THE UNITED STATES AND IRAQ'S SHI'ITE CLERGY: PARTNERS OR ADVERSARIES?

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February 2004

Report Documentation Page

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.

1. REPORT DATE	2. REPORT TYPE	3. DATES COVERED
FEB 2004	**N/A**	**-**

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE **The United States and Iraq's Shiite Clergy: Partners or Adversaries?**	5a. CONTRACT NUMBER 5b. GRANT NUMBER 5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER
6. AUTHOR(S) **W. Andrew Terrill**	5d. PROJECT NUMBER 5e. TASK NUMBER 5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) **Strategic Studies Institute United States Army War College 122 Forbes Avenue Carlisle, Pennsylvania 17013-5244**	8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)	10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S) 11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)

12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
Approved for public release, distribution unlimited

13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

14. ABSTRACT
The author addressed the critical need to gain the cooperation or at least the passive tolerance of the Shi'ite clerics and community. Such an effort could become more challenging as time goes on, and one of the recurring themes of this monograph is the declining patience of the Shi'ite clergy with the U.S. presence. By describing the attitudes, actions, and beliefs of major Shi'ite clerics, the author underscores a set of worldviews that are profoundly different from those of the U.S. authorities currently in Iraq and Washington. Some key Shi'ite clerics are deeply suspicious of the United States, exemplified by conspiracy theories. These suggest that Saddam's ouster was merely a convenient excuse, allowing the United States to implement its own agenda. Other clerical leaders are more open-minded but not particularly grateful for the U.S. presence, despite their utter hatred for Saddam and his regime.

15. SUBJECT TERMS

16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT	b. ABSTRACT	c. THIS PAGE			
unclassified	**unclassified**	**unclassified**	**UU**	**55**	

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 8-98)
Prescribed by ANSI Std Z39-18

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The author states: I would like to thank Ms. Sarah E. Peter, Dr. Larry Goodson, Dr. Steven Metz, Dr. Conrad Crane, Lieutenant Colonel Thomas N. Baker, U.S.A.R., Dr. Jeffrey Record, and Captain David M. Burke, USAF, for useful comments on earlier drafts of this work. My friend, Dr. Sami G. Hajjar, also provided his wise insight and suggestions. My thanks also go to Colonel Brian Kerns, USAF, Defense Attache in the United Arab Emirates, and Major James Overstreet, Assistant Air Attaché in Amman, Jordan, in 2003. Both of these fine officers gave a great deal of their time to help me with my research while I was in the Middle East. I also thank Bart Gatrell, who served as my very able research assistant on this project. All mistakes associated with this work are, of course, my own.

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ISBN 1-58487-153-9

FOREWORD

The U.S. military presence in Iraq is currently in a transitional phase. Either the anti-U.S. insurgency will be brought under control and security will be provided to those forces involved in nation-building; or the insurgency will expand, and U.S. goals in Iraq will be undermined by increasing civil unrest. It is imperative that the former objective be accomplished while the later fate be avoided. To ensure this outcome, U.S. policymakers must understand the internal dynamics of Iraq, including the role of Iraq's Shi'ite clerics.

This monograph by Dr. W. Andrew Terrill helps to address the critical need to gain the cooperation or at least the passive tolerance of the Shi'ite clerics and community. Such an effort could become more challenging as time goes on, and one of the recurring themes of this monograph is the declining patience of the Shi'ite clergy with the U.S. presence. By describing the attitudes, actions, and beliefs of major Shi'ite clerics, Dr. Terrill underscores a set of worldviews that differ in important ways from those reflected in U.S. policy. Key Shi'ite clerics' deep suspicion of the United States is exemplified by conspiracy theories. These suggest that Saddam's ouster was merely a convenient excuse, allowing the United States to implement its own agenda. Other clerical leaders are more open-minded but not particularly grateful for the U.S. presence, despite their utter hatred for Saddam and his regime.

The Strategic Studies Institute is pleased to offer this monograph as a contribution to the national security debate on this important subject as our nation grapples with a variety of problems associated with the U.S. presence in Iraq. This analysis should be especially useful to U.S. military strategic leaders as they seek to better understand Iraq's largest sectarian community.

DOUGLAS C. LOVELACE, JR.
Director
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

W. ANDREW TERRILL joined the Strategic Studies Institute in October 2001, and is SSI's Middle East specialist. Prior to his appointment, he served as a senior international security analyst for the International Assessments Division of the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL). In 1998-99, Dr. Terrill also served as a Visiting Professor at the U.S. Air War College on assignment from LLNL. He is a former faculty member at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia, and has taught adjunct at a variety of other colleges and universities. He is a U.S. Army Reserve lieutenant colonel and a Foreign Area Officer (Middle East). Dr. Terrill has published in numerous academic journals on topics including nuclear proliferation, the Iran-Iraq War, Operation DESERT STORM, Middle Eastern chemical weapons, and ballistic missile proliferation, terrorism, and commando operations. Since 1994, at U.S. State Department invitation, Dr. Terrill has participated in the Middle Eastern Track 2 talks, which are part of the Middle East Peace Process. He holds a B.A. from California State Polytechnic University and an M.A. from the University of California, Riverside, both in Political Science. Dr Terrill also holds a Ph.D. in International Relations from Claremont Graduate University, Claremont, California.

SUMMARY

Clerics are one of the most important forces guiding and directing Iraqi Shi'ite public opinion. Many of Iraq's secular leaders were sullied by their collaboration with the Saddam Hussein regime or were tainted by their prolonged absence from Iraq, and thus do not have the potential power of the religious establishment to mobilize popular opinion. Moreover, many Shi'ite clerics are emerging as important spokesmen for their communities. Iraqi Shi'ites have been denied power proportionate with the size of their community since Iraq was established in 1920 and are determined not to be disenfranchised again. Their actions toward the United States are often calibrated with this goal in mind.

All of Iraq's major Shi'ite clerics are critical of the U.S. military presence. Some are deeply critical and may choose to support anti-coalition violence should the U.S. forces remain in Iraq for an extended period of time. Those who do cooperate with the U.S. presence usually are careful to explain to their followers that they do so reluctantly and only in recognition of overwhelming U.S. power.

The leading Shi'ite clerics in Iraq at this time are Grand Ayatollah 'Ali Sistani and his four colleagues who control the Najaf *Hawza*, a Shi'ite religious seminary and center of religious scholarship. The *Hawza* clerics have had a tradition of staying distant from politics, but this tradition now seems to be eroding. Sistani publicly treats the U.S. presence as illegitimate, but also engages in tacit cooperation with U.S. authorities. His continued cooperation with the United States will be vital for U.S. forces now in Iraq, but his patience is not assured.

A potentially important leader seeking to compete with the *Hawza* is the young and militant Muqtada al Sadr, a junior cleric whose father was Iraq's most senior cleric in 1999 when he was murdered by Saddam's agents. Sadr is backed by the deeply radical and anti-Semitic Grand Ayatollah Kazem Ha'eri, an Iraqi exile in Iran and a believer in a variety of hateful conspiracy theories about the United States. Sadr hopes to develop a strong following among the young and impoverished dwellers in Shi'ite slums.

Shi'ite political parties with an Islamic agenda also are emerging as significant players in post-Saddam Iraq. The most important of these is the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), which has a long history of collaboration with Iran. SCIRI currently is cooperating with the United States on the grounds that Shi'ite interests must be strongly asserted, or they will be ignored. Nevertheless, SCIRI publicly stresses its strong distrust of the United States and unhappiness with the U.S. presence in Iraq. The smaller *Da'wa* and Iraqi *Hizb'allah* parties likewise stress the need for the United States to leave Iraq as soon as possible. None of these parties publicly call for violence against the United States at this time, although one of *Da'wa*'s sources of spiritual inspiration (Sheikh Fadlallah of Lebanon) has hinted that violence may be appropriate.

While none of Iraq's leading Shi'ite clerics is friendly to the United States, some are more tolerant than others of the U.S. presence. None seem to trust the United States or assume that the United States has a benevolent agenda in the region. The ouster of Saddam thus earned the United States surprisingly little credit with a clerical leadership that suffered unspeakable oppression under the ousted tyrant. The dangers of militant Shi'ites committing acts of terrorism against U.S. forces in the foreseeable future thus are real and pressing. The likelihood and potential scope of such attacks will probably increase so long as the U.S. military presence continues.

In examining the above questions, the author has included a glossary at the back of this monograph for individuals who are less familiar with some of the titles, honorifics, names, and concepts within Twelver Shi'ite Islam.

THE UNITED STATES AND IRAQ'S SHI'ITE CLERGY: PARTNERS OR ADVERSARIES?

Every day, we receive dozens of requests from Iraqis asking us to issue a *fatwa* against the Americans, and we say no. But this "no" will not last forever.

Spokesman for Grand Ayatollah Sistani[1]

If Sistani calls for a holy war, it will happen.

Ayatollah 'Ali al Wahid[2]

No to America. No to the Devil.

Chant at Muqtada al Sadr rally[3]

Introduction.

When the U.S.-led military forces took control of Iraq in early 2003, they assumed control of a country with a short but extremely complex religious, ethnic, and social history. As the future of post-Saddam Iraq unfolds, the attitudes and behavior of the Shi'ite Muslim Arabs are emerging as critical factors for Iraq's future. This community, traumatized by years of Iraqi government brutality, forms 60-65 percent of the Iraqi population. Currently, the majority of its members appear determined not to return to their former status as an oppressed majority ruled by minority Sunni leaders.

At the time of this writing, U.S. military forces in Iraq are facing serious ongoing casualties in their confrontation with predominantly Sunni Muslim Arabs, some of whom are supporters of the previous regime. The Shi'ites, in contrast, while showing strong signs of impatience with the U.S. military presence, have not yet joined in the guerrilla war at any significant level. So long as they continue to remain outside of the fighting, the United States may have a reasonable chance of succeeding in the rehabilitation of Iraq. The Iraqi situation will, however, become vastly more complex should Shi'ite leaders call upon their followers to resist the U.S. military presence.

