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SPECIAL REPORT

Who Are the Insurgents?

Sunni Arab Rebels in Iraq

Summary

- Building a profile of a typical anti-coalition Sunni Arab insurgent in Iraq is a daunting task. Demographic information about the insurgents is fragmented, and the rebels themselves are marked more by their heterogeneity than by their homogeneity. Drawing from a wide array of sources, however, we can try to piece together a view of their primary motivations for taking up arms against the U.S.-led occupation.

- Sunni insurgents generally claim one of three primary identity-based impetuses for their anti-American and antigovernment violence: Ba'th Party membership or affiliation with Saddam's regime, adherence to Islam, or tribal interests, values, and norms.

- Secular/ideological, tribal, and moderate Islamist concerns are not necessarily mutually exclusive and often are even mutually reinforcing.

- Many ex-army officers, security force personnel, and Ba'th Party members lost their privileged status in the new Iraq and remain bitter, angry, and frustrated. This fact, combined with the perceived humiliation of being forced to live under foreign occupation and, worse still, the prospect of longer-term Shi'i supremacy, led many to take up arms.

- In strictly economic terms, many Sunni Arab tribes suffered following the war. While a number of tribes had once earned money through large-scale transborder smuggling, such activity has become increasingly dangerous and difficult, as U.S. troops have instituted measures to cut off all unregulated cross-border movement. Additionally, some tribes that had previously relied on payments from Saddam for "good" behavior found no such patronage from the Coalition Provisional Authority, which was not inclined to buy them off in this manner.

- By the end of 2003, U.S. military officials noted that some insurgents were attacking them to avenge the spilled blood of relatives, whether killed by accident or in guerilla attacks. In effect, U.S. success on the battlefield, while deterring some, had on other occasions only served to perpetuate the insurgency.

- In the last decade of Saddam's rule, many young Iraqi men, having realized that the Ba'th Party had lost its ideological coherence, turned away from the party's original ideas toward a new set of beliefs. They adopted an alternative ideology, namely,

fundamentalist Islam based essentially on the thought of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood.

- Many young Iraqi Sunni Arabs were inspired specifically by the work of the Iraqi Muslim Brother Muhammad Ahmad al-Rashid. On the one hand, al-Rashid demonstrated a pragmatic approach to political action, while on the other he very clearly stated that eventually jihad with the sword is the way of the true Muslim.

- The ultraradical Salafis and Wahhabis are distinct from Iraq's moderate and even some otherwise radical Islamists. While an accord may eventually be reached between a future democratic Iraqi government and moderate and certain radical Islamist groups, the beliefs of the Salafis or Wahhabis will never allow for compromise.

- The Iraqi government may be able to substantially reduce the insurgency by appealing to the secular, tribal, and non-Salafi Islamist groups through policies that address their primary concern: the status of Sunni Arabs in the new Iraq.

- Such policies should include meaningful participation in the formulation of the permanent constitution, even though Sunni Arab representation in the National Assembly is very low, and political guarantees that oil revenues will be shared equitably, that Iranian influence will not be allowed to penetrate into Iraq, that Iraq will not become an Islamic republic, and that Sunni and Shi'i Islam will be equally respected by the state. Further, steps should be taken to ensure that Sunnis (as well as Kurds, Turkomans, and Christians) are not discriminated against in the job market or in the choice of infrastructure upgrades.

Introduction

Building a profile of a typical anti-coalition Sunni Arab insurgent is a daunting task: ready demographic information about the insurgents is fragmented, and the rebels themselves are marked more by their heterogeneity than by their homogeneity. Drawing from a wide array of sources, however, we can try to piece together a view of their primary motivations for taking up arms against the U.S.-led occupation. Sunni insurgents generally claim one of three primary identity-based impetuses for their anti-American and antigovernment violence: secular/ideological, tribal, or Islamist. Further, the Islamists can be divided into two camps: moderates and radicals who might one day reach an accord with coalition forces and the Iraqi government, and ultraradical Salafi and Wahhabi Islamists with whom a rapprochement will never occur. With the exception of this Salafi and Wahhabi minority, core ex-Ba'this—some of whom are wanted for crimes against humanity—and hardened criminals, the identity and motivations of most insurgents are elastic and multifaceted.

It may seem strange that the same person, or even community, may both express loyalty to Saddam Hussein as a symbol and hold Islamist beliefs, but this should not come as a surprise: Individuals in the Sunni Arab areas commonly call for the institution of strict Islamic rules in one breath while expressing great admiration for Saddam in the next. Consider briefly the town of Ramadi, where walls are littered with graffiti hailing Saddam Hussein as Iraq's leader, while rebel leaders there declare: "We have two missions in the city. One to defend Ramadi against the Americans...and the other to kill anyone who sells alcohol or sex CDs."[1] Likewise, a mix between Saddamism and Islam can be found in many other regions, mainly on the upper Tigris, but also in Baghdad and the upper Euphrates. For example, painted on the walls of the Sunni Arab neighborhood of A'zamiyya in Baghdad one is just as likely to find the words "Long Live Saddam!" as "Jihad Is Our Way!"[2]

This bizarre mix of loyalty to Saddam, whose secular credentials are well known to the Iraqis, and to radical non-Salafi Islam may be partially explained by Saddam's Islamization of regime and party in the last decade of his rule. Even if one questions the sincerity behind his efforts, this movement substantially lowered the walls separating party members and traditional nonparty Muslims, even Islamists. Further, after 1993 many party

members realized that demonstrating moderate piety would serve their careers. Following the demise of the regime, these party members demonstrated even more piety than before: some even grew beards, regularly wore the traditional *dishdasha*—or sometimes even the Muslim Brotherhood–style skullcap—and consistently prayed at mosque.

Another common denominator between traditional Sunni Muslims and Ba'this, or non-Ba'thi secular Sunni Arabs, was the privileged status that a large proportion of Sunni Arabs enjoyed under Ba'th rule relative to the Shi'i majority and the Kurds. Most Sunnis, whatever they thought of the Ba'th Party, were beholden to Saddam and were often connected to the regime through relatives or close friends. At present, only the most radical Islamists, such as ideologically pure Wahhabis and extreme Salafis, are likely to express strong criticism of the fallen dictator (even though, on an operational level, they are not averse to cooperating with Ba'this). Thus, non-Salafi Islamism and Saddamism are not mutually exclusive and often are even mutually reinforcing. The same may apply to the relations between both non-Salafi Islam and Saddamism, on the one hand, and tribalism, on the other. Men with strong tribal connections and bound by tribal interests, values, and norms are just as likely to define themselves as Islamists, Saddamists, or, to varying degrees, both. Still others define themselves as "nationalists".

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The Secularists/Ideologues: Ba'this, Saddamists, and Arab Nationalists

Ba'th Party members and their dependents, as well as those closely affiliated with the Ba'th regime through patron-client networks or service in the state security apparatuses, enjoyed certain privileges under Ba'th rule that were lost with the collapse of Saddam's regime. Economic, ideological, social, and power-based secular interests largely motivate the insurgents belonging to this group.

Ba'this long defined themselves as being both pan-Arab nationalists and Iraqi patriots.[3] These sentiments—pan-Arab nationalism (*al-qawmiyya*) and patriotism (*al-wataniyya*)—are now being called upon in the armed struggle against coalition forces and the new Iraq. Non–Sunni Arab Iraqis view such nationalistic and patriotic references with some suspicion, believing these calls are designed to further the specific interests of the Sunni Arab community to the exclusion of other Iraqi ethnic and religious groups. This stems largely from the country's unique historical course and the sectarian divisions that have long split Iraq. Since the country's formation in 1920–1921, the Sunni Arab population has enjoyed more advantages than the country's Shi'i majority and Kurdish minority in terms of government employment, principally within the powerful security apparatuses. Generally speaking, the chances of a young Sunni Arab man finding a well-paying and prestigious job in government service, especially in the security apparatus, were better than those of his Shi'i Arab equivalent. A pan-Arab ideology that acknowledged the existence of only one Arab identity made no allowances for any discussion of a Sunni-Shi'i divide or questions about which group received more government jobs or privileges. With the exception of a few individuals, such as Taha Yasin Ramadhan, a fully Arabized Kurd, the Kurds were even further distanced than the Shi'a from positions of power and influence.

