



## **THE NEAREST AND DEAREST ENEMY: IRAN AFTER THE IRAQ WAR**

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*Tehran's stand towards events in Iraq developed chronologically and against a backdrop of continuing hostility to the United States. From 2001 until the beginning of Operation Iraq Freedom in March 2003, Iran called for resolution of the issue through international organizations, while simultaneously interacting with Washington, Baghdad, and the Iraqi opposition. The next stage was marked by allegations of Iranian support for Iraqi insurgents. These allegations continued in the third stage, from July 2003 to the present, as did a warming of Tehran-Baghdad relations. With the end of the war in Iraq, Iran found itself surrounded on all sides by what it perceives as its greatest enemy -- the United States. It was also faced with the possibility of Kurdish autonomy and being surpassed by Iraq as the center of Shi'a Islam.*

*This article was originally written for a project and conference on "After the Iraq War: Strategic and Political Changes in Europe and the Middle East," co-sponsored by the GLORIA Center and The Military Centre for Strategic Studies (CeMiSS) of Italy.*

One would expect Tehran to welcome the ouster of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. He was a man responsible for an eight-year war (1980-1988) against Iran that cost hundreds of thousands of lives, who forced thousands of Iraqis to become refugees in Iran, used chemical weapons against Iran's Shi'a Muslim co-religionists in Iraq, and who sponsored a violent Iranian opposition group for approximately two decades. Indeed, UN Security Council Resolution 598 of July 1988 led to a ceasefire between Iran and Iraq, but a formal peace treaty was never signed.

Nevertheless, the conclusion of Operation Iraqi Freedom has placed Iran in an uncomfortable political and strategic position in which it is surrounded on all sides by what it perceives as a greater enemy than Saddam Hussein-- the United States. Furthermore, Tehran is unsure of where it stands with the new government in Baghdad. These factors, as well as the possibility of Kurdish minorities militating for greater autonomy and the revival of Iraq as the center of Shi'a Islam, greatly affect Iran's current position.

The Iranian attitude towards events in Iraq developed in three fairly distinct phases. The first phase lasted from September 11, 2001-- the date of al-Qa'ida attacks against the U.S. - - until March 20, 2003. During that time Tehran pursued a policy of what it called "active neutrality." It refused to take sides and maintained contacts with Baghdad, London, and Washington, but also simultaneously supported Iraqi opposition groups. During this period, furthermore, Iranian leaders expressed great hostility to the United States and skepticism about its intentions. The second phase lasted from March 20, 2003, when Operation Iraqi Freedom began, approximately until the creation of the Iraqi Governing Council in July 2003. This period was marked by U.S. allegations of Iranian interference in Iraqi affairs, as well as the emergence of a heretofore unknown Shi'a cleric named Muqtada al-Sadr and questions about his relationship with Iran. The third phase, from July 2003 until the conclusion of this article in June 2005, includes factors seen previously-- U.S. and Iraqi allegations of Iranian interference and Iranian criticism of the U.S -- and also includes formal Tehran-Baghdad contacts and a warming of relations. The conclusion identifies the threats Iran currently perceives, discusses the ways in which Tehran is trying to address them, and explains Iranian behavior that appears to be at cross purposes.

#### **FORESHADOWING-- FROM THE BALKANS TO AFGHANISTAN TO IRAQ**

International actors operate in a very dynamic environment, in which the influence of different factors fluctuates over time. Times of conflict can be especially fast-paced. Furthermore, the obscurity of the

Iranian decision making process, in which informal actors and networks can wield as much influence as formal ones, makes comprehension and prediction extremely difficult. A model for Iran's recent dealings with Iraq is its dealings with the Balkans in the mid-1990s, and Afghanistan since September 2001.

In the Balkans, Tehran provided humanitarian services, set up radio stations, and sent in missionaries. Tehran also led the way in securing a December 1992 Organization of the Islamic Conference declaration that called for an end to the international arms embargo, and it smuggled arms and ammunition into the region. Iranian spies and IRGC personnel were active on the ground, sometimes disguising themselves as relief workers.

Notably, the Iranian Ambassador to Sarajevo during some of that time (1994-1998), Mohammad Ebrahim Taherian, later served as the first ambassador to Kabul after the Taliban's ouster. Before that, he served in Afghanistan and helped channel Iranian aid to Shi'a mujahedin groups, and he then served in Tajikistan.<sup>2</sup> The man appointed consul to the southern Afghan city of Kandahar in December 2004-- Hussein Shaykh Zein-ed-Din-- has a similar background. He served as ambassador to Colombia in 1999, when Colombian authorities became concerned about Iranian activities in the demilitarized zone and raised questions about Iranian military advisers working on a slaughterhouse in a region that had few cows and was controlled by Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) guerrillas.