If the majority of Shi'ites are currently not clear U.S. supporters, neither have they yet chosen to take up arms against U.S. forces in significant numbers. Consequently, a strong effort must be extended to win their cooperation and avoid pressing them into becoming enemies, while still seeking good relations with Iraq's non-Shi'ite citizens. If the Shi'ite Arabs of Iraq do rise in significant numbers to oppose the U.S. presence, the result will be a radicalizing experience for them and increasing casualties for the U.S. armed forces. Any Iraqi political system emerging from such a crucible can be expected to be hostile to the United States and potentially destabilizing for the region. Correspondingly, U.S. sacrifices of blood and treasure made during and after the invasion of Iraq will have yielded few, if any, tangible results.

Under these circumstances, it is important to consider the current and emerging leadership of Iraq's Shi'ite community. Much of the current leadership can be found among religious leaders. Although these individuals and their organizations may yet be displaced by more secular elites, they are the most powerful forces in the Shi'ite community at present. The Shi'ite community's religious hierarchy, current leaders, possible strategies, and future aspirations, therefore, deserve serious consideration by U.S. policymakers and military leaders.

The Iraqi Shi'ites: Beliefs and Practices.

To understand Iraq's current political and sociological situation, one must consider Islamic beliefs as practiced by the Iraqi Shi'ites. It is also important to discuss briefly the history of Iraq's Shi'ite community. Iraqi Shi'ites are a diverse group, comprising both religious and secular elements. A wide degree of differing opinion exists on the proper role of the clergy in politics within Iraq, as well as in the wider global Shi'ite community. The idea that decent people, and especially clerics, stay far away from government has a strong tradition in Shi'ite Islam, although this concept has been greatly weakened in the last 30 years with the rise of activist clerics in Iran and Lebanon. The quietist view also conflicts with many mainstream Islamic views which consider religion and politics inseparable.

Iraq is one of the two great centers of Shi'ite life and theology in the world (Iran being the other).[4] Shi'ites represent 60-65 percent of the total Iraqi population and around 80 percent of Iraq's Arab population.[5] Despite this majority, all Iraqi governments have been dominated by the less numerous Sunni Arabs. The Sunnis initially were more willing to cooperate with the post-World War I British colonial power, and later were able to dominate the institutions of national power, as well as the military and internal security forces.

Shi'ite Arabs are numerically dominant in southern Iraq, and the holy cities of Karbala and Najaf are important centers of Shi'ite religious learning.[6] In addition to the Shi'ites of the south, at least two million Shi'ites also live in a large slum area of eastern Baghdad once known as Saddam City. The inhabitants of this district now call it either Sadr City (after a religious leader murdered in 1999 by Saddam's agents) or Revolution [*Thawra*] City, its name in pre-Saddam times. Other Shi'ites live in more prosperous areas of Baghdad and have thus altered the demographic balance of this traditional seat of Sunni dominance. Some estimates suggest that at least half of the population of Baghdad is now Shi'ite.[7] It might also be noted that Sunni/Shi'ite intermarriage is both reasonably common and socially acceptable in Iraq, and thus perhaps holds some potential for defusing intercommunal conflict in the future.

The vast majority of Iraqi Shi'ites are Twelvers, who believe that the twelfth Imam (leader of the Islamic community) who went into hiding in 873 (never dying or emerging but rather entering "occultation") will return as a messiah to restore justice to the world.[8] Twelvers are the majority faction in Shi'ite Islam. The Shi'ite communities of Iran, Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Lebanon are comprised almost entirely of Twelvers. The disappearance of the twelfth Imam and his anticipated return as a messiah help to create a mental framework whereby many devout Shi'ites view contemporary governments as corrupt in a way that will eventually be rectified by a redeemer acting for God.

Shi'ites, like other Muslims, believe in the Koran as well as the documented sayings and traditions of the Prophet Mohammad adhered to by Sunni Muslims. Nevertheless, and despite some contrary Shi'ite claims, there are important differences in doctrine

and worldview. All practicing Muslims view Muhammad as the world's most perfect man and look to his example, even in the routine details of daily life, to help guide them in their own actions. Shi'ites, however, also look to the life and example of 'Ali, the Prophet Muhammad's son-in-law and the fourth Caliph, as a source of inspiration, especially for dealing with injustice, victimization, and suffering.

Moreover, suffering and victimization were a fundamental part of 'Ali's life. After prevailing in a long struggle to become Caliph, 'Ali was murdered with a poisoned dagger because his support from the lower classes frightened numerous members of the Islamic elite. 'Ali's son, Hussein ibn 'Ali, then took up his father's struggle and was killed in 680 during a hopelessly unequal battle on the plains of Karbala after refusing to subordinate himself and pay tribute to Mu'awiya, the rival Caliph in Damascus. Hussein was subsequently lionized by Shi'ites as the ultimate example of noble martyrdom, while his more compromising brother, Hassan, is often treated with embarrassed silence in Shi'ite religious texts.[9]

The Shi'ite focus on their own lamentations, victimization, suffering, and martyrdom is often described as the "Karbala complex," referring to the death of Hussein ibn Ali. This outlook remains striking in a contemporary context, and numerous scholars of Islam refer to Karbala as the core of Shi'ite history.[10] Karbala has also been described as providing the Shi'ites with a proclivity towards defeatism as well as a belief that government is often (perhaps usually) corrupt and oppressive. In Iraq, this view was strongly reinforced by Saddam's years of misrule.

Shi'ite religious leadership, and especially that of the Twelvers such as the Iraqis, also is quite different from that found in Sunni Islam. The Shi'ite hierarchy is organized in a complex pyramid structure unheard of in Sunni Islam. Consequently, the guidance offered by senior clerics is vital. According to Shi'ite doctrine, believers are bound by the *fatwas* (or religious declarations) of the clerics they choose to follow so long as those clerics are alive. The high rank of a cleric and the size of his following often are key guideposts for predicting the seriousness which will greet any *fatwas* that he chooses to issue.

Many Iraqi Shi'ite clerics, prior to the rise of Iranian clerical leader Ruhollah Khomeini, remained aloof from political matters after the failure of a 1920 revolt organized with the support of Shi'ite clerics against a British occupation force. Traditional Shi'ite Islam has been a faith of submission and lamentation, whereby the just often live a squalid life waiting for the twelfth Imam to reappear and provide divine restitution for their suffering.[11] This approach seemed reasonable to most Iraqi clerics, but their worldview was challenged by events in Lebanon and Iran during the 1970s. The militant activities inspired by Ruhollah Khomeini in Iran and Musa Sadr in Lebanon at this time sometimes are described as the "Shi'ite awakening."

The highest clerical rank in Shi'ite Islam is normally *grand ayatollah* (*ayatollah 'uzma*) or "great sign of God." Directly below this rank is *ayatollah* or "sign of God" followed by *hojat al islam* or "authority on Islam." Lower ranks in descending order are *mubellegh al risala* ("carrier of the message") then *mujtahid* (a graduate of a religious seminary, although the entire clergy is sometimes referred to as the *mujtahids*) and finally at the lowest rung, *talib ilm* (a religious student).[12] In the past, there have been, generally, no more than five grand *ayatollahs* throughout the Shi'ite world at any one time. This situation has now changed. Now there are at least seven grand *ayatollahs* throughout the Muslim World, with one Beirut newspaper suggesting that there are 14 grand *ayatollahs* in Iran alone.[13] The most exalted of the clerics are often viewed as the *Marja al Taqlid* or "Source of Emulation" by followers who chose to be guided by their advice and example. Correspondingly, Shi'ite Muslims have a variety of senior clerics they may choose to follow, ranging from activist to quietist clerical leaders.

Promotions to the highest grades in the Shi'ite clergy are usually based on factors such as the authorship of important Islamic tracts and the establishment of a following of promising students. Yet, these factors often prepare one for a quiet life as a scholar rather than a leader of political movements. Iraq's most senior current cleric, Grand Ayatollah 'Ali Sistani, is widely viewed as a brilliant Islamic scholar who may not have the skills to be an effective political leader. An additional complication exists in assessing the leadership

potential of various senior clerics. Promotions traditionally have been decided upon by the religious establishment, although in Saddam's Iraq the last few appointments to grand *ayatollah* were made by the government, which nevertheless was forced to choose among a very few highly qualified candidates.[14]

The Shi'ite Clergy in Pre-Saddam Iraq.

Iraq was created out of territory taken from the Ottoman Empire as a British class A mandate in the aftermath of World War I.[15] Like many colonialist states, Britain sought a weak minority-based client regime which would fear being overwhelmed by the remainder of the population should the country achieve independence. The choice of the Sunni Arabs as a junior partners in the administration of Iraq was thus a natural one since they were clearly outnumbered by Arab Shi'ites within the borders of the new state.

Nevertheless, the British decision to work with Sunni rather than Shi'ite Arabs was partially forced upon them. Following World War I, Iraq's Shi'ite clergy took angry exception to the concept of the British mandate, and was prepared to resist it to an extent that did not occur in the Sunni community. The preeminent Shi'ite cleric Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Taqi Shirazi issued a *fatwa* that "none but Muslims have a right to rule over Muslims."[16] This declaration was followed by a call to jihad against the British forces issued by the Shi'ite clergy from the holy city of Karbala in southern Iraq.[17] Initially, Iraqi irregulars did quite well against British forces, but the tide turned after the Government of British India sent significant numbers of reinforcements and supplies to Iraq. By February 1921, the resistance had been broken, and British authority was restored to the country, albeit with nearly 2000 British casualties, including 450 dead.[18]

Britain's suppression of Iraq's 1920 revolt easily was placed within the Shi'ite psychological framework of unjust leaders taking control of an honest, pious, but defeated, people. It also caused most Shi'ites to retreat back into familiar patterns of submission that continued throughout the British Mandate (1920-32). Moreover, in the aftermath of the revolt, the British were unwilling to bring many

Shi'ites into government administration. Rather, they depended on Sunni Arabs and other minorities working under the client Hashemite King, Feisal, whom they installed in Iraq.[19]

Shi'ite patterns of resigned acceptance of government authority continued through a series of post-mandate regimes led by Sunni Arabs. Prior to Saddam Hussein's rise to power, Iraq's Shi'ite clerics had already developed what one scholar calls a "live and let live relationship" with the Iraqi government.[20] Najaf's long serving preeminent cleric, Grand Ayatollah Mohsen Hakim, committed only two major political actions in his lifetime. These were to issue a *fatwa* in 1960 forbidding Shi'ites to join the Communist Party due to its official atheism, and to support the *Da'wa Islamiya* Islamic political party openly before this group was outlawed.[21] Hakim died in 1970 just 2 years into the era of Ba'th party rule.