Adherence to pan-Arab nationalism in the new Iraq, however, has different functions: first, it provides a respectable ideological legitimacy to the effort to return the Ba'thi regime to power or to return the Sunni Arab community to a position of supremacy through other means. This is essentially a sectarian quest to reverse the ascendancy of the Shi'a and the Kurds following the war. Adherence to a pan-Arab ideology also holds a promise of financial, political, and military support from the Sunni Arab world, especially from the Gulf States, who object to any growing Shi'i influence.

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As for Iraqi patriotism (*al-wataniyya al-'iraqiyya*) among Sunnis, this, too, may be construed as being self-serving, as it justifies a struggle—under the banner of freeing Iraq of all foreign troops and influences—against the new, more representative governmental system. A successful representative-based system would grant the Shi'i community more power than they have ever had in Iraq, inevitably coming at the expense of the Sunni Arab community. All this, of course, does not mean that the ex-Ba'thi Sunni Arab insurgents do not truly believe in their version of pan-Arabism or Iraqi patriotism, as many of them genuinely and fiercely believe that only they know how to run the country.

Many ex–army officers, security force personnel, and Ba'th Party members lost their privileged status in the new Iraq and remain bitter, angry, and frustrated. This fact, combined with the perceived humiliation of being forced to live under foreign occupation and, worse still, the prospect of longer-term Shi'i supremacy, led many to take up arms. Many of these insurgents belong to Saddam's tribe, albu Nasir, or to tribes that had forged close relationships with his. Most of them live in the basin of the Tigris, north of Baghdad, in towns like Dhulu'iyyah, Tikrit, Beiji, and Dur. Thus, for example, in the village of Buwayr, villagers freely acknowledge that they are still supporters of Saddam. Ideological or tribal affinity is not the primary reason they give. Rather, the vivid memory that Saddam provided the village with as much electrical power as it needed and dug a well for it as far back as 1986 feeds this sentiment; the Americans, on the other hand, had done "nothing" for them. But Saddam is also a Sunni Arab like them.

Similarly, even ostensibly Islamist organizations, including, for example, an organization calling itself al-Mujahidin (The Holy War Fighters), often speak in Saddamist language. Consider a letter the organization wrote to an Iraqi newspaper in response to the publisher's call for rebels to lay down their arms. The al-Mujahidin rejected this call, explaining in secularist terms that they must fight because the occupation "confiscates sovereignty and independence, hurts our dignity, humiliates the people, dissipates our wealth, and dismembers the homeland." The invasion was conducted, the letter continues, with the aim of "controlling Iraq's immense wealth and securing the requirements of the Zionist entity." The United States will be defeated because "power, no matter how great, cannot make history if faced with the will . . . of the people." Only at the beginning of this epistle, with the words "In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate," and at the end of the message with a few more such phrases, is there any reference to Islam or God. This, in fact, mirrors closely the language Saddam himself used from the 1980s on.[4] The Islamist veneer of this essentially secular group—and many others like it—finds its roots in the last decade of Ba'th rule, when some in the party adopted a skin-deep form of "Islamism" to gain public legitimacy.

Interviews with ex–Ba'th officials-turned-insurgents-expose other secular and sectarian motivations for carrying out military operations. Many are no longer admirers or supporters of Saddam (if they ever were). Their primary grievance is the loss of lucrative jobs that provided both economic security and prestige, and the sense of deep humiliation they feel both as a community and as individuals. Many senior- and midlevel Sunni Ba'this believe that only they know how to conduct the affairs of the Iraqi state, and that the Shi'a, and particularly the Shi'i clergy, are totally incapable of doing so. In some cases there is evidence of a genuine fear for the very existence of the community. An interview with a few armed guards at one of Iraq's most important Sunni mosques, the Abu Hanifa mosque, further illustrates the fear of growing Shi'i power. Speaking the day Saddam's capture was announced, one stated bitterly: "We don't have any future." They insisted they were no longer fighting for the privileges they had enjoyed but, rather, for the survival of their community in a Shi'a-dominated state.[5]

This mind-set can perhaps be more clearly understood if we briefly consider the story of Isma'il Muhammad Juwara. Though himself not an insurgent, he is a Sunni and former midlevel official in the dreaded Mukhabarat (Iraq's main internal security apparatus) who has suffered greatly since the collapse of Saddam's regime. Born in 1957 and bred in

Dhulu'iyya, a midsize town at the heart of the Sunni Triangle, he joined the Ba'th Party before graduating from high school, just as many other members of his extended family had. As reported by Major Hussein Mahdi 'Ubaydi, a local police force commander, "just about every family [in Dhulu'iyya] had someone working in security or the army or some government job . . . it was normal to join the Ba'th party—it was like a rule." As such, these young men, particularly those working within the country's security apparatuses, were both respected and feared by those whose loyalty they were assigned to check.

Juwara himself spent most of his time in the Shi'i south, monitoring both army personnel and civilians. He enjoyed economic benefits that, especially after 1991, stood in stark contrast to the growing poverty of most other Iraqis. For example, when he got married, he received a free plot of land and a home-construction loan, which was converted into a grant when the second of his nine children was born. Furthermore, he bought cement at cost from a government warehouse. He received a government car for work, which he could also use for private needs. He received extra food coupons and bought electrical appliances at a special supermarket set aside for Mukhabarat families, where goods were sold at a discount. Additionally, his family received free health care at Baghdad's well-stocked al-Rashid Military Hospital. In 2002, he even received permission to take his son abroad for special treatment, a highly exceptional privilege. And from time to time, he and his colleagues would also receive envelopes full of cash as special bonuses.

After the fall of the Ba'th regime, he was sacked and his organization was taken apart. He was offered no other means of existence except for simple rations and tried to make ends meet by selling gasoline on the black market. Further, those who had once feared him now treated him with disdain. A clerk at one bank where he held an account called him a "dog" when he went to withdraw funds and told him he should go to Saddam to ask for his money. However, his newfound misfortune was confounded by his inability to understand how being a Ba'thi, something of which he had been extremely proud since he was a young man, had become "some sort of disease." He began to ask himself: "Was serving the country some sort of crime? . . . We were on top of the system. We had dreams. . . . Now we are the losers. We lost our positions, our status, the [economic] security of our families, stability. Curse on the Americans. Curse on them." Worse still, in his mind, were the Shi'a: "These people with turbans are going to run the country. What do they know? Iraq needs people like us."[6]

Such anger among soldiers and officers may have been ameliorated somewhat had they been immediately placed on the coalition's payroll following the collapse of Saddam's regime, but they were not. Rather, Paul Bremer, head of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), announced in May 2003 that the Iraqi army would be disbanded. No one was to receive a salary, pension, or severance pay. This created great frustration and anger among the professional soldiers and officers, as opposed to the conscripts, most of whom were Shi'a who were drafted against their will. In June the CPA eventually did decide to start paying salaries, as well as make severance payments, but this came late and was at first done inefficiently, and thus it did not stop the protests.

This author could not verify for certain how many people lost their jobs as a result of the de-Ba'thification process announced in May 2003, but Ahmad Chalabi, head of the De-Ba'thification Commission, indicated in early 2004 that around 28,000 senior Ba'thists had already been removed from public posts. He estimated that an equal number would be removed in the future. He demanded the acceleration of the process in order to restore "normal life" in Iraq. A CPA spokesman offered lower numbers than Chalabi, saying that only 15,000 to 30,000 would be removed. Indeed, in a May 2004 interview with senior U.S. administration officials, this author was told that the total number of people actually removed or prevented from entering public positions reached around 30,000, and the process of reviewing appeals was completely under way by March 2004. Though de-Ba'thification was and continues to be a necessity, the process needs to be carried out

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selectively; members of the security forces who have committed no criminal acts and have been prevented from returning to service should be paid a pension.

Many ex-Ba'this—believing that they lost the chance of enjoying any form of government status or privilege, and fearful of being discriminated against by a Shi'i-controlled state—established a number of underground groups to fight coalition forces and advance the Sunnis' sectarian cause. Most groups assumed secular names, such as al-'Awda (The Return), al-Islah (The Reform), Jabhat al-Muqawama (The Resistance Front), al-Qiyada al-'Amma Li-Jaysh al-'Iraq (The General Command of Iraq's Army), and Munazzamat al-Tahrir al-'Iraqiyya (The Iraqi Liberation Organization). Other ex-Ba'thi groups include Kata'ib Salah al-Din (Saladin Phalanx), which operates around Ramadi; Kata'ib al-Mujahidin (The Jihad Warriors Phalanx), which operates among the Arab population of the ethnically mixed province of Kirkuk; Fida'iyyi Saddam (Saddam's Martyrs), which took French journalist Alexandre Jordanov hostage in April 2004; and, most interestingly, Hizb al-Ba'th al-'Arabi al-Ishtiraki (The Ba'th Arab Socialist Party), which has provided training, weapons, and finances to both nationalist and Islamist groups.

