110-252), Pg. 31-32, Public Perceptions of Security, July 23, 2009. Nationwide Survey, April 2009. For security reasons, to protect the integrity of the data and the anonymity of the individuals involved with the polling data and their association with the U.S. Government, the survey questions and supporting data are only described in a classified annex.

xvii These results are excerpted from Department of Defense, Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq, Report to Congress In accordance with the Department of Defense Supplemental Appropriations Act 2008 (Section 9204, Public Law 110-252) August 2009, pp. 31-32.