Nevertheless, even before Hakim's death, traditional approaches to clerical thought and behavior were increasingly challenged. The arrival of exiled Iranian Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini to Najaf in 1964 brought an important politically militant senior cleric to Iraq, perhaps for the first time since the 1920s. From his new home at Najaf, Khomeini spoke to other Shi'ite religious leaders about the need for an assertive clergy willing to rally the masses against un-Islamic (in his words "satanic") governments such as those of the Iranian shah and secular Iraqi strongmen, including Saddam Hussein.[22] Khomeini, however, did not publicly challenge the Iraqi government, since such actions would have resulted in deportation, imprisonment, or execution. His later rise to power in Iran was, nevertheless, viewed as a staggeringly important achievement for Islamic activism. Likewise, the rise of another activist Shi'ite cleric, Musa al Sadr, in Lebanon further challenged the quietist approach. Sadr, who was born and educated in Iran, was able to mobilize the deeply oppressed but also quiescent Shi'ites of southern Lebanon into demanding greater political rights. He disappeared in 1975 during a trip to Libya and is widely assumed to have been murdered by Libyan leader Colonel Muammar Qadhafi.[23] Lebanon, nevertheless, remained a center of Shi'ite political activism after Sadr's death.

Saddam and the Shi'ite Clergy.

The Iraqi Ba'th party came to power for the second time in 1968 (having previously ruled from February until November 1963), serving as the vehicle for Saddam Hussein's rise to undisputed power by 1979. While initially appearing as nothing more than the latest in a series of Iraqi dictatorships, there were important differences from earlier regimes. The more sweeping authoritarianism of the Ba'th leaders quickly became apparent in their relationship with Iraq's already battered Shi'ite religious establishment. In particular, the Ba'thists sought to end the autonomy of Shi'ite theological centers and also to restrict the activities of the *Da'wa Islamiya* (Islamic Call) political party, which had been formed in 1958 to fight atheism and communism.[24] The harassment of the clergy escalated and led to the closure of previously flourishing theological institutes. The number of young men interested in preparing for theological careers correspondingly declined.

After taking power, Saddam also carefully observed the activities of the Shi'ite clergy, taking care to eliminate or co-opt anyone that appeared to have a potential to challenge the regime. The 1979 experience of neighboring Iran was perhaps especially troubling to Saddam when the secular shah was overthrown by militant Shi'ites who then established an Islamic government under clerical leadership. Saddam was also horrified by Iranian revolutionary zeal and Tehran's interest in exporting its system of government throughout the region. While the collapse of the Iranian monarchy eliminated an important enemy with strong ties to the West, the alternative of a neighboring Islamic Republic began to appear worse.

When war broke out between theocratic Shi'ite Iran and secular Sunni-dominated Iraq in 1980, Iraq's Shi'ite clerics became even more suspect to the regime. This fear appeared well-founded since some Iraqi clerics were openly sympathetic to Iran, leading to their imprisonment, torture, and assassination by the regime.[25] One particularly significant case was that of Grand Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al Sadr, a leading Iraqi scholar and religious leader of the Shi'ite community. Ayatollah Sadr was much more politically active than

most Iraqi clerics, and Iranian radio broadcasts in Arabic referred to him warmly as the "Khomeini of Iraq."[26] Sadr was executed on April 8, 1980, on charges of treason. Also, during the Iran-Iraq war, excessive displays of piety by ordinary Iraqis could provoke the always harsh wrath of the regime.

The Iran-Iraq War ended in August 1988 with a ceasefire on terms favorable to Iraq. Iraqi Shi'ites had shown themselves to be largely unreceptive to Iranian propaganda and fought with determination against Iranian forces. Saddam's persecution of the clerical establishment, nevertheless, continued after the war had ended, and the Shi'ites did not receive a greater share of political power within the country despite their loyalty. Saddam, at this time, continued to view Islamic radicals as his greatest enemies, although this would change in August 1990 as the United States confronted Iraq over Saddam's invasion of Kuwait.

The invasion of Kuwait led to Iraq's military defeat at the hands of a U.S.-led multinational coalition in February 1991. In the immediate aftermath of this conflict, the Shi'ites moved to the forefront of Iraqi politics when a number of southern cities rebelled against Ba'th party rule. These uprisings appear to have been provoked by the retreat of hundreds of thousands of defeated, mostly Shi'ite, soldiers fleeing from the Kuwaiti theater of operations. Angry and humiliated, a number of Shi'ite soldiers moved against individuals and symbols representing Ba'th party authority. This rebellion was joined by Shi'ites in the south and was also supported to a limited extent by the Iranians. According to various sources, Iranian irregulars and Iranian-trained Iraqi exiles crossed the border to help overthrow the Saddam regime and replace it with an Islamic Republic.[27]

In a move to undermine Shi'ite support for the rebellion, Saddam appeared on television in a friendly conversation with Grand Ayatollah Abu al Qassim Kho'ei. Much as his 1990 televised effort to appear friendly to a young British hostage, Saddam's action was viewed with horror by substantial numbers of the viewers.[28] Many (probably most) Shi'ites assumed Kho'ei was coerced, and the action of hauling the elderly cleric before the television cameras was widely viewed as grotesque. Moreover, Saddam's forces savagely attacked the Shi'ites and killed many of their leaders in the aftermath of the

1991 rebellion. Again, the government viewed the clergy as at least partially responsible for instigating the uprising. This was a fairly accurate understanding of the situation. Although returning soldiers initiated the challenge to the government, many clerics did support the uprising once it had been ignited. In response to the revolt, thousands of clerics were arrested, and hundreds were executed.[29]

Following the savage repression of the 1991 uprising, Saddam retained his policies of repression but also sought to place a more pious face on the regime. His goal at this point was not to suppress Islam completely but rather to reshape it into a tool of the regime. Correspondingly, the words, "'Allah Akbar" (God is great) were added to the Iraqi flag, and study of the Koran became compulsory in Iraqi schools. In 1996 serving alcohol was banned in Iraqi restaurants in accordance with Islamic sensitivities.[30] Moreover, by the mid-1990s, Saddam begun to celebrate his birthday by inaugurating a new Mosque each April 28. In a particularly crude example of Saddam's use of propagandistic art and architecture, he ordered the "Mother of All Battles Mosque" to be built in the mid-1990s with four minarets shaped like Scud missiles and another four shaped like machine gun barrels.[31]

Saddam's increased interest in Islam may have resulted from a shift in enemies, with the United States replacing Iran as Iraq's most dangerous foe. He may also have seen Islam as a "safety valve" whereby impoverished Iraqis living under United Nations' sanctions could assuage their unhappiness through prayer rather than anti-regime activity. With Saddam's stranglehold on the clergy remaining in place, religion thus devolved into another instrument for use in controlling the society.

Shi'ite Responses to the U.S.-Iraq War of 2003 and Its Aftermath.

In March 2003 a U.S.-led coalition initiated military operations against Iraq with the stated purposes of eliminating the Saddam Hussein regime and disarming Iraq of all weapons of mass destruction. U.S. forces were overwhelmingly successful in their efforts to push forward, quickly overcoming whatever resistance was placed in their path. In response to the U.S. military advance,

large elements of the Iraqi conventional military forces melted into the civilian population. On May 1 President Bush declared the major combat stage of the war over within 6 weeks of initiating the conflict. Saddam Hussein, by then, had gone into hiding but was eventually captured on December 13, 2003, by U.S. forces.

In 2003, the U.S. administration was especially hopeful that Iraqi Shi'ites would rally to support the U.S. invasion due to the oppression that they had suffered under Saddam's regime. Instead, the Shi'ites displayed caution. In early April, Iraq's leading Shi'ite cleric, Grand Ayatollah 'Ali al Sistani of Najaf, was widely reported to have issued a *fatwa,* instructing fellow Shi'ites not to oppose the U.S.-led invasion.[32] Sistani was then the only Grand Ayatollah in Iraq and as such served as the highest ranking Shi'ite religious authority in that country. Spokesmen for Sistani subsequently denied issuing this *fatwa*, which became controversial in the postwar period.[33]

Additionally, while the Shi'ite clergy was content to stand aside as U.S.-led forces ousted Saddam, they displayed no interest in allowing the United States to dominate Iraq. Rather, a variety of Shi'ite religious leaders sought to assume power themselves and limit the U.S. role in governance. Grand Ayatollah Kazem al Ha'eri, a leading Iraqi Shi'ite authority in exile in Iran, even went so far as to issue a *fatwa* demanding that local clerics assume as much authority as possible as Saddam's rule unraveled and power vacuums developed. Following the defeat of Saddam loyalists in the south, Shi'ite clerics rapidly moved to establish themselves as the center of local government for the holy cities of Najaf and Karbala.[34]

Shi'ite clerical efforts to dominate local government in the southern cities of Kut, Najaf, and Karbala, along with surrounding villages and towns, were carried out with remarkable speed and effectiveness. Clerics did this in many cases by assuming control of essential services, including neighborhood security, garbage collection, firefighting, education, and hospital administration. They also appointed administrators and imposed curfews, while offering civic protection, jobs, health care, and financial assistance to the needy.[35] In addition, clerics opened their own newspapers and other media outlets across Iraq. Clerical ability to assume these tasks was a direct result of organizational, communications, and fund-raising

skills honed through years of religious activity and charity work, as well as limited efforts at dissent.[36]

In moving to take control of key aspects of local government, the clerics had a key advantage of being one of the groups least compromised by participation in Saddam's crimes. Saddam, as a secular leader, did make an effort to include Shi'ite technocrats in some high visibility positions, but had little interest in working with Shi'ite clerics, beyond bribing or cajoling them into publicly praising the regime. Conversely, a number of Shi'ite leaders openly were murdered by the Ba'th regime or disappeared under suspicious circumstances when they appeared too independent or perhaps too capable of establishing a mass following. A few, as noted, were publicly executed for openly supporting the Khomeini regime in Iran.[37]

The Shi'ites also choose not to wage any immediate postwar armed struggle against the coalition forces despite their unhappiness over the disruption of services and some coalition security policies on issues such as searches and arrests. The most serious departure from this relatively peaceful approach occurred when British soldiers in the town of Majar al Kabir in southeastern Iraq attempted to disarm the population, provoking strong armed resistance and leading to six British deaths in one incident.[38] Subsequently, comprehensive efforts to disarm Shi'ites in southeastern Iraq were discontinued.