Finally, it is widely believed that foreign jihadists were infiltrating Iraq, mainly through Syria. Indeed, in late 2004 U.S. commanders reported that some senior Ba'this who had found shelter in Syria were actively providing money to insurgents in Iraq. The most prominent among these figures are believed to be Sib'awi Ibrahim Hasan, Saddam's half brother, who was arrested in February 2005, and General Tahir Jalil Habush, ex-chief of the Mukhabarat. Such individuals, and even some lower-ranked Ba'this, will never give up violence, because they believe that there is no future for them in Iraq save a trial.

The Tribes

A different, often mutually reinforcing set of motivations for joining the insurrection revolves around tribal interests, values, and norms, whether economic, cultural, or political.

In the Sunni Arab parts of Iraq there are hundreds of small and medium-sized tribes and subtribal units, and some ten large tribal federations, the largest of which are the Dulaym and the Shammar Jarba. The former is spread between Baghdad and the Jordanian and Syrian borders, the latter farther north, in the "Jazira" between the Tigris and Euphrates. Each counts more than one million members. Smaller federations like the Jubbur, the 'Azza, the 'Ubayd, and the Mushahada are mainly spread along the Tigris north of the capital. There are many tribes that do not form parts of federations. The most meaningful tribal components, however, are the much smaller units, mainly the *fakhdh* (a subtribal unit numbering a few thousand) and the *khams*, a five-generation unit responsible for blood revenge and for the payment of blood money, or *diyyeh*. Tribes in the countryside of the Shi'i areas usually are smaller and less cohesive. For a combination of immediate and historical reasons, some tribes, like the Dulaym, the Zawba', and the Azza', are more involved in the insurgency than others.

In strictly economic terms, many Sunni Arab tribes suffered following the war. While a number of tribes had once earned money through large-scale transborder smuggling, such activity has become increasingly dangerous and difficult, as U.S. troops have instituted measures to cut off all unregulated cross-border movement. Additionally, some tribes that had previously relied on payments from Saddam for political support and "good" behavior found no such patronage from the CPA, nor from the Iraqi Interim Government, which was not inclined to buy them off in this manner. Under Saddam, many tribesmen had worked as paid border guards.

Saddam also regarded tribesmen in general, and Sunni Arab ones in particular, as men with particularly high motivation in battle. He believed their Arab pedigree guaranteed their loyalty in any war against Iran, and their tribal background guaranteed that they would not turn their backs to the enemy, because they were bound by the tribal code of honor (*al-sharaf*). As a result, during the Iraq-Iran War, young tribesmen were promoted

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in the armed forces at breakneck speed, filling the ranks of the Mukhabarat. For modestly educated country boys this was the fulfillment of a socioeconomic dream, and they were staunchly loyal to regime and leader.[7] Not surprisingly, as reported by a U.S. journalist who spent time in Falluja, "unlike Shi'ites in the south, . . . Sunnis in Falluja had thrived on government contracts, smuggling and graft."[8] With the loss of this employment came not just financial difficulties but also a loss of status and prestige. Serving within the military or internal security apparatuses was not just a job for many tribal men, but a passion. Tribal "warrior" traditions are very strong in Iraq, and the respect and social status that accrue from being a guard or soldier are highly valued.

Culturally and socially, the behavior of U.S. and coalition forces toward the Iraqis was occasionally insensitive and was perceived by the local population as offensive. This insensitivity may be explained by a lack of familiarity with the local language and culture, the stress of having one's life under constant threat, and the difficulty of differentiating between combatants and noncombatants. This has led to a steep deterioration in relations between U.S. forces and the local population, which was quite hostile to start with. For example, consider the humiliation suffered by men handcuffed in front of their families and pinned to the ground by the feet of U.S. soldiers. In Bedouin tradition, just *exposing* one's sole is considered an offensive act, as it symbolically suggests that the one who does so is stepping on the person to whom it's exposed. Indeed, in a certain context, even stepping on another person's shadow is regarded as an insult for the same reason. Further, while physically stepping on someone's head or neck is sometimes police practice in the United States, in Iraq such an act is a serious offense.

In other instances, male U.S. soldiers conducted body searches on Iraqi women, also a major humiliation that affects the honor (*'irdh*) of a family. Even in the Shi'i south, in Majar al-Kabir, where initially the population was not hostile to the coalition forces, British troops made mistakes such as entering private homes in search of weapons with dogs, which are regarded as unclean animals. They also entered homes in relatively peaceful areas without first exhausting diplomatic avenues. The result was a major confrontation that led to British and Iraqi casualties. As one insurgent in Falluja told a journalist: "America has invaded us and insulted us and so it is legitimate for us to fight. It is our honor and our duty."[9]

Understandably, the instances that triggered the greatest hostility toward the U.S.-led occupation were those in which U.S. soldiers mistakenly opened fire on noncombatants, such as in Falluja in April 2003. While monitoring a mass demonstration, U.S. soldiers believed Iraqi gunmen were shooting at them from rooftops and decided to open fire, killing sixteen innocent demonstrators and wounding dozens. Following such death or injury, tribal norms make it imperative to redeem honor by seeking revenge. Otherwise, the family and clan of those who were killed or wounded are subject to scorn, a decline in social status, and sometimes even aggression from other tribe members. The only way of circumventing this cycle of tribal violence is for blood money to be paid. The U.S. Army eventually did offer the Iraqi families compensation for these deaths, for injuries, and for damage to property. While payment of this blood money led to a lessening of resentment and anger, they did not disappear.

Another U.S. military mistake in Ramadi not only resulted in the tragic death of innocents but also put an end to fruitful cooperation between the United States and one of the most important families of the Dulaym tribal federation. In April 2003, six U.S. smart bombs completely demolished the Kharbit family home. Somewhere between seventeen and twenty-two family members died instantly, including women and children. U.S. forces wrongly believed that either Saddam Hussein himself or Barzan Tikriti, his half brother, was in the house. Shaykh Malik Kharbit, the head of the family and an important shaykh of the Dulaym, was killed, too. The Kharbits had cooperated with U.S. officials before the war, but after the attack they were not ready for any such further cooperation.[10] Whether or not any of the Kharbit's tribal supporters joined the insurgency in retaliation is uncertain, but by the end of 2003, U.S. military officials noted in general terms that

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In other instances, U.S. forces became entangled in a web of internal tribal political machinations and simply became lost in that strange and baffling jungle. A U.S. captain reported, for example, that when U.S. troops first came to Falluja, Shaykh Ghazi al-Sami al-'Abd, leader of the area's largest and most hostile tribe, al bu 'Isa, hosted them with pleasure. However, Shaykh Ghazi had money but no power, while his cousin, Barakat, had power but no money. Barakat ultimately forced his rich cousin to fund a group of anti-American fighters. Shaykh Ghazi obliged, apparently wary lest he be seen as a coward or collaborator with the Americans. But as a good businessman he also took advantage of the deteriorating security environment (to which he himself was now contributing) and started buying agricultural plots from farmers at reduced prices. In this way, internal tribal competition for leadership and greed played a role in pitting tribes against the occupation. Indeed, sensing that the Sunni tribes were bitter about the new reality, Saddam himself, while still in hiding, tried to activate the tribal system in defense of the old regime. In October 2003, he wrote a letter to tribal leaders urging them to launch a jihad against "the hated invaders" and those who cooperated with them.[11]

All this does not mean that there have been no instances of peaceful and fruitful cooperation between U.S. forces and Iraqi tribes. For example, in the Tikrit area a few tribal shaykhs did reach agreements with U.S. commanders. Sabah Mahmud from the Sadah tribe explained that his cooperative efforts with the United States stem from practical concerns: "The reality is they [the U.S. forces] are here on the ground; the past is dead. Give the Americans a chance to see what they are going to give us." Shaykh Mahmud al-Nada, meanwhile, leader of Saddam's albu Nasir tribe in 'Uja (Saddam's home village), asked the U.S. forces to release Tikriti prisoners. Reportedly, the request was granted and the men (or some of them) were released in exchange for the shaykh's personal honor-bound commitment to keep them out of mischief and prevent them from engaging again in anti-coalition activities. This was followed by extensive negotiations between the CPA and the U.S. Army, on the one hand, and Tikriti tribal shaykhs, on the other. This may explain, at least in part, why violence in Saddam's hometown started to recede in spring 2004.