In the early 1990s, the revolutionary impulse was still important to Iran and activities in the Balkans could take place at relatively little cost to it. A more recent guide to Iran's reaction to Operation Iraqi Freedom

is the way the country's leaders behaved after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks against the United States. Tehran initially condemned the actual attacks and the Iranian public expressed sympathy for the victims and their families. On the day of the attacks President Mohammad Khatami said in a statement read out on state television, "I condemn the terrorist operations of hijacking and attacking public places in American cities which have resulted in the death of a large number of defenseless American people."<sup>3</sup> Candlelight vigils took place in Tehran, there was a moment of silence before a World Cup qualifying match, and officials signed the book of condolences at the Swiss Embassy, which represents U.S. interests in Iran.

Nevertheless, Tehran claimed that it would not help the United States if it acted against al-Qa'ida and its Taliban hosts in Afghanistan. "America's expansionist policies were the cause of recent developments," Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamene'i said.<sup>4</sup> "Most of the evidence points the finger of suspicion towards the Zionists for masterminding the recent incidents in America," according to Khamene'i, and he went on to say that Israel was exploiting the situation to oppress the Muslim Palestinians. Khamene'i warned that "if America was to enter Pakistan and dispatch forces to Afghanistan so as to expand its might in the region, its problems will multiply daily."

Less than a week later, Khamene'i said, "We shall not offer any assistance to America and its allies in their attack on Afghanistan."<sup>5</sup> As the crowd chanted "Death to America," Khamene'i asked how the United States could seek Iranian assistance in attacking Afghanistan, when "You are the ones who have always inflicted blows on Iran's interests." According to Khamene'i, the

United States wants to establish itself in Central Asia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the subcontinent under the pretext of establishing security. The United States also intends to "settle scores with anyone who defended the oppressed people of Palestine." Khamene'i said that U.S. government comments about the terrorist attacks were "very arrogant and pretentious." Many who side with the United States "are more dangerous than the entire terrorists of the world," he said, adding, "The most stubborn and evil terrorists are on your side right now."

During the period immediately preceding Operation Enduring Freedom, Iranian officials consistently emphasized their desire to have the issue resolved in a multilateral forum, and preferably by the United Nations. There were three reasons for this attitude. The first, and most important, was Tehran's reluctance to have U.S. military forces on its eastern border. The second reason, of almost equal importance, relates to Tehran's unhappiness about the U.S. ability to act unilaterally if it desires, and to organize an international coalition to support its military actions. The third reason is Iran's self-perceived role as a Third World and Islamic community leader. If the United States could act against a small, undeveloped country such as Afghanistan, then other developing countries, including Iran, would be at risk.

These reasons reflect some of the traditional influences in Iranian foreign and security policy-- ethnicity, geopolitics, Islamic radicalism, thirdworldism, and nationalism.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, cooperation with the United States in a war against a Muslim state could have repercussions. Professor Fereidun Khavand of the University Rene Descartes in Paris explained, "For every regime, there is a founding myth, and the founding myth of the Islamic Republic is anti-Americanism."<sup>7</sup>

Letting that myth collapse by joining an American or Western coalition against a Muslim country, Khavand said, would jeopardize the Islamic republic's legitimacy.

Once the war in Afghanistan began, Khamene'i explained events by saying that America's "true motive" is the "quest for power" and the "quest for hegemony."<sup>8</sup> Khamene'i said that the United States is threatening global peace and its logic for attacking Afghanistan is "very weak."<sup>9</sup> Khamene'i accused the United States of having "wounded the body of the Islamic ummah [community]." In this speech, Khamene'i also accused the United States and United Kingdom of "warmongering, tyranny, injustice, arrogance, drunkenness [with power], and unwise behavior...igniting the flames of war, endangering world peace, massacring innocent people, and wasting huge amounts of money."