Competition for religious leadership, and in some cases political power, rapidly materialized among clerics as the postwar situation unfolded. Occasionally, the followers of leading clerics sought to suggest that they were more anti-American than their rivals, apparently viewing this approach as a key asset in appealing to the Shi'ite masses.[39] Nevertheless, the newly empowered religious personalities and organizations still are finding their way in the new Iraqi political system. Some are still making decisions about the relationship between the mosque and future governance. Leading Iraqi organizations, movements, and individuals therefore need to be examined in order to ascertain possible future directions of Iraqi politics.

The Religious Establishment: Grand Ayatollah Sistani and the Najaf Hawza.

In the aftermath of Saddam's 2003 ouster, the Najaf-based Islamic seminary *Hawza al 'Ilmiya*, (circle of the '*ulama* or learned Islamic scholars) which is formally headed by Grand Ayatollah 'Ali Sistani, emerged as the key voice of the Shi'ite clerical establishment in the postwar era. This seminary, at the heart of the Shi'ite religious establishment, is led by four senior clerics, all of whom have distinguished records of Islamic scholarship, but uncertain political skills. Other senior clerics associated with Sistani in the *Hawza* include Ayatollah Mohammed Ishaq Fayad, Ayatollah Muhammad Said al Hakim, and Ayatollah Basheer al Najafi.[40]

The *Hawza* emerged as an extremely important institution in Iraq almost immediately after Saddam's removal. At that time, mosques throughout the mostly Shi'ite south and the Shi'ite areas of Baghdad declared their allegiance to the *Hawza*.[41] However, it is not clear if they were declaring their allegiance to Sistani and his senior colleagues, affirming clerical rule, or simply acknowledging their willingness to receive guidance, support, and public services from the Shi'ite leadership in Najaf.

Sistani's emergence as an important Iraqi leader follows 5 years of house arrest in his Najaf home. His emergence from isolation in Spring 2003 was a striking introduction to the political world marked by death threats from fellow Muslims. In April, shortly after the fall of Baghdad, an angry mob encircled Sistani's house and demanded that he leave Iraq on penalty of death.[42] This action sometimes is seen as anger over his supposed defeatism in the face of the U.S. invasion, but is more usefully explained as part of the rivalries within the Shi'ite community. The assailants in this instance were followers of a radical young cleric, Muqtada al Sadr. Sadr, who is now an aspiring force in Iraqi politics, would have benefited enormously from a Sistani decision to leave the country. Instead, Sistani merely increased his security measures. He also eventually attempted to improve relations with Sadr.

At the time of this writing, Sistani has consistently refused to meet with U.S. officials, including U.S. administrator Paul Bremmer.[43] He

apparently fears such meetings could compromise his standing as an Iraqi nationalist and spokesman for the Shi'ite community. Not surprisingly, Sistani occasionally is described as reclusive and often speaks through his son and spokesman, Mohammed Rida Sistani.[44] This way of operating, nevertheless, goes beyond security or protecting his reputation and may also be designed to enhance the dignity of his activities and statements. Moreover, Sistani is skilled at making his opinions known through spokesmen despite any reclusive tendencies and was quick to establish an official internet web site devoted to his views at *www.sistani.org*. Other Iraqi clerics soon established web sites as well.

Sistani's role as Iraq's senior Shi'ite cleric makes him a natural choice as the spokesman for his community, but, as noted, he has rivals and detractors. In challenging Sistani's leadership, critics note that Sistani was born in Mashad, Iran, and speaks Arabic with a Persian accent (sometimes described as heavy). Some of his adversaries have suggested his Persian birth makes it inappropriate for him to serve as the head of Iraq's religious community because he is not a true Iraqi.[45] Some detractors also challenge his lack of militancy in asserting Iraqi rights to the occupation authorities.

Grand Ayatollah Sistani often is described in the Western press as a nonpolitical cleric. There is some validity to this observation since Sistani comes from the conservative or "quietist" Shi'ite tradition of remaining remote from power. Nevertheless, any misgivings he previously might have held about this approach would be difficult to gauge due to a long-standing need to avoid Ba'thist ire. Sistani throughout his life has witnessed Saddam's brutality toward the clergy, including the murder of his immediate predecessor, Grand Ayatollah Muhammad Sadiq al Sadr. Saddam's climate of oppression was hardly a conducive environment to clerical experimentation with political activism.

Following the ouster of Saddam's regime, Sistani became more willing to intervene in the political process. In May 2003, for example, Sistani issued a *fatwa* calling on Iraqi Muslims not to join or take part in activities sponsored by political parties because the agenda of those parties were not yet clear.[46] Presumably this prohibition will be relaxed over time as party agendas become more

clear, but Sistani's willingness to ban political parties also suggest that the *Hawza* may be interested in containing the influence of both secular and religious parties as competition for Iraqi leadership. This is hardly a nonpolitical act.

Sistani is also willing to confront the United States over its policies in Iraq. On July 1 he went expressed "great unease" about U.S. involvement in deciding Iraq's future and demanded that the Iraqis be allowed to rule themselves as soon as possible.[47] Also in July, Sistani issued a *fatwa* opposing U.S. plans to set up a council of handpicked Iraqis to draft a new Constitution and instead called for general elections to choose delegates to such a convention.[48] In a subsequent statement to the Iranian Students News Agency, he stated that "No one should look towards foreigners or seek their help," apparently referring to the United States.[49] Over time, Sistani has shown no inclination to soften this view, and he has consistently reiterated that there can be no substitute for a general election to choose delegates for a convention to draft a new constitution.[50]

Sistani's awakening interest in political activity may have some advantages for the United States as well as the already noted drawbacks. Despite his Iranian heritage, Sistani is likely to be unreceptive to Iranian influence on important issues. He is a towering figure within the religious hierarchy of Shi'ite Islam, and his achievements are in stark contrast to those of Ayatollah 'Ali Khamenei, the *faqih*, or Supreme Religious Guide (or jurist), of Iran. Khamenei achieved his Constitutional position of *faqih* as result of his political activism rather than because of his scholarship, and therefore is held in contempt by many of the more senior Shi'ite Islamic scholars. Indeed, Khamenei was only promoted from *hojat al Islam* to *ayatollah* by the Iranian government on the eve of his taking office as *faqih*. Khamenei has never written any major Islamic tracts and never developed a strong student following while teaching at an Islamic seminary. Next to Sistani, Khamenei appears completely undistinguished, and the idea of Sistani receiving guidance from him would be viewed as ludicrous. Moreover, some of Iran's leading grand *ayatollahs*, such as Hussein 'Ali Montazeri, with whom Sistani may identify, have been treated poorly by the Iranian regime despite their elevated religious credentials.[51]

Less is known about some of the other senior *Hawza* clerics, although they do occasionally speak out, often against the U.S. presence in Iraq.[52] Ayatollah Najafi appears to be the most prominent cleric in the *Hawza* after Sistani. He usually agrees with Sistani on major issues but also seems to express himself in harsher language. Najafi refers to the Western forces in Iraq as the "U.S.-led infidel coalition" and cites Koranic verses about avoiding the council of unjust people when referring to coalition authorities.[53] Najafi, like Sistani, limits his interaction with the public, but he also makes his son available to elaborate on his political and theological ideas. Except for Najafi's more colorful way of expressing himself, the four senior ayatollahs of the *Hawza* seem to maintain remarkable solidarity on key issues. Disagreement, when it occurs, seems to take place in private. The public solidarity of Iraq's four leading clerics naturally supports the legitimacy of any *fatwas* they might issue.

The Muqtada al Sadr Movement.

In opposition to Sistani and the leading *Hawza ayatollahs* for control of the religious establishment is the Sadr movement (sometimes called the Militant *Hawza* or the Sadr-2 movement), which is led by Sayyid Muqtada al Sadr, the son of Grand Ayatollah Muhammad Sadiq al Sadr, Sistani's immediate predecessor as the leader of the *Hawza*. More than any other Shi'ite political leader, Muqtada al Sadr has sought to define the United States as an enemy of Iraq which needs to be confronted and driven from the country. Sadr's anti-American approach has emerged partially out of ideological conviction, but also as a way of challenging the quietist *ayatollahs* and establishing an issue upon which to define his leadership. Muqtada's actions must be understood as an effort not only to oppose the United States, but also to trump Iraqi rivals whom he will paint with the brush of collaborationism. Should Iraqi Shi'ites ever rise against the occupation, Muqtada will seek to serve as the leader who anti-American elements can rally behind.

Many of the basic details of Sadr's life are difficult to establish due to the wide variance between his supporters and detractors on such simple issues as his age and theological rank.[54] Most

Western journalistic accounts have now settled on the idea that he is 30 years old, but previously he was described in a variety of sources as younger, including as young as 22. Sadr's detractors apparently hoped to undermine any claim to community leadership by suggesting he was too young and inexperienced to be taken seriously as a theological leader. On the basis of his appearance, one would assume Sadr is 30.