In other instances, tribes needed wells, schools, clinics, jobs, clean water, irrigation canals and pumps, and sewage and other services, and the coalition forces had the means and indeed provided much of this. Agreements were not honored in all such cases, but a tribe's practical interests represent a strong incentive to modify its political behavior. Using the traditional pragmatism of the tribes to pacify them was occasionally successful.

While mistakes were made throughout the Sunni Triangle, especially during the early stages of the occupation, the U.S. commanders also made great efforts to positively deal with the complicated issues of tribal society. Under the command of Maj. Gen. Charles H. Swannack, Jr., the 82nd Airborne in the volatile Anbar governorate endeavored to win hearts and minds by addressing the specific economic and political needs of the tribes. In Maj. Gen. Swannack's assessment, as little as 1 percent of the population was actually interested in attacking coalition forces. Most of the remaining 99 percent of Iraqis were on the fence; they were potential supporters of either the coalition or the insurgency. In order to gain the trust of the population, therefore, when conducting military operations, the 82nd Airborne has gone to great lengths to target insurgents with surgical precision to avoid any unnecessary civilian death or injury. Unfortunately, this effort was only partially successful, and some tragic mistakes occurred.

To try to offset negative sentiments the division created a public works program that helped stimulate the economy and employ Iraqis—principally young males—so that they might be able to provide for their families and ultimately refrain from attacking U.S. forces. Additional incentives designed to stop hostile activities in Anbar included the

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employment of approximately 2,200 Iraqi border police operating in the 82nd Airborne's zone of responsibility. They were tasked with patrolling the western borders and managing four crossing points. Thus, for example, the 44,000 religious pilgrims who returned to Iraq from Saudi Arabia after the hajj were handled exclusively by these border police, though apparently not without some U.S. presence. At the suggestion of one tribal shaykh, much of the border security force was made up of tribal Bedouins, who are able to navigate the desert at night and spend long stretches there. The division also established seven battalions for the Iraqi Civil Defense, though most of them proved ineffective in the stormy confrontations with the insurgents in April–May 2004.

Further, the 82nd Airborne spent $41 million to create jobs, establish a veterans' office, and start a civic-improvement program. During Ramadan, the division paid Iraqis to refurbish some 230 mosques and to clean up towns in Anbar province. Refurbishing looted clinics was also a major priority. The division also encouraged the Iraqis to run the civil affairs of the province, creating a provincial council selected by caucus. An earlier council was composed almost entirely of tribal shaykhs, apparently some of them very unpopular. The new one was composed of forty-one members, only eight of whom were tribal shaykhs, the rest mainly leading professionals. The council met with military officials once a month to coordinate their activities. The result of these initiatives was that by March 2004, the division was receiving an average of three hundred tips per week regarding insurgent activity, compared to twenty per week in August 2003.[12]

Such efforts were not specific to the 82nd Airborne. From the moment he arrived in northern Iraq, Maj. Gen. David Petraeus, commander of the 101st Airborne Division, engaged the tribes and their shaykhs in Mosul (as well as other segments of the population) with good results. Relative to other Sunni Arab towns, the city was pacified. He established a representative city council and initiated a large number of projects in consultation with it and other community leaders. Opening the border with Syria for commerce, too, helped the city and nearby tribes. His successors continued with the same policy, and yet, since November 2004, Mosul has again become an arena of extensive terrorist activity. This regression was largely related to the U.S. offensive in Falluja. Fearing for their lives, most of Mosul's police officers and other security units melted away. The steep reduction in U.S. troop numbers there may have also contributed to this deteriorating condition.

Finally, the abuse of Iraqi prisoners in Abu Ghraib prison also has not made things easier for U.S. forces. The huge exposure given the scandal in Iraq and the Arab world has only added fuel to the fire and accentuated the collective hurt felt by Iraqis and Arabs at the hands of foreigners. Even had efforts to avoid noncombatant casualties been fully successful, deep resentment among the Sunni Arab tribes would have been unavoidable. The war deprived them of a relatively advantageous position. Unintended casualties and cases of humiliation only fanned preexisting negative sentiments.

The Islamists: Moderate and Radical

No less significant than the secular and tribal motivations among rebels, many young men are drawn to insurgency by what they consider to be the teachings of Islam. Where do these young Iraqi Islamists come from?

The Setting

In an interview in April 2004, 'Ayyash al-Kubaysi, a representative of Hay'at al-'Ulama al-Muslimin (The Muslim Ulama Council), offered an explanation for why so many young Iraqi men had turned to Islam over the last decade of Ba'th rule. As he put it, during the years of the international embargo, young men "were reared in the mosque," and "the mosque embraced them." According to Kubaysi, despite the oppressive Ba'thi system, there were

The 82nd Airborne spent $41 million to create jobs, establish a veterans' office, and start a civic-improvement program.

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some clandestine Islamist organizations in the Sunni community.[13] This claim seems unsubstantiated, but there is no reason to doubt that the mosques, indeed, served as focal points for religiously inclined young men interested in more than just Friday prayer. The mosques were the only institution, apart from the tribes, relatively immune to regime and party control. They became the natural place for people in search of an alternative to the Ba'th to pass their free time.

During the last decade of Ba'th rule, the regime's approach to Islamic piety was deeply ambivalent. Though the Ba'th Party long defined itself as a secular pan-Arab socialist organization, under the Faith Campaign (al-Hamlah al-Imaniyyah) instituted in 1993, the media as well as the educational system began to put a heavy emphasis on the Islamic identity of the country. The regime actively encouraged piety and made great efforts to present itself as being pious. This about-face for a relatively secular regime was the result of two developments: first, the Ba'th Party lost much of its confidence in its own ideology; and second, party and regime sensed that a new zeitgeist was filling the horizon—Islam. Saddam knew that large segments of the Iraqi public were "returning" to religion. As a result, he decided to jump on the bandwagon. Indeed, he even created a Ba'thi form of Islam to regain some of his lost popular support. Ultimately, this enhanced a variety of Islamist trends in Iraq, some of them far removed from his initial intent.

Much like before, any independent Islamic trend separate from state efforts, be it among Sunnis or Shi'is, was viewed as a threat. In the Shi'i areas, this meant harsh repression and occasional assassinations of overly popular clerics who were perceived as threats. In the Sunni areas, imams who crossed an invisible line in their preaching were often interrogated and jailed for short periods. Yet these Sunni clerics generally were allowed much more freedom of expression than ever before. Further, many young men, having realized that the ruling party had lost its ideological coherence, turned away from the party's original ideas toward a new set of beliefs.

By the late 1980s it had become clear that secular pan-Arabism fused with social-ist ideas was no longer a source of inspiration for some Ba'th Party activists. Many young Sunni Arabs adopted an alternative ideology, namely, fundamentalist Islam based essentially on the thought of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. A minority even moved toward the more extreme Salafi, and even Wahhabi, interpretation of Islam. The regime was reluctant to repress such trends violently, even when it came to Wahhabis, for the simple reason that these Iraqi Wahhabis were anti-Saudi: much like the ultraradical Islamist opposition in Saudi Arabia, they, too, saw the Saudi regime as deviating from its original Wahhabi convictions by succumbing to Western cultural influences and aligning itself with the Christian imperialist United States. This anti-Saudi trend served the Iraqi regime's political purposes. Still, the main Islamic shift among the younger generation was more moderate.

The Ideological Inspiration

One of the more popular Islamist thinkers is the Iraqi Muslim Brother Muhammad Ahmad al-Rashid. A prolific writer who treads a thin line between preaching nonviolence and advocating violence, his books were banned from publication in Iraq under Saddam, but they were allowed to be published in Egypt; from there, his books reached Baghdad, mostly through Jordan, and inspired many. For young Sunni Arab Iraqis, instigating a violent revolution that would destroy the Sunni Arab–controlled Ba'th regime was a non-starter. This was true for two distinct reasons: first, the Ba'th regime was well entrenched and managed to inspire such fear in all parts of society that a violent revolt was almost unthinkable; and second, even had such a revolt been successful, toppling the Ba'th regime was extremely dangerous, because it would have immediately opened the way for Shi'i ascendancy, shattering Sunni predominance. Following the Gulf War of 1991 it was difficult enough for the regime to suppress the Shi'i revolt while the Sunni Arab community was united; suppressing another such revolt while the Sunni community was divided

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One of the more popular Iraqi Islamist thinkers is the Muslim Brother Muhammad Ahmad al-Rashid.

would have been impossible. Furthermore, some of the young Sunni Arab Islamists were the children of Ba'thi officials or even security officers.

But how to spread the word? Al-Rashid explains that to introduce Islamic change in society, written texts are not the most important factor, but, rather, the human touch is. Islamic law, he contends, cannot change society by itself unless there is deep conviction in the hearts of the people.[14] The initial response of the true Muslims, he continues, is to proselytize peacefully: begin organizational and educational activities to expand the ranks of true Muslims and deepen their Islamic education and conviction. However, by essentially branding the character of most existing states in the Islamic world as *jahili-yyah*—as returning to the state of the pre-Islamic pagan Arabs—the author is not only delegitimizing the present governments but, by implication, accusing them of being guilty of apostasy (*ahl al-Riddah*). According to Islamic tradition, apostates should be killed. This is not explicitly stated in the text, because it would mean an immediate and deadly confrontation with all the ruling regimes in the Arab world. Yet any person with a basic Islamic education would understand the implication. More directly, he writes: "We shall battle the parties of atheism today and the governments of infidelity with our [organizational and educational] actions before we fight them with our . . . weapons."[15]

Further, in a section dedicated to jihad, al-Rashid is very clear that eventually jihad is the way of the true Muslim. He is not speaking of the Sufi concept of *jihad al-nafs* ("jihad of the soul"), designed to improve one's personality, but, rather, he makes it clear that he means jihad with the sword. For him, the highest degree of jihad in Islam is when a "Muslim will fight with desire, enthusiasm, and love for sacrifice, hoping for death for Allah, happy for it and rushing towards it (*multadhdhan bihi, musta'jilan lahu*)." Trying to describe the ideal jihad warrior, whom the Prophet dubbed "*al-jahid al-mujahid*," the author points out that this is "a man . . . attracted to the battle, whether [in the way of] rejecting the oppressive [ruler] or fighting in the battlefield against the infidels." Al-Rashid continues, quoting the Prophet: "I wish that I [could be] killed for the sake of God, then be revived, then killed, then be revived then killed, then be revived then killed."[16]

On the other hand, however, al-Rashid warns his readers not to rush immediately to their deaths; he cautions that a jihad warrior should be rational and calculating. Quoting Hasan al-Banna, he writes: "He who showed patience together with me until the seed grows . . . will be rewarded by God for this."[17] Al-Rashid points out that previous callers for Islamic rule made the mistake of threatening the rulers while only having a weak power base. As a result, the rulers easily suppressed them and their message. "The *da'wa* [call to Islam]," says al-Rashid, "will progress according to balanced phases."[18] The Iraqi youth, al-Rashid suggests in his writings, suffer from disorientation as a result of their tendency to mix secular Arab nationalism with Islam. As a result, their Islam is weak, but they are not, however, inclined toward atheism.

Al-Rashid's books allowed young Iraqis to remain politically inactive in a regime that threatened their lives if they crossed a certain line, while providing them with a sense of value and mission. Further, his words set for them short-term goals that they could fulfill, according to their own judgment, without too much risk. But now, since the elimination of the Ba'th regime, legal Islamist activity both in the Shi'i south and the Sunni center has mushroomed in a way unprecedented in Iraqi history; the field has opened for formerly private radical Islamist thought to be voiced strongly and publicly. Further, young Sunni Arab Islamists could easily interpret what they read in the works of al-Rashid and others as encouraging them to spring to full-fledged jihad. With Saddam gone, the risk has greatly reduced, and the reward—returning the Sunni Arab community to hegemony under the banner of Islam—is tantalizing.

While reading such scholarly Islamist books was typical for the intellectually inclined young Islamists, many others who were attracted to Islam and who spent much time in the mosques were less educated and less intellectually inclined. But they, too, had sources of external religious inspiration. These young men listened to Islamist video and audiocassettes coming from across the border. In particular, popular Islamist preachers in Syria and

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Jordan have often been referenced in interviews with young Iraqi Islamist fighters. The trickle of such cassettes before the war became a deluge after it. Now they can be purchased risk-free in the marketplace. People who did not have money to buy videos would rent them for a small fee and watch them in small groups. In this respect, Iraqi Islamists in 2003–2004 have followed in the footsteps of Iranian Islamists on the eve of the Islamic Revolution, who eagerly listened to recordings of Khomeini, then exiled in France.

While the Sunnis certainly have increased religious freedoms today, one question remains: why be drawn to the mosque and nowhere else? The answer is simple: under the Ba'th regime all non-Ba'thi social and political institutions and civil-society cells except the mosque were wiped out, and tribes have never had large or deeply institutionalized places of mass assembly that could compete with the mosques. Now that the party's centers are no more, people looking for guidance and identity in this unnerving post-Ba'th environment have discovered it not only in such books and tapes but also in their mosques. Imams and khatibs (preachers) offer this guidance freely and with great enthusiasm, as the new situation in Iraq has raised their social status and political power by leaps and bounds.

The Islamists: Ultraradical Salafis and Wahhabis

The most radical Islamist fanatics are the Salafis, or, as they self-proclaim, "those who follow in the footsteps of the Muslim forefathers." The Salafis are deeply influenced by the most extreme interpretation of Islam as presented by Sayyid Qutb, the Egyptian Muslim Brother who was hanged by Gamal 'Abd al-Nasser in 1966. They saw the secular Ba'th regime as a return to *jahiliyya*, the pre-Islamic era of barbarism and paganism, and, much like Sayyid Qutb, believed it was their duty to use violence to remove such a secular regime from power. Some of these Salafis are also Wahhabis, followers of the purist teachings of the eighteenth-century Arabian ideologue Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab. Much like the Salafis, they accuse all Arab regimes of being too friendly with the West and borrowing from it too many cultural elements. As apostates, these regimes deserve to be destroyed. The Wahhabis are also strongly opposed to Sufi Islam. And while not all the Salafis are theologically anti-Shi'i, all the Wahhabis are, because they see Shi'a as idol-worshippers. Movements in which Salafis and Wahhabis are paramount include Tanzim Qa'idat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn, a group led by Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi; Jaysh Ansar al-Sunna; Jama'at al-Salafiyya al-Mujahida; Ansar al-Islam, a principally Kurdish organization; and the Black Banner and al-Faruq Brigades.

While many young tribal insurgents often see themselves as both nationalists and pious Muslims, and thus are likely to move freely between the three identities and groupings noted above, the identity and worldview of the ultraradical Islamists are far more fixed and rigid. Thus, while many insurgents might one day lay down their weapons and become integrated into the new state system, this does not apply to the Salafis and Wahhabis. For them, the only options are victory, death, prison, and the continuation of the armed struggle.

Despite the Faith Campaign initiated by Saddam, Salafi criticism against his Ba'th regime remained potent until the day he was removed from power. To the Salafis, the Ba'this were nonbelievers. Their objection to the new order in Iraq, however, is far more profound, and thus even cooperation with ex-Ba'this is now seen as legitimate. Much like Osama bin Laden, they revile a Christian presence in the Islamic homeland. Western "promiscuous" values, support for Israel, and democracy in Iraq that will elevate the Shi'i community are all seen as threats. While a sizable group within the Salafi-Wahhabi camp consists of non-Iraqi Arab Islamists who roam the world in search of jihad, native Iraqis represent the majority.

One example of an Iraqi who rose through the ranks of al-Zarqawi's movement to a position of leadership may illustrate the challenge Salafis present to the new Iraq.[19] 'Umar

Husayn Hadid, an Iraqi electrician in his thirties whose religious fervor drew suspicion from Saddam Hussein's agents long before U.S. forces invaded Iraq, is regarded by many who fought the Americans in Falluja as the main leader among the local fighters. "Inside Falluja, 'Umar was the leader. Even Abu Mus'ab [al-Zarqawi] couldn't say no to him," said a mufti who sat on the council that directed the insurgents in Falluja and is now hiding in Baghdad. "If Abu Mus'ab didn't cultivate the support of 'Umar, he never would've been allowed to stay in Falluja."