Likewise Sadr's rank in the Islamic hierarchy is difficult to establish with certainty, although he is clearly junior within the clerical structure. Ayatollah 'Ali al Baghdadi, a Sadr critic, has described him with almost certain accuracy as a "simple student" (*talib*) at the lowest end of the religious hierarchy.[55] Occasionally, Sadr's allies, including the radical Grand Ayatollah Kazem al Ha'eri, will refer to him as a *hojat al islam*, but this designation appears to be a serious misrepresentation of his credentials.[56] Sadr himself has hinted that the title is legitimate simply because a grand *ayatollah* (Ha'eri) has referred to him as a *hojat al islam*, but under pressure Sadr will say titles are not important (a staggering misstatement for a Shi'ite cleric). He has also tried to overcome his problems with status by being publicly appointed as the representative of Grand Ayatollah Ha'eri, the radical Islamist friend of Muqtada's father. At the time of this writing, Ha'eri was still living in Iran, although an unconfirmed report exists that he visited post-Saddam Iraq on one occasion in June.[57]

Sadr, like his mentor Ha'eri, favors the Iranian concept of clerical rule (*Velayet-e Faqih*) and would like to see the concept applied to Iraq.[58] Additionally, Sadr and his supporters are moving forward with a strong Islamic social agenda. These efforts may appeal to Iraqis who fear the imposition of western culture, but they might also alienate those who fear a system of overbearing theocratic intrusions on daily life such as one finds in Iran. Sadr is also known to be ruthless, and has been accused of being involved in the high profile murder of a returned Shi'ite exile leader Abdul Majid al Kho'ei, the son of Grand Ayatollah Abu al Qasim Kho'ei.[59] Kho'ei had lived in exile in London and returned to Iraq following Saddam's ouster. Kho'ei appears to have been relatively pro-American and was a serious emerging power who would have threatened Sadr's ability

to mobilize a significant following. His death may represent a lost opportunity for U.S. policymakers seeking to reconstruct Iraq.

Sadr's reputation as a firebrand has alienated him from many moderate Iraqi Shi'ites, but his youth, toughness, radical agenda, and confrontational style may be useful assets in appealing to angry young men in the Shi'ite slums. It would therefore be a mistake to dismiss Sadr's potential for leadership. High clerical rank, while helpful, is not an indispensable requirement to lead a Shi'ite mass movement. In Lebanon, for example, a currently middle-aged cleric, Hassan Nasrallah (born in 1960) has for some time served as the Secretary-General of the militant *Hizb'allah* party with the backing of senior religious leader Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah. Sadr, who is viewed as approaching power the same way, is sometimes called "Iraq's Nasrallah."[60]

Moreover, a minority school of thought in Shi'ite Islam suggests that political activism can sometimes substitute for theological accomplishments. Ayatollah 'Ali Khamenei, the current *faqih* of Iran, and his supporters naturally favor this school of thought since it provides some justification for Khamenei's leadership role in Iran. Khamenei, as noted, currently holds the most senior position in the Iranian government, but he is not an accomplished Islamic scholar.

Muqtada al Sadr also benefits tremendously from his late father's popularity, prestige, and the circumstances of his death. Grand Ayatollah al Sadr was murdered by Saddam's agents in February 1999 after his speeches became increasingly popular and showed some independence from government censorship.[61] Several of Grand Ayatollah al Sadr's older sons were murdered as well in the incident. The popularity of Grand Ayatollah al Sadr only started to become apparent with Saddam's ouster when a Shi'ite slum of 2 million was renamed Sadr City by clerics living there. The courage of Grand Ayatollah al Sadr, along with his martyrdom and that of several of his sons, has conferred considerable legitimacy on Muqtada al Sadr as the surviving son of a heroic family. Additionally, Muqtada is currently raising the six children of his slain brothers, adding to his image as having picked up the torch for his heroically decimated family.[62]

As noted, Muqtada al Sadr has also arranged to have himself designated as the representative of Grand Ayatollah Kazim al Ha'eri,

an Iraqi exile in Qom, Iran. This appointment has allowed Sadr to speak with considerable religious authority despite his youth and lack of theological standing. Some Sadr supporters even suggest that Ha'eri's ruling effectively gives Sadr more authority than Sistani since they claim Ha'eri is the more renowned Islamic scholar.[63] This claim is dubious, but it does allow Sadr some leeway in dealing with senior clerics who may consider denouncing his activities as un-Islamic.

Ha'eri is deeply anti-American and remains comfortable referring to the United States as the "Great Satan," an Iranian expression of derision that has otherwise declined in usage in recent years.[64] Correspondingly, Ha'eri, like Sadr, is virulently opposed to the U.S. military presence in Iraq and has repeatedly warned the Iraqi public that U.S. forces are occupation troops and not liberation forces.[65] According to Ha'eri, Saddam Hussein was actually an American agent for many years, but God "caused the fire of disagreement and war to erupt among the unjust themselves, namely between the masters of global arrogance [the United States] and their most vicious agent [Saddam Hussein]."[66] This theory of Saddam as an American agent has a great deal of salience in the conspiracy-oriented politics of the Arab World, although it is not yet clear how prevalent it is in Iraq.

In another strange and disturbing departure from reality, Ha'eri issued a June 2003 *fatwa* maintaining the Iraqis must not sell land to Jews on the grounds that they are seeking to displace Iraqi Arabs so that they can create a new Israeli-type Jewish state in Mesopotamia.[67] Although such fulminations are extreme to the point of being madcap to Westerners, they have a way of becoming popular among radical circles in the Middle East. Thus Ha'eri and Sadr must not be dismissed as fringe figures incapable of generating a popular following. Indeed, Ha'eri's school of thought on Jews is not fundamentally different from that of Iranian leader, Imam Ruhollah Khomeini, who routinely referred to Jews as "satanic."[68]

The relationship between Sadr and Ha'eri is clouded by uncertainties, and it is not entirely clear who benefits most from it. Sadr is well-served so long as Ha'eri remains a distant legitimizing authority figure who does not intervene in daily events or interfere

with Sadr's efforts to advance his own agenda. Ha'eri is, nevertheless, a grand ayatollah in his 60s and may not be fully comfortable serving as the tool of a 30-year-old cleric with student status, regardless of the prominence of his family. There are thus constant rumors that Ha'eri will be returning permanently to Iraq "soon." These rumors have as yet come to nothing, but the threat looms for Muqtada. Moreover, while Ha'eri is in Qom, the Iranians can be expected to maintain influence over him and, by extension, the Sadr movement. The Iranians, therefore, probably favor Ha'eri's continued presence in their country.

Sadr, not surprisingly, also maintains significant links to Tehran, but he is not under Iranian control. In June 2003, Sadr traveled to Tehran and met with a number of senior leaders there including Ayatollah 'Ali Khamenei, Iran's Supreme Religious Guide, and 'Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, Iran's former president and the head of the Iranian government's powerful Council for the Discernment of Expediency. Rafsanjani apparently had a role in attempting to repair differences between Sadr and the Iranian-supported Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI).[69] SCIRI has been especially close to the Tehran government for decades, but it has not maintained good relations with the Sadr movement.

Early into the occupation, Sadr called for the boycott of U.S.-sponsored institutions such as the transitional Governing Council and the U.S.-supported Iraqi Media Network (IMN). He has urged Iraqis to ignore the Council and to refer political and social issues to the religious establishment for resolution.[70] Sadr has also made a strong effort to influence regional and international media outlets. He and his supporters give a large number of interviews to numerous regional media outlets. He also has sought news coverage for events that underscore support for his activities. In mid-July, for example, 4,000 of his supporters staged an anti-American rally in Najaf. This publicity-seeking strategy is not always well-received. Sadr's continuing policy of busing in large numbers of loud and unruly crowds of slum dwellers to listen to his sermons at the Kufa Mosque near Najaf apparently has alienated a number of Najaf residents.[71]

In August 2003, Sadr created a militia loyal to him, which he calls the Imam al-Mahdi Army.[72] At various times, Sadr has claimed that

this force is currently unarmed, but this is not the case. Al Mahdi Army members do carry weapons and have resisted efforts to disarm them by closing roads and other such actions.[73] The force, nevertheless, remains small, and its value as a fighting force is subject to considerable doubt. Sadr is also reported to be having trouble funding this force, and this situation may be especially problematic for its future.

In October 2003, Sadr went a step beyond establishing his militia by creating an alternative government designed to undermine and replace the U.S.-sponsored Governing Council. Sadr created ministries for his new government and appointed officials to lead them in what was widely viewed as a preparatory step for declaring an Islamic Republic. He also appealed for large scale popular support, which he did not receive. The new "government" quietly dissolved, with Sadr stating "there have been no demonstrations of public support for this government, and therefore I cannot create it."[74] Again, funding problems may also have been important in Sadr's decision to back down.

In his public pronunciations, Sadr has thus far stopped short of calls for violent resistance to U.S. and coalition forces. He justifies this restraint on the grounds that a *fatwa* calling for resistance has not yet been issued by higher religious authorities.[75] Nevertheless, by October 2003, the nonviolent aspect of the Sadr movement seemed to be slipping. Two U.S. soldiers were killed in an ambush in Sadr City on October 9 in an encounter with guerrillas presumed to be supporters of Muqtada al Sadr. A car bombing of an Iraqi police station occurred the same day in Sadr City and may have been related.[76]

While Sadr's commitment to Islamic government has definitely produced adherents, he also appears to have offended a number of Iraqis and created legions of enemies by his transparent interest in seizing power. Sadr's supporters also have had difficult relationships with some important Sunni clerics due to his efforts to control as many Islamic institutions as possible.[77] Sadr vigilantes are also known to be overbearing and offensive, for example, occasionally demanding that all women wear veils, even Christian women.[78] Sadr's supporters further have had violent confrontations

with assertively secular Iraqis such as the communists and others who oppose religious rule. All of these problems suggest that Sadr is likely to develop a limited but committed following that will be difficult to expand.

Sadr sometimes seems to fear that he will at some point be detained and imprisoned by U.S. occupation forces or by the Iraqi Governing Council. In such a case, Sadr will probably seek to borrow a page from imprisoned Palestinian militant Marwan Barghouthi who is on trial for murder and incitement in Israel.[79] He will use imprisonment and trial in an effort to boost his popularity and bolster nationalist credentials. Barghouthi, however, has wide appeal across the Palestinian territories. Sadr, with his more limited appeal, may have difficulty generating the same popular sympathy. Nevertheless, Sadr's arrest could frighten other clerics who may fear a larger crackdown. Such fears could produce a significant reaction on Baghdad's streets.

The Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) and the Badr Corps.