From an early age, Hadid was known as a Salafi who stood out even in conservative Falluja, known as Iraq's "city of a hundred mosques." Long before U.S. forces became his target, Hadid took potshots at Saddam's regime, highly unusual among Sunni Arabs. As a teenager, Hadid picked fights and "made people uneasy," noted his uncle, Abu Muhammad Hadid, who lives on the family's tribal lands on the outskirts of Falluja. His first outlaw act was shooting a policeman in the leg, a scandal that was settled in tribal courts with Hadid's family paying compensation to the officer. In the early 1990s Hadid was excited about the regime's shift to Islam. Hadid and an older friend campaigned against "sins" they saw in their city, Falluja, threatening owners of beauty parlors and music stores. In the mid-1990s, Hadid terrified townspeople by blowing up Falluja's only cinema. A sign of the age was that the Ba'th regime relented, and the cinema never reopened. Ba'th Party security forces eventually stormed his friend's house and killed him. Hadid, then in his twenties, decided he would avenge his death. "That day was the seed of everything going on with Umar today," said a former Falluja police officer who participated in the raid on the friend's home.

Hadid allegedly helped murder a senior official of Saddam's Ba'th Party in Falluja and then disappeared. Saddam's government tried him in absentia and sentenced him to death by hanging. Hadid returned to Falluja after the fall of Saddam's regime. He opened an electrician's stand in a marketplace and resumed his pious life. When the men of Falluja decided to take up arms against U.S. forces, Hadid quickly assembled a small army. They started modestly, firing rocket-propelled grenades at U.S. convoys and perfecting their crude, homemade bombs, but grew to heroic status after U.S. troops broke off efforts to occupy Falluja in April 2004. Hadid became a local icon. His name was spray-painted on walls, and recruits lined up to join the fight. Around that same time, Hadid became friendly with al-Zarqawi, taking command of a Tawhid and Jihad offshoot of about 1,500 men known as the Black Banners Brigade. He protected al-Zarqawi from being thrown out by the locals or being turned in for the $25 million ransom offered by U.S. officials for his capture. Even though Hadid's religious views were more extremist than those of most in Falluja, what mattered to them was that he was from the local tribe of albu Mahamdeh and a son of the city. Further, he was seen as a freedom fighter against the Christian invaders and, perhaps more importantly, as a champion of Sunni interests against perceived Shi'i and Kurdish encroachment.

After the U.S. decision in April to break off its attacks in Falluja, Hadid and other leaders decided to form a united front to govern the city. The resulting body was the Mujahidin Shura, an eighteen-member council made up of Islamists, nationalists, and former Ba'this. Each cell took a territory to protect. Hadid assumed control of Jolan, known as the district in Falluja where the most radical insurgents and terrorists, many of them non-Iraqis, took shelter. Though he was tied to al-Zarqawi, whose movement conducted a campaign of beheadings and large-scale bombings of Iraqi civilians, the people of Falluja could not admit to themselves, let alone to others, that Hadid was as bad as al-Zarqawi, whose atrocities turned many people against him. "I asked 'Umar once how he could hold himself together when he slaughtered another human being," said one of Hadid's cousins. "He laughed and swore he'd never personally beheaded a hostage. He said he chose men who don't have hearts to do the actual killing. He said it's a battle, so everything is permissible."

Hadid's admirers remained completely silent over his organization's murderous anti-Shi'i terrorism. It should be remembered that in a letter from al-Zarqawi to Osama bin Laden intercepted in 2003, al-Zarqawi reported his plan to kill Shi'a to bring about a Shi'i-Sunni confrontation. Soon afterward, in March 2003, hundreds of Shi'i pilgrims were slaughtered on 'Ashura day in Karbala and Baghdad's Kazimayn. Even by his own tribe, Hadid is believed to be responsible for the brutal murder and mutilation in Falluja of six Shi'i drivers who belonged to the Janani subtribal unit of the Rabi'a tribal federation. When the Shi'i religious leaders were reluctant to act, the tribal system kicked in. The Rabi'a threatened that they would avenge the spilled blood of their tribesmen.[20] Indeed, the Ba'th regime tolerated, albeit with great difficulty, the Iraqi Salafis and Wahhabis because a massive crackdown would have triggered tribal feuds and weakened the regime's power base.

After Falluja fell in November 2004, Hadid escaped, shedding his anonymity. He wanted to make a name for himself, no lesser a name than that of his boss, al-Zarqawi. In mid-December 2004, his organization kidnapped one of the Baghdad-based journalists of the Saudi-financed *al-Sharq al-Awsat* and demanded that the newspaper publish a sympathetic article about Hadid. If it did not, they threatened, the newspaper's headquarters would be blown up. *Al-Sharq al-Awsat* responded by withdrawing its team from Iraq altogether.

There is no way that the Salafis can be dissuaded from continuing their terrorist activities. To please them any future government would need to be both viciously against the United States and rabidly for Taliban-style Islam. But in the case of Salafis with tribal roots like Hadid, their tribes may play a role in limiting the damage they can do. Already some tribes hurt by the extremists' campaign of murder and mayhem have threatened the perpetrators' tribes with revenge. The latter may soon rethink the protection they afford their marauding members.

The Insurgents: Three Vignettes

While Ba'thism/Saddamism, tribalism, and Islamism all serve as primary identity-based catalysts for Sunni Arab insurrection in today's Iraq, tactical military cooperation among the three categories is widespread and, as noted above, any given non-Salafi rebel may identify with one, two, or all of these causes. Some brief case studies of insurgency in Iraq may help illustrate this point and fully convey the complicated mix of motivations among Iraqi rebels.

The Intellectual Islamist

Ahmad Hasan Ibrahim, killed fighting U.S. forces, offers a fairly typical portrait of a young Islamist fighter. He was an engineering student who was married and owned his own home. His father was an upper-middle-class merchant who had prospered under the Ba'th regime. In late 2001, while studying at university, Ahmad became increasingly religious. While the family typically prayed at home, he went to the mosque. He read the Qu'ran compulsively and fasted every Monday and Thursday, telling his family he was trying to avoid temptation. He used to curse his uncle for listening to songs on television, even though his uncle was also religious. (Ahmad's objection to music implies an inclination toward Wahhabism.) Further, he hated Saddam Hussein. The family feared this would get him into trouble with the authorities but, unlike Falluja's Hadid, he practiced precaution and did not challenge the regime openly. During the war, Ahmad initially joined a local group that protected property against looters but eventually turned his ire on the Americans. Stated a cleric at the local Shahid Bashar Qalandar mosque: "A Muslim does not accept a foreigner and a non-believer to rule over him." After his death, even his mother

expressed pride in his actions, though she did this in secular terms: "He raised our heads, he defended his country and honor."[21]

A Group of Jihadists from Khaldiya

The five members of a squad that attacked U.S. troops in early September 2003 and paid for it with their lives were less intellectual than Ahmad but no less enthusiastic. They lived in Khaldiya, a small town on the Euphrates, west of Baghdad. They hailed from different families and tribes but "were united by the resurgent piety that followed the collapse of Hussein's government." All five were devotees of Mahmud al-Aghasi, a militant Syrian preacher who conveniently refrains from criticizing his own secular government and whose video cassettes are often on sale near Sunni mosques. The group's leader, thirty-one-year-old Hussein al-Fahdawi, reportedly declared before dying: "Today we have sacrificed ourselves to defend our honor and pride . . . we have sacrificed our souls for the sake of Islam, to get rid of the monkeys, pigs, Jews and Christians."

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Al-Fahdawi was born into a family of fourteen. Manager of a small construction crew, he studied Islam with the town's elder cleric, Shaykh 'Abd al-Salih, never missing the obligatory five daily prayers. In fact, he often traveled all the way to the mosque to perform them, firing workers for not doing the same. During Ramadan, he refused to talk to people he suspected of having cheated on their fast. After the war, he would not talk to those he suspected of looting. He was not married, which at his age was unusual. He recruited his jihad team from people he encountered through his job. This was not a difficult task, as relatives recalled that all the town's men became more pious after the war. The group enjoyed listening to Qu'ranic recitations and began attending Friday prayers at Khaldiya's grand mosque.

One of the smaller Khaldiya mosques, the Nur mosque, served as a rallying point for radical Islamists. Murals of al-Aqsa and the slogan "Jerusalem, we are coming!" adorned its walls. The thirty-three-year-old local shaykh, 'Alam Sabbar, explained that it is legitimate to fight the Americans because they are infidels. When al-Fahdawi's corpse was brought home, Shaykh 'Abd al-Salih told his family not to wash off the dust from the body, as normally required by Islamic tradition, because the dust of jihad was considered purifying and sanctifying. In a later interview, however, the shaykh declined to call Fahdawi a martyr (*shahid*), explaining that this was up to God's judgment, and even described the men as reckless, stating it was too early to take up arms against the occupation: "It is not time for jihad."[22] Whatever his true view, the central role of the Sunni clerics in post-Ba'th Iraq cannot be ignored.