Another organization that seeks to influence the future of Iraq is the SCIRI. It is a political party known for its long exile in Iran, where the organization developed a reputation for being a puppet of Tehran. This reputation was conferred for good reason. SCIRI supported the Iranians during the Iran-Iraq War by making innumerable anti-Saddam/pro-Iran radio broadcasts directed at Iraqi citizens and soldiers. While SCIRI claims to welcome all Muslims into its ranks, it nevertheless is composed almost exclusively of Shi'ites. SCIRI's military arm is the Badr Corps (or Badr Brigade), which has been organized and trained by the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), and thus has previously maintained strong links to Iranian hard-liners.

Until his assassination in August 2003, SCIRI was led by the 65-year-old Mohammad Bakr al Hakim. Hakim was born in Najaf, but fled Iraq in the 1980 due to persecution by the Saddam regime.[80] Hakim's followers called him *ayatollah*, but it is unclear that his credentials were actually that exalted.[81] If Iran had been able to

defeat and overrun Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War, it is possible and perhaps even likely that Hakim would have been installed as a client ruler acting as Tehran's surrogate in conquered Baghdad. Hakim also remained virulently anti-Ba'thist throughout the last decades of his life, denouncing Saddam and his supporters with absolute contempt and hatred.

Mohammad Bakr al Hakim was murdered in August 2003 by unknown assailants using car bombs outside of Najaf's holiest shrine. At least 80 other people also died in this attack. In the aftermath of the attack, Hakim's brother and chief aide, Hojat al Islam 'Abdul 'Aziz al Hakim, assumed leadership over SCIRI. 'Abdul 'Aziz has favored policies that largely are indistinguishable from those of his assassinated brother. He had also spent decades in exile and therefore must overcome the danger of being seen by Iraqis as an outsider.

Currently, it is unclear if the majority of Iraqis can forgive SCIRI's wartime collaboration with Tehran due to the organization's hostility to Saddam. Many Iraqis, who are anti-Saddam, have no wish to be dominated by the Iranians and saw the war as an Iranian attempt to overrun and subjugate Iraq. It is, however, uncertain if Tehran will continue to dominate SCIRI now that the organization is seeking a power base outside of Iran. Some SCIRI members have indicated that they accepted Iranian dominance only because they had no other way to resist the Saddam regime.[82]

Collaboration with the Iranians, nevertheless, is only one aspect of the Hakim brothers' background. The Hakim family has an uncompromising history of opposition to the Saddam Hussein regime, and the SCIRI leadership clearly hopes to capitalize on this record. A number of Hakim family members were killed by Saddam's regime after Mohammad Hakim failed to heed Iraqi warning to cease subversive broadcasting from Iran during the Iran-Iraq War. Other members of the family ranging in age from 76 to 9 remained under arrest, with many of them believed to have died under deplorable conditions in regime prisons.[83]

Ayatollah Mohammad Hakim returned to Iraq in May 2003 after living in exile in Iran for 23 years. His brother, 'Abdul 'Aziz, had returned slightly earlier. Aware of his reputation as an Iranian client,

Mohammad Hakim immediately attempted to reassure the United States and the Iraqi population by refusing to call for an Islamic Republic in Iraq along the Iranian model. Instead he stated, "We want a democratic government, representing the Iraqi nation, the Iraqi people, the Muslims, Christians and all minorities."[84] He also stated that "We do not want an extremist Islam." As part of its effort to project an image of moderation, the SCIRI leadership remains publicly committed to this claim.

SCIRI claims to be part of the *Hawza* as well, although it was not initially accepted as such by either Hawza's senior Najaf leaders, including Sistani, or by Muqtada al Sadr's movement.[85] Later, both Sistani and Sadr began treating SCIRI as a part of the *Hawza*. This tendency became especially pronounced after Mohammad Hakim's assassination, when all of Iraq's leading clerics were attempting to express outrage, and Muqtada al Sadr especially was interested that the Baghdad rumor mill did not link the crime to his followers. Sadr is known to be cold-blooded and to have maintained poor relations with SCIRI, but no direct evidence links him to the assassination.[86] Officially, SCIRI blames ex-Ba'thists and other regime remnants. SCIRI has also criticized the United States for failing to provide proper security that would have prevented the assassination.[87]

Sadr's concerns that he might be under suspicion are not surprising. While SCIRI is not interested in a showdown with Sistani, it has been harsh in its description of Muqtada al Sadr, and SCIRI representatives have publicly accused Sadr of being responsible for the murder of Majid al Kho'ei.[88] They also continuously have condescended on Sadr's credentials to lead an important Islamic movement. Iranian leaders, as noted, intervened in June 2003 to ask the two groups to show more cooperation with each other, but with few results.[89] SCIRI leaders view Sadr as an upstart without any claim to the leadership of the religious movement in Iraq.

SCIRI has also chosen to participate in the U.S.-sponsored Iraqi Governing Council, with Hojat al Islam 'Abdul 'Aziz al Hakim as the SCIRI representative. 'Abdul 'Aziz assumed this role while his brother Mohammad was still alive, and has continued on the Council after Mohammad al Hakim's assassination. In making this decision, SCIRI leaders, including both the late Ayatollah

Mohammad al Hakim and Hojat al Islam 'Abdul 'Aziz al Hakim, repeatedly have told their followers that the Shi'ites must avoid repeating past historical mistakes associated with the 1920 revolt against the United Kingdom, when Shi'ite resistance paved the way for subsequent exclusion from civil government and officer corps positions.[90] In accordance with this approach, SCIRI leader Hakim has attempted to play a constructive role on the Governing Council. SCIRI sometimes takes credit for bringing the more radical group, *al Da'wa*, into the Governing Council and for moderating the views of the formerly Tehran-based Islamic Action Organization.[91] SCIRI leader 'Abdul 'Aziz Hakim has also served as an intermediary between the Governing Council and Sistani.[92]

The SCIRI leadership nevertheless has made frequent and caustic comments about the U.S. military presence in Iraq, despite the organization's willingness to collaborate with U.S. authorities. In October 2003, for example, 'Abdul 'Aziz Hakim told an Iranian audience that the United States is an "enemy" that seeks to turn Iraq into a colony.[93] Despite such remarks, SCIRI rhetoric has also opposed guerrilla operations against U.S. forces. This view was first articulated by Mohammad al Hakim and unhesitatingly has been reiterated by his brother, 'Abdul 'Aziz.[94] Rather, the SCIRI leadership maintains that the United States must leave Iraq as soon as possible, but it is not appropriate to consider armed resistance against these forces at this time. The SCIRI leadership also describes the current armed resistance as being dominated by Saddam regime remnants rather than Iraqi nationalist or patriots. The SCIRI leadership therefore is harsher in its description of the insurgents than the mainstream Arab media in neighboring countries. SCIRI detests the former Ba'thists and is not troubled by the idea of U.S. soldiers hunting them down and killing them.

The military arm of SCIRI is the Badr Corps (or Badr Brigade). This group is comprised of around 10,000 militiamen trained by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).[95] The Badr Corps was first assembled during the Iran-Iraq War and drew heavily from Iraqi POWs in Iranian hands. It subsequently was reinforced by Iraqi Shi'ites who fled that country in 1991 after the failed Shi'ite uprising against Saddam Hussein. Some individuals may have joined the Badr

Corps out of conviction, but many from both the Iranian prisoner of war camps and the refugee centers may have had little choice. The Badr Corps has been infiltrating back into the Iraq since the 2003 war broke out. Several thousand Badr Corps members were able to enter the country and are now giving Hakim an important advantage in providing trained militia for the preservation of security in Iraqi cities, towns, and villages.[96]

SCIRI's leadership has initiated and maintained a strong effort to convince both the Iraqi public and the U.S. occupation authorities that the Badr Corps is not a threat to Iraqi security. Both Hakim brothers have claimed that the Badr Corps must transform itself from a military organization to a security organization in the aftermath of Saddam's defeat. It is not totally clear how SCIRI defines the difference, although this distinction does suggest that heavy weapons are no longer necessary. In possible support of a more peaceful image, then-SCIRI leader Mohammed Bakr al Hakim announced on May 31, 2003, that the Badr Corps had given up its heavy weapons to focus on the political struggle. This claim was false, but clearly indicated that Hakim wished to reduce the profile of the Badr Corps, appear cooperative to the United States, and avoid a confrontation with coalition forces.[97]

In May 2003, U.S. military authorities accused SCIRI of using the Badr Corps to participate in an attack on U.S. forces.[98] SCIRI leaders emphatically denied the charge, which contradicts their strategy of cautious cooperation with the occupation. While SCIRI units may have been involved in this effort, they were probably operating without the SCIRI leadership's authorization. SCIRI, at this time, seemed totally committed to cooperation with the occupation authorities as a matter of political strategy.

Since the May incident and also since 'Abdul 'Aziz al Hakim's assumption of SCIRI leadership in August, SCIRI has continued to assert the importance of not confronting the U.S. occupation forces with force until all political and diplomatic means for ending the occupation have been exhausted. Like his brother, 'Abdul 'Aziz refers to the Iraq resistance fighters as "terrorists" and even corrects interviewers who use more neutral words to describe them.[99] He also

is quick to point out that anti-coalition fighters have killed a number of Iraqis in their operations, which he maintains underscores the need to defeat them.

In September 2003, 'Abdul 'Aziz renamed the Badr Corps as the Badr Organization as a way of indicating its movement away from military functions.[100] Nevertheless, most Iraqis continue to call the organization the Badr Corps. SCIRI leaders often slip and use the old name, although they continue to present the message that the Badr Corps is being demilitarized. In an October 2003 interview with al Jazirah satellite television, 'Abdul 'Aziz stated that the Badr Corps had "turned into a civil organization and will play a role in the restoration of security and the reconstruction and building of a new Iraq." Also, in something of a contradiction, 'Abdul 'Aziz maintains that Badr Corps members should be included in the new Iraqi armed forces along with members of other existing Iraqi militias.[101]

The Da'wa Islamiyah and Iraqi Hizb'allah.

An organization with a long, tragic, and disturbing history in Iraq is the *al Da'wa Islamiyah* (the Islamic Call) group. *Al Da'wa* was founded in 1958 and is the oldest Shi'ite Islamic opposition party in Iraq. The party began legally as a traditional political party, founded primarily to struggle against communist and anti-religious trends in Iraqi society. Such trends were of special concern during the presidency of Brigadier 'Abdul Karim Qassim (1958-63)because of his strong reliance on the support of the then-powerful Iraqi Communist Party.[102]

In the 1970s the *Da'wa* was popular in the large Shi'ite section of Baghdad, then known as *Thawra* City (later Saddam City and then Sadr City). *Thawra* City was described by *Da'wa* literature as the "stronghold of heroes."[103] *Da'wa's* combination of a religious agenda and a potential power base was therefore of considerable concern to the Ba'thists. *Da'wa* leader Mohammad Baqir al Sadr was arrested in 1972, 1974, 1977, and for several days in 1979. Each arrest seemed to add to his popularity.

The Iranian revolution of 1978-79 radicalized the *Da'wa* and also increased their interest in armed strikes against the Saddam regime.[104]

In 1979 the *Da'wa* began a serious assassination campaign directed at Ba'thist officials, and on April 1, 1980, they unsuccessfully attempted to assassinate Deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz. On April 5, more *Da'wa* terrorists attacked the funeral procession of security officials who had died in the attack against Aziz. Saddam responded by making membership in *Da'wa* a crime punishable by death and executed hundreds of members. Sadr was arrested and on April 9 was executed.[105] Repression against the *Da'wa* continued to be brutal throughout the war and the party was further radicalized as a result of this process. The *Da'wa* also has been accused of participation in international terrorism in the 1980s, and may have been involved in attacks against Americans in Kuwait and Lebanon.[106] It was gravely crippled by 1982, and the party that exists now may have little continuity with the party of 1958-82.

Da'wa claims to have lost 77,000 members killed in its struggle against Saddam.[107] In recent years, a weakened *Da'wa* focused heavily on assassinating members of the Saddam regime since provoking an uprising or engaging in serious military strikes remained beyond the group's capabilities. In this regard, *Da'wa* has claimed responsibility for a December 12, 1996, attack on Saddam Hussein's oldest son, Uday, in which he was severely wounded and two of his companions were killed.[108] Other individuals and organizations attempted to take credit for this attack as well, and it is difficult to discern the truth on this incident.[109] Currently, *Da'wa* claims to have several thousand fighters under arms, although the organization is also reported to be deeply fragmented.[110]

Da'wa has close ties to radical Lebanese Shi'ites, including the Lebanese *Hizb'allah* (party of God). Moreover, many individuals within *Da'wa* are believed to look to the Lebanese *Hizb'allah* spiritual guide, Mohammad Fadlallah, as a *marja al taqlid* from which they draw inspiration and guidance.[111] This linkage could be a problem for U.S. forces at some later point. Fadlallah, whose organization is deeply involved in the conflict with Israel, has strongly asserted that the United States invaded Iraq on behalf of the Israelis, who viewed Saddam as a threat. In an interview with Lebanese television, he maintained,

> The Americans want a dismembered, fragmented, and divided Iraq. They want to draw up the political map of the region accordingly. The Israelis do not only want Iraq to be split into mini-states and communities. The Israelis also want to see Iraq destroyed, scorched, and slaughtered with blood spilled at the door of every house.[112]

Fadlallah has also expressed his hope that the Iraqi people will make "the occupier's stay in Iraq difficult and uncomfortable."[113] It is not clear that this is a call for violence, although it could be interpreted as such. Most Arab newspapers that cover Fadlallah suggest that he has not called explicitly for violence against the occupation troops. It would probably be unwise to do so since various U.S. political figures have called for attacking *Hizb'allah* as part of the Global War on Terrorism.[114] Even if Fadlallah's statements were interpreted as calls for violence, it is not clear the *Da'wa* would honor them since Fadlallah is in Lebanon and cannot be assumed to be familiar with local conditions. The *Da'wa* publishes a weekly newspaper with the same name as the party itself. This publication routinely criticizes the United States but stops clearly short of incitement against the U.S. presence.[115] The group does not seem to want to be pushed into a confrontation at this time.

Da'wa also claims to have good relations with SCIRI. Like SCIRI and with SCIRI encouragement, *Da'wa* has opted, at the time of this writing, to participate in U.S.-sponsored governing institutions. Dr. Ibrahim al Ja'fari, who has previously served as *Da'wa's* chief spokesman was selected from the Iraqi Governing Council to be the first of nine people to serve 1-month rotations as the Iraqi President. His term began in August 2003.[116] The leader of the party itself is Sheikh Mohammed Naseri.

In the years following Ayatollah Baqir al Sadr's execution, *Da'wa* became factionalized, and one breakaway faction formed the Iraqi *Hizb'allah* (party of God), which claims to have been founded in 1981 and, like *Da'wa*, looks to the example of Grand Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al Sadr.[117] Thus far, Iraqi *Hizb'allah* appears to be a small party, but it may be growing. Iraqi *Hizb'allah* has published at least two newspapers since the ouster of the Saddam regime. Also, perhaps somewhat surprisingly, the Secretary-General of Iraqi *Hizb'allah* recently has declared loyalty to Sistani rather than

to Fadlallah.[118] This move may place some pressure on *Da'wa* itself to do the same, creating a somewhat difficult situation if Sistani and Fadlallah diverge on any important issue. To date, these two major Shi'ite figures appear to have at least some views in common. While Fadlallah can not be called a quietist, he does not support clerical rule. *Hizb'allah* leaders also claim not to support the concept of clerical rule, stating it is an Iranian idea that does not apply to Iraq.[119]

Another organization that may have links to Iraqi *Hizb'allah* is the Supreme Council for the Liberation of Iraq (SCLI; not to be confused with SCIRI). While apparently quite small, SCLI is also a deeply radical organization, and its newspaper was closed down for incitement by U.S. authorities.[120] SCLI is now publishing a new newspaper called *Sada al Ummah* (*Echo of the Nation*).[121] SCLI has organized demonstrations against the United States and threatened "dire consequences" if one of its leaders was not released.[122]

Secular Shi'ites in Postwar Iraq.

The clergy is, of course, not the only power in the Shi'ite community, and the possibility of secular leadership developing and even overshadowing the clergy must also be examined. Most Iraqi Shi'ites are believed to be respectful of the clergy, and those with "believing minds" predisposed to accepting religious authority may be especially loyal to them. Shi'ite tradition states that the clergy are not only morally infallible men, but also *masum*, not subject to error. Such vanities appear anachronistic to educated Shi'ites but can be very real to important elements within the urban and rural poor.[123] Many ordinary Shi'ites often tend to place more trust in their religious leaders rather than the secular elites for both religious reasons and because of the reluctance of many clerics to collaborate with Saddam beyond the limits required to survive.

Nevertheless, it is not clear that all or even most Iraqi Shi'ites view the clerics with a reverent sympathy. Clerical preoccupations with scholarship and aloofness from worldly matters sometimes have raised the question of Shi'ite religious institutions becoming inadequate to modern needs, even "hopelessly obsolete." Moreover,

nagging suspicions sometimes strike all but the most committed believing mind that the clergy may not always live up to its image of self-sacrifice. For example, in his discussion of the Shi'ites of Lebanon, Shi'ite scholar Fuad Ajami maintains, "In a world of scarcity, there was always the suspicion that the cleric was a parasite, that he lived off the toil of other men."[124]

Within this context, the future influence of secular and especially Western-educated Shi'ites in the emerging Iraqi government is uncertain. Currently, there is no secular counterpart for the structured, hierarchical, and pervasive Shi'ite religious organizations in Iraq. Should secular Shi'ites wish to influence a future democratic Iraqi government, a natural approach would be to form viable and effective mass-based political parties. Building viable political parties is, however, a highly problematic enterprise in contemporary Iraq. During the Saddam era, the only legal political party was the Ba'th, and it had functions that had nothing to do with advancing the values of its members within a democratic setting. Other political parties in Iraq's history have been rigid and ideological (such as the Iraqi Communist Party or the *Da'wa Islamiya* party).

Moreover, political parties, to be effective, must manage their disputes with the framework of formal governmental institutions. These institutions have not yet been established in post-Saddam Iraq, and it is not clear that they will be respected once they are. Nor is it clear that any future constitution will be respected as legitimate by the majority of Iraqis. Constitutions not only create institutions, they also allocate power. Those communities that feel cheated by a new constitution are hardly likely to respect it.

Many Arab political parties, like those elsewhere in the developing world, are based on tribes, sects, and ethnicity. This pattern is likely to be emulated in Iraq, although probably less so in urban Iraq, where citizens of various tribes and ethnicities may encounter similar problems and favor nontribally based solutions. Another problem is that emerging Iraqi political parties are ensuring their security through the formation of militias. Most political leaders have an understandable reluctance to trust their future to the respect their opponents have for the as yet undeveloped institutions of civil society. The two major Iraqi political parties that currently exist in

the Kurdish areas have militias and have fought against Saddam as well as each other.

There is also resistance to the concept of political parties. Grand Ayatollah Sistani, as noted, even issued a *fatwa* in May 2003 asking people to refrain from joining political parties, although presumably this *fatwa* is temporary, pending the parties' full explanations of their agendas.[125] Moreover, Sistani's action may not have been directed solely against secular parties. Sistani is also worried about the power of Islamic parties with leaderships returning from exile and emerging from underground. As he becomes more comfortable dealing with these parties, he may relax his opposition.

Beyond the problem with parties, no secular Shi'ite leaders hold any sort of stature equivalent to that of the leading members of the clergy. Some prominent Shi'ite leaders such as Ahmad Chalabi have spent most of their lives as exiles and may have difficulty organizing a popular following.[126] Moreover, at least some of the most promising secular Shi'ites previously had made their peace with the Saddam, and attempted to work for themselves and their community within the framework of the regime. The fate of Dr. Saddoon Hammadi is interesting in this regard.