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Ba'this turned Moderate Islamists

A group of Sunni insurgents with a nationalist and pro-Ba'th orientation interviewed in al-Mansur district of Baghdad and in the mixed city of Baquba, northeast of Baghdad, seemed to have largely comprised ex–army officers and young men angered by the killing and detainment of people during the U.S. search for Saddam Hussein. Within the group, there were also non-Iraqi Arabs and some bearing the tattoo of a winged heart, the logo of the Saddam Feda'iyyin, Uday Hussein's private militia. The cell commander was a Jordanian who had arrived in Iraq before the war, intending to stop the Americans from conquering the entire Middle East. The cell received instructions from a committee consisting mainly of clerics based in Diyala, northeast of Baghdad, that controlled some one hundred fighters. They were supported by private donations and money sent from Syria.

One of the interviewees, a nineteen-year-old who called himself "Abu Muhammad," clearly admired Saddam Hussein but defined the cell's views as "a mix of Islam and pan-Arabism." All of those interviewed opposed suicide bombings, saying they were not terrorists and did not undertake such missions, though they said they do recite Qu'ranic verses before their operations. Abu Muhammad said he had family in Tikrit, including

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senior army officers. He claimed to lead a group of twenty people. Fearing informers, he recruited only family members and close friends. Group members were adamant that once the United States was driven out of Iraq, the collaborators would be killed. Further, the group ferociously rejected any notion of returning expatriates leading Iraq and promised to kill them if they achieved leadership positions. They would accept only a leader who had "suffered like us, who was with the people" during the wars and sanctions. They did not mention any suffering at the hands of the Ba'th regime. After all, they and their families were the regime.

Conclusion

While secular/ideological, tribal, and Islamist motivations drive the insurgency, practically speaking, Sunni Arab insurgents may be divided into two categories: those who are candidates for a rapprochement with the Iraqi government, and those who are not. Insurgents in the latter category include the ultraradical Salafi and Wahhabi Islamists, ex-Ba'this who have either committed crimes against humanity or are otherwise convinced there is no place for them in the new system, and hardened ordinary criminals. The former category includes all other secular/ideological, tribal, and Islamist groups. The question remains: what can be done to drive a wedge between these two categories and find a political solution with the insurgents with whom an accord might be reached?

To begin, the Iraqi government should initiate a media campaign that fully illustrates the profound religious differences between the Salafis and the more moderate Sunni Muslims and Sufis. For example, when Falluja was under the control of the ultraradical insurgents, the dress code they demanded was very close to that ordered by the Taliban, and far stricter than the usual conservative dress code of this religious town. Smoking cigarettes was strictly prohibited, and any connection to alcohol was punishable by public flogging. Further, Western films, makeup, and hairstyles were also forbidden.[23] This is a way of living that would be completely foreign to—and unwanted by—most Iraqis.

Government media can also highlight the strong reservations many insurgents have about the atrocities committed by al-Zarqawi and some Iraqi Salafis. For example, "Abu Barra," a commander of the Allahu Akbar Battalions, a group of native Fallujan insurgents, insisted that the locals were attacking only U.S. military targets, not anyone or anything else. "The others," Barra said, "are Arab Salafis who claim that any Iraqi or Muslim not willing to carry arms [against the U.S. and Iraqi government] is an infidel. They are the crux of our ailment. Most of them are Saudis, Syrians and North Africans . . . It is the Zarqawis and . . . Salafi group who are going to lead Falluja, Samarra, Baqubah, Mosul and even some parts of Baghdad to disaster and death." "Abu Abd Allah" al-Dulaymi, military commander of the First Army of Mohammad, added: "He [Zarqawi] is mentally deranged, has distorted the image of the resistance and defamed it. I believe his end is near."[24] The majority of Falluja's citizens were caught between the coalition and the more radical mujahidin, local and foreign alike. The citizens' misery must be alleviated quickly, and the recovery shown to the Iraqi public, but insurgents must also be fully exposed for the suffering they have caused to Iraqi civilians.

The government must persuade ordinary Fallujans, in exchange for a commitment to protect their lives, to speak openly and clearly to the Iraqi and Arab media about what they experienced from April to November 2004 under "the Islamic Republic of Falluja." Their descriptions of summary public executions, public flogging, torture chambers, and all other atrocities would help expose the ultraradicals for what they are: brutal killers. To be sure, the interviewees would also criticize U.S. forces and the largely Shi'i National Guard units who helped conquer Falluja, but this would only add credibility to their criticism of the insurgents. Another element of extremist policies and beliefs that should be

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fully exposed is the Wahhabis' anti-Sufi and anti-Shi'i attitudes. Most Sunnis, much like their Shi'i countrymen, abhor the prospect of a Sunni-Shi'i civil war.

While changing public opinion through media is important, are there any tangible steps that can be taken to persuade less radical Iraqi insurgents to lay down their arms? What I have tried to demonstrate is that all these insurgent groups have one main concern: the place of the Sunni Arab community within the new Iraq. The groups that are the most likely candidates to cease all military operations are those that currently object to attacks against Iraqis, even those working with coalition forces, and the Iraqi economy. The same groups also generally object to the taking of foreign hostages. There are also political clerics respected by many insurgents with similar views. For example, the leadership of the (legal) Muslim 'Ulama Committee and the Iraqi Islamic Party are more or less hostile to the coalition and the Iraqi government, having even issued fatwas against participation in the elections. However, these clerics mostly have an Iraqi orientation, not a broader Salafi one. Following the success of the elections they are reevaluating their position.

When it comes to addressing specific concerns, what may satisfy the moderate Islamists are guarantees that Iraq will not become an Islamic republic but that Islam will play an important role in the new Iraq. In fact, this concern has already been addressed by the interim constitution—and will likely also be addressed by the permanent constitution. At the same time, though, most Sunni Arabs (as well as many Shi'a) are not interested in an Islamic republic. If the principle of autonomy, or federalism, is adopted for the whole country—and not just for the Kurds—it will be possible for each autonomous zone to adopt some of its own laws, thus somewhat calibrating the degree to which Islamic rules are imposed. Still, imposing Islamic law and Islamist dress codes in Iraq—as Shi'i fundamentalists have already done in Basra—will enrage the more secular elements of the population. Some insurgents who would otherwise be inclined to lay down their arms will keep fighting, and peaceful citizens will leave the country. Also, it is essential that the Shi'i and Sunni interpretations of Islamic history and law—even the most minor differences—are treated by the state educational and legal systems on an equal footing.

Another concern of the moderate Islamists is that the United States and the coalition forces will stay in Iraq indefinitely. Many other Iraqis, who accept the coalition troops at present as a necessary evil, share this concern. Both the Iraqi government and U.S. leaders currently hold that coalition troops will stay as long as needed. Indeed, this is crucial to avoid defections to the antigovernment camp. However, they should also regularly emphasize that coalition troops will be withdrawn to desert bases or out of the country as soon as the country is pacified or as soon as an elected Iraqi government asks them to leave. Finally, there is a need to make greater efforts to win over the non-Salafi Sunni clerics. In today's Iraq, a preacher's sermon can have far more impact than any television or radio broadcast.

When it comes to the specific interests of the Saddamists and Ba'thists, not much more can be done other than expediting the work of the vetting committees, thus allowing more ex-Ba'this to enter public service. This reintegration is not risk free and many oppose it, but strict security measures should help. As for tribes, the present policy of assisting the rural areas with services and employing tribe members as police officers in their hometowns and as border guards should be continued if they prove reliable. Further, attempts must be made to resume ties with tribal chiefs. These chiefs proved to be the most responsible and pragmatic leaders in provincial towns such as Samarra, Tikrit, and even Falluja. In most cases they compared favorably to the clerics, conducting negotiations with the government and coalition forces despite death threats. In Tikrit these talks succeeded in keeping the peace. In Samarra and Falluja they failed. It is important, though, to differentiate between corrupt would-be tribal shaykhs and genuine community leaders.

Most Sunnis, much like their Shi'i countrymen, abhor the prospect of a Sunni-Shi'i civil war.