Saddoon Hammadi has served as Iraq's Foreign Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Prime Minister, and most recently Saddam's last Speaker of the Assembly. He has a Ph.D. in economics from the University of Wisconsin and has been described as having a "thoughtful and scholarly demeanor."[127] He also is the author of a number of academic articles on Arab affairs and political philosophy.[128] Hammadi has favored economic and political liberalism in the past, and was presented to the world as a reform Prime Minister after the 1991 Gulf War. He apparently took his reform charter a little too seriously for Saddam and was removed in semi-disgrace after 7 months in power.[129]

Hammadi nevertheless had value for Saddam as a regime "democratic ornament."[130] An articulate, respected Shi'ite intellectual who appeared in high profile/high prestige positions gave Saddam's government the appearance of broad-based Iraqi support across ethnicities. Saddam thus presented Hammadi with the option of being co-opted and in return gaining a few crumbs

of power for himself and some economic assistance for his Shi'ite supporters. This Faustian bargain occasionally was made available to Western-educated intellectuals, but it was never an option for the clergy. Formal clerical participation in the Ba'thist government was less acceptable to Saddam even on this limited scale. Certainly no *ayatollah* would hold any of the positions Hammadi held.

The question remains as to how sullied some secular Shi'ite leaders have become through their association with Saddam's government. On the one hand, any effort to obtain favors and concessions from the government involved working with Saddam and his regime. Saddam was, after all, the head of state and working with his regime a concession to reality. On the other hand, Saddam led a criminal regime, and the requirement to look the other way was excessive. The dilemma for the future of Iraq is how to treat Western educated and other secular Shi'ites who were not involved in the military, security, or intelligence fields. These people may find support in Iraq even if they did collaborate with the Saddam Hussein regime. Hammadi, himself, was arrested by U.S. troops in early June. His son and members of his al Karakshah tribe stringently protested the arrest on grounds that he did not take part in any crime against the Iraqi people.[131] While he is likely to be released at some future time, Hammadi will probably always be tarnished by his collaborationism, as will other secular leaders who followed his path.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations.

The United States, through its military presence in Iraq, has found itself in a position whereby its civilian and military leaders must understand the internal dynamics and activities of the Shi'ite clergy within larger Shi'ite and Iraqi societies. While this clergy may not actually rule Iraq, it is likely that it will be highly influential in determining Iraq's future. Moreover, any breakdown in relations between the United States and the Shi'ite clergy during the occupation could threaten grave consequences for U.S. troops remaining in Iraq. With this situation in mind, the following policy recommendations are made.

1. *U.S. leaders need to recognize the non-American values of most of the Shi'ite clergy and correspondingly understand that Shi'ite clerical*

cooperation with U.S. forces remains largely tactical. This does not mean that most of the Shi'ite clergy has a short-term anti-American agenda, but neither does it mean that the Shi'ite clergy is trustworthy or should be considered as a long-term ally. None of the major Shi'ite clerical leaders are comfortable appearing too close to the occupation. All have criticized the U.S. presence, and some have done so in odious and incendiary ways.

2. *U.S. policymakers must correspondingly maintain the subtlety to recognize that Shi'ite clerics are now legitimate long-term and important political actors in Iraqi politics*. A dialogue between the U.S. and major Shi'ite groups, therefore, remains essential. Nevertheless, the clergy does not speak for all Iraqi Shi'ites, and this must also be understood.

3. *U.S. policymakers may have to gamble on continued cooperation with Grand Ayatollah Sistani and the Hawza and even with SCIRI*. U.S. leaders are not always comfortable with Shi'ites, and especially Shi'ite clerics, perhaps due to decades of problems with Iran. Nevertheless, Grand Ayatollah Sistani, for all his difficulties, is not someone who can be ignored or marginalized. To treat him as an enemy could make him into an enemy.

4. *The U.S. Government will have to expect that Iran will continue to compete with the United States for influence in Iraq on a more or less permanent basis*. Iran, nevertheless, does not have so much to offer the Iraqi Shi'ites that its influence cannot be contested effectively. Moreover, tensions between Iraqis and Iranians will not disappear now that Saddam has been removed from power. Additionally, any clear or borderline Iranian incitement against U.S. troops must be treated as much more serious than merely competing for influence in Iraq.

5. *The U.S. Government needs to be particularly wary of Muqtada al Sadr and his movement, but should try to avoid a direct confrontation with them if possible.* Muqtada al Sadr has behaved like a clear enemy of the United States on numerous occasions. Nevertheless, Sadr is such a divisive figure internally that he may not have any chance of seizing power. Sadr is often on bad terms with other important Shi'ite leaders, including Sistani and Hakim. He also has substantially antagonized Sunni Muslims, and his heavy-handed

Islamic vigilantism is deeply offensive to secular Iraqis and religious minorities such as Christians. The U.S. forces must therefore be certain that they take no action that will force Iraq's major clerics to support Sadr, unless such action is indispensable for the safety of coalition forces or Iraqi civil society. Knowing where to draw the line on these issues will have to involve discussions with *Hawza* and perhaps SCIRI.

6. U.S. policymakers cannot depend on the defeat of the current Sunni-based insurgency to quiet Shi'ite criticism of the U.S. presence in Iraq. The defeat of the current insurgency and the destruction of Saddam remnants sometimes are viewed as the magic bullet to allow all Iraqi citizens to begin expressing gratitude for the U.S. intervention. Ironically, the final destruction of Saddam remnants may empower Shi'ites to oppose the U.S. presence in Iraq in a more assertive manner. At that point, they will not need the United States to help destroy their Ba'thist enemies. Once the United States is no longer performing the useful function of killing their enemies, the U.S. presence will be much more unwelcome.

7. *U.S. Army forces in Iraq must understand that virulent anti-U.S. propaganda is emanating from Shi'ite sources as well as Sunni mosques and publications*. Careful attention must be directed at these sources to detect efforts at incitement against U.S. forces and their Iraqi partners. In some cases, U.S. authorities in partnership with the emerging Iraqi leadership will have to continue closing radical Shi'ite newspapers, radio stations, and news magazines. They must remain aware that incitement can sometimes occur in subtle ways.

8. *U.S. forces must also emphasize their concern about Iraqi Shi'ite groups, which may seek to coordinate with outside radicals such as those in Lebanon*. While it may be impossible to prevent *Da'wa* and Iraqi *Hizb'allah* from seeking theological inspiration from radical Lebanese clerics, the formation of any kind of operational ties should be of grave concern to the United States.

9. Finally and most importantly, the United States needs to consider withdrawing its forces from Iraq as soon as a stable government is in place, so that anti-American feelings in the Shi'ite community do not grow unmanageable as the United States potentially wears out its welcome. Most Shi'ite clerics feel the need to treat the United States

as an entity with either no legitimacy or only the most conditional legitimacy for remaining in Iraq at this time. Many clerics also have their own conspiratorial and sometimes bizarre explanations for why the United States intervened in the first place. The longer the United States stays in Iraq, the more pressure will be placed on that tolerance. Should an explosion occur among the Shi'ites, it may well become unmanageable.

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GLOSSARY OF SHI'ITE TERMS, ORGANIZATIONS, AND PERSONALITIES

Ayatollah: A senior clerical rank in Shi'ite Islam. To obtain this title and status, a mid-level cleric normally must write a major tract on Islam and develop a significant student following.

Badr Corps/Badr Legion: The military arm of SCIRI. Named after the Prophet Mohammad's first military victory in 624.

Da'wa Islamiya: A religious political party in Iraq founded in 1958. The party was formed as a legal organization, but was later outlawed and driven underground.

Faqih: The Supreme Religious Guide or jurist under the Iranian system of government.

Fatwa: A religious ruling issued by a senior Shi'ite cleric. A fatwa is considered binding on the followers of that cleric, so long as the cleric is alive.

Grand *Ayatollah*: (*Ayatollah 'Uzma*) Normally the most senior rank in Shi'ite Islam, although two pivotal recent historical leaders have been referred to by the more exalted title of Imam. (See Imam)

Hakim, 'Abdul 'Aziz: The current leader of the Supreme Assembly for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq. He assumed power after his brother was assassinated in August 2003.

Hakim, Mohammad: Founding leader of SCIRI. Known for his strong association with Iran.

Hawza al 'Ilmiya: Literally translated as circle of scholars. The phrase refers to the circle of scholars that comprise the leadership of the Shi'ite seminary in Najaf and hence are the highest Iraqi authorities on Shi'ite Islam.

Hizb'allah: Party of God (*Hizb*= party; *'Allah* =God or the God). A powerful political movement in Lebanon; there is also an Iraqi *Hizb'allah*, which is much smaller and less significant. Other *Hizb'allah* organizations exist either legally or illegally in a variety of Middle East countries.

Hojat al islam: Literally: Authority on Islam. A mid-range to senior cleric ranking just below ayatollah.

Imam: The leader of an often small Islamic Community ("a village *Imam*"). Sometimes the title also is used to suggest an individual who stands at the pinnacle of the entire Shi'ite Islamic community. In recent decades, the title has been applied by followers to Musa Sadr of Lebanon and Ruhollah Khomeini of Iran.

Khamenei, Ali: The current supreme religious guide (*faqih*) of Iran.

Khomeini, Ruhollah: The father of Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Marja al Taqlid: Source of Emulation. Title given to a cleric by his followers when his life and thoughts are taken to be the model for good conduct and his statements are taken as authoritative.

Mubellegh al risala: Literally: carrier of the message. A mid-level clerical ranking in Shi'ite Islam.

Sadr, Muqtada: Firebrand cleric and son of Grand Ayatollah Sadiq al Sadr.

Sadr, Musa: A Iranian-trained cleric who became the head of the Shi'ite community in Lebanon in the 1970s. Sadr is one of the early models of an activist Islamic cleric.

Sayed: Roughly translated as "the honorable." An honorific denoting the holder as a supposed descendant of the Prophet Mohammad. Clerical holders of this title, such as Muqtada al Sadr and Iran's Grand Ayatollah Khomeini, wear black turbans.

SCIRI: The Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq. Currently a major Shi'ite political party. Sometimes translated as SAIRI, the Supreme Assembly for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq.

SCLI: Supreme Council for the Liberation of Iraq. A small and radical organization with possible ties to Iraqi *Hizb'allah*.

Sistani, 'Ali: The leading cleric in Iraq at the present time. Leader of the Najaf *Hawza*.

Talib: (plural: *Taliban*) A religious student preparing to be a cleric.

Velayet-e Faqih: The rule of the jurist. This concept is the basis for the current institutions for clerical rule in Iran.