The groups that are the most likely candidates to cease all military operations are those that currently object to attacks against Iraqis.

What may satisfy the moderate Islamists are guarantees that Iraq will not become an Islamic republic but that Islam will play an important role in the new Iraq.

Coalition troops will be withdrawn to desert bases or out of the country as soon as the country is pacified or as soon as an elected Iraqi government asks them to leave.

The elected government is illegitimate to most Sunnis.

Another way to minimize Sunni Arab concerns about their future in the new Iraq is to emphasize that oil revenues are the property of the nation as a whole, with an Alaska-style addition.

There is an urgent need to upgrade the country's infrastructure, to encourage the entrepreneurial class, and to substantially reduce unemployment in Iraq.

This is the time to make a strategic decision to both partially privatize and decentralize the production of electric power.

While the elections have provided a legitimate government in the eyes of nearly all Shi'a and Kurds, in large areas of the Sunni Triangle, holding safe and fair elections was impossible. As a result, the elected government is illegitimate to most Sunnis.[25] The way to overcome this problem would be for the new government to make sure that influential Sunni Arab leaders participate in the committees in charge of developing the permanent constitution. Even though they cannot control the insurgents, their high-profile participation in such consultations would deliver an important message. Eventually, the Shi'i politicians who won in a big way will have to show real generosity and offer the Sunni Arab community a deal they cannot turn down. Further, government ministry positions should be fully open to young Sunni men and women with the right qualifications. However, the various security institutions present a special problem, as some of the atrocities committed by the Salafis against the police and national guardsmen could not have been planned without inside information. While Sunni Arabs should certainly not be excluded from these organizations, the various security organs must be monitored very closely.

Another way to minimize Sunni Arab concerns about their future in the new Iraq is to emphasize that oil revenues are the property of the nation as a whole, with an Alaska-style addition. Establishing a national oil authority where all governorates are equally represented may be an institutional way of addressing this issue. To counter widespread suspicions of corruption and discrimination, this sector must have complete transparency. Further, the Iraqi government must overtly and covertly assure the Sunni community that—good neighborliness notwithstanding— Iranian penetration, into Iraq will not be tolerated. It must establish an internal security branch dedicated solely to combating infiltration. Ideally, Sunni Arab intelligence officers after passing a rigorous vetting process, would work directly on Iran with Iraqi Shi'a and Kurds loyal to the new Iraq. The elected Iraqi government should also make every effort to persuade important Sunni and Shi'i clerics, tribal shaykhs, politicians, intellectuals, professionals, and businessmen to meet and issue joint communiqués calling for an end to hostilities and warning against intercommunal bloodshed.

Finally, there is an urgent need to upgrade the country's infrastructure, to encourage the entrepreneurial class, and to substantially reduce unemployment in Iraq. The new government will be living on borrowed time. It must be transparent to prevent corruption and, crucially, to demonstrate that it can build more than the terrorists can destroy. Ensuring a steady supply of electric power is especially important, as it is necessary for potable water, sewage, job opportunities, and illuminated streets. By December 2004, nearly two years after Saddam's downfall, Iraq was producing only 4,100 megawatts of electric power, a little below pre-war levels and about half of the country's fast-growing domestic demand. This is the time to make a strategic decision to both partially privatize and decentralize the production of electric power.

In terms of sabotage to infrastructure and crime, Baghdad and Basra are worst off. To help offset these attacks to the central system, the government could provide neighborhoods—through loans and subsidies—backup generators capable of serving 500 families each. Purchasing 2,500 one-megawatt generators would cost around $1 billion, with spare parts and other hardware costing an additional $500 million. These generators would kick in the moment the central system shut down. Further, they would be very difficult to sabotage because they do not require a high-voltage grid and the neighborhoods themselves would be responsible for their operation and protection. This would empower the people and give them a sense of control over their lives. Such a measure, which aligns well with Iraq's tradition of strong neighborhoods (*mahallat*), may even help turn the tide against the insurgents inside their own West Baghdad strongholds. With at least $17 billion annually in oil revenues, the resources are available for such an initiative. U.S. and Japanese companies could provide the generators within a few months and, without placing their own personnel at risk, could tutor Iraqi technicians in neighboring countries.

Coalition forces would help escort the generators to their destinations. The rest would be up to the Iraqis themselves.

Notes

1. Akeel Hussein and Nicholas Pelham, "Rebels' Writ Runs Large across the Troublesome Sunni Triangle," *Financial Times,* July 30, 2004, http://ft.com/.

2. Anthony Shadid, "In New Iraq, Sunnis Fear a Green Future," *Washington Post Foreign Service,* December 22, 2003.

3. See Amatzia Baram, *Culture, History and Ideology in the Formation of Ba'thi Iraq* (London: MacMillan, 1991).

4. *Al-Ittijah al-Akhar* [The Other Tendency] (Baghdad), March 13, 2004, FBIS March 14, 2004.

5. Anthony Shadid, "In New Iraq, Sunnis Fear a Green Future," *Washington Post Foreign Service,* December 22, 2003.

6. Daniel Williams reporting from Dhulu'iya, Iraq, *Washington Post Foreign Service,* January 13, 2004.

7. For details see Amatzia Baram, "Neo Tribalism in Iraq: Saddam Husayn's Tribal Policies 1991–96," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 29 (1997), 1–31; Amatzia Baram, *Building toward Crisis: Saddam Husayn's Strategy for Survival* (Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1998).

8. Rajiv Chandrasekaram, *Washington Post*, October 17, 2004.

9. *Observer* (London), January 11, 2004.

10. Based on telephone conversations with Paul McGough, chief correspondent in Iraq for the *Sydney Morning Herald,* July 24, 2004, and Deborah Amos' National Public Radio program "All Things Considered" on August 2, 2004.

11. Agence France-Presse from Tikrit, October 18, 2003.

12. Based on a presentation by Gen. Swannack at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, June 30, 2004. See also WINEP's *Policywatch* No. 884, July 20, 2004.

13. Interview by Muhammad al-Baqali, *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, April 23, 2004, FBIS-NES, April 23, 2004.

14. Muhammad Ahmad al-Rashid, *Al-Masar: Ihya' Fiqh al-Da'wa* [Resurrecting the Call's Jurisprudence or Comprehension] (The Fifth Book, Cairo: Dar al-Bashir lil-Thaqafa wal-'Ulum, 1999), 16.

15. Muhammad Ahmad al-Rashid, *Al-Masar: Ihya' Fiqh al-Da'wa* (The Fifth Book, Cairo: Dar al-Bashir lil-Thaqafa wal-'Ulum, 1999), 9. See also his earlier book, *Al-'Awa'iq* [The Obstacles], *Ihya' fiqh al-Da'wa, No. 2* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risala, 1997). This volume is dedicated mainly to theology. The same author also published *Al-Muntalaq* [The Point of Departure] *No. 1* in the same series.

16. Al-Rashid (pp. 67–68) provides the source for this prophetic saying as *Sahih al-Bukhari,* one of the canonical collections of the Prophet's traditions.

17. Muhammad Ahmad al-Rashid, *Al-Masar: Ihya' Fiqh al-Da'wa* (The Fifth Book, Cairo: Dar al-Bashir lil-Thaqafa wal-'Ulum, 1999), 67–68.

18. Ibid., 69, 71.

19. Most of the profile provided here is based on a report by Hannah Allam, "Fallujah's Real Boss: Omar the Electrician," in Knight Ridder newspapers, November 22, 2004.

20. See an excellent account from Baghdad by Tish Durkin, *National Journal Group, Inc.,* October 16, 2004.

21. Mariam Fam, Associated Press from Mosul, November 7, 2003.

22. Anthony Shadid from Khaldiyyah, *Washington Post,* September 21, 2003.

23. Nir Rosen, "Home Rule," *New Yorker,* July 5, 2004, 50–51. And a personal interview with Rosen in Washington, DC, May 22, 2004.

24. Karl Vick, *Washington Post,* October 13, 2004.

25. See, for example, Hamza Hendawi, "Iraqi Vote May Not Resolve Sunni Dilemma," Associated Press, January 31, 2005; "Disgruntled Sunnis Could Thwart Iraq Constitution," Reuters from Amman, February 1, 2005; David Axe, "On the Sunni Side from the Besieged Sunni Triangle: The Glowing Portrait of the Iraqi Election Doesn't Hold," *Salon,* February 1, 2005, http://www.salon.com.

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