But Tehran's pragmatic side also showed itself. Before the war began, Iran agreed to assist downed American aviators, and afterwards it played a helpful role in the November-December 2001 Bonn Accords.<sup>10</sup> Tehran recognized that its inaction during the 1990-1991 Persian Gulf crisis had not yielded any benefits. Moreover, it probably hoped to reap some sort of benefit by cooperating with the United States

Nevertheless, statements from Iranian military and political leaders in the winter of 2001-2002 reflected the discomfort caused by the proximity of U.S. forces. For example, the deputy commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps said the U.S. aim was to have "influence on Central Asia and access to fuel resources and geopolitical conditions in the region."<sup>11</sup>

President George W. Bush's January 29, 2002 State of the Union address contributed to Tehran's sense of anxiety. He said that

Iran- as well as Iraq, North Korea, and their terrorist allies- "constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world." The deputy IRGC commander's reaction to Bush's speech was to make an implicit threat to act against Persian Gulf oil fields, and two weeks later the IRGC commander threatened to "sever the hands of any invader."<sup>12</sup>

### 'ACTIVE NEUTRALITY'

Iran adopted a policy of what it called "active neutrality" in the lead-up to Operation Iraqi Freedom. The Foreign Ministry spokesman described this policy in September 2002.<sup>13</sup> "The Islamic Republic of Iran's regional position and national interests necessitate that it should actively hold talks with all the parties involved to prevent the outbreak of war in the region." Iran would therefore talk with all the concerned parties, he said, "to resolve the Iraqi crisis." Iranian officials consistently opposed unilateral U.S. action, emphasizing instead their desire that any action should take place within a multilateral framework. Meanwhile, Tehran and Washington were holding clandestine meetings, Iraqi officials were visiting Iran, and Iran was hosting Iraqi opposition meetings.

Active neutrality, which is also referred to as "preventive diplomacy," reflected a cost-benefit analysis by the Iranian foreign policy establishment.<sup>14</sup> Through this policy, Iran hoped to see Iraq peacefully disarmed while it avoided the prospect of complete encirclement by a "pro-U.S. security belt" stretching from Kuwait in the Persian through Afghanistan to Central Asia all the way the Azerbaijan and the Caucasus. This policy and avoiding encirclement would conform to Iran's self-image and desire for prestige.

*Contacts with Washington*

Tehran and Washington have not had diplomatic relations for more than two decades. U.S. diplomatic interests in Iran are represented by Switzerland, and the Iranian interests section in Washington is located in the Embassy of Pakistan. The two countries also communicate with each other on the sidelines of multilateral fora. As the war in Iraq appeared inevitable, it seemed very likely that Tehran-Washington contacts would increase, and there was some optimism that these contacts would result in a diplomatic warming.

In mid-July 2002, an anonymous "Tehran-based diplomat" said Washington recently sent a message to Tehran to gauge Iran's view on U.S. efforts to overthrow Saddam Hussein and to enlist Tehran's support.<sup>15</sup> Tehran denied this,<sup>16</sup> and Iranian officials reiterated their opposition to U.S. military action against Iraq. Supreme National Security Council Secretary Hassan Rohani said that Iran opposed an attack against Iraq, and he added, "America has always cast a hegemonic eye on the region" because of its strategic value and so it can have access to its energy resources.<sup>17</sup> President Khatami said, "Any interference in the affairs of Iraq would be against the interest of the people of Iraq, and countries of this region and peace and tranquility of the world."<sup>18</sup>

Soon thereafter, an Iranian vice-president denied that Tehran would assist downed U.S. aviators in the way it had during Operation Enduring Freedom.<sup>19</sup> In his words, "We do not agree on dealing a strike to Iraq, let alone providing services to those who seek to launch such a strike." But a representative of the Iranian supreme leader reportedly established an office in Dubai to facilitate clandestine contacts with U.S. officials.<sup>20</sup> An anonymous U.S. Defense Department official said later that "preliminary feelers" between

Tehran and Washington concerning military emergencies in the Persian Gulf region were taking place through Arab intermediaries in a small Gulf state.<sup>21</sup> Unnamed U.S. officials described discussions regarding American aviators bailing out over Iran. They said Tehran agreed to provide medical assistance to downed Americans, get them home as soon as possible, and to return any flyable aircraft.<sup>22</sup>

Allegations of Iran-U.S. meetings continued in the months immediately preceding the war. "Bush administration officials held a rare private meeting with Iranian envoys in Europe last month [January 2003] to seek...an assurance that the Tehran government would not interfere in military operations if the United States goes to war against Iraq."<sup>23</sup> As usual, Tehran denied that such a meeting occurred.<sup>24</sup>

According to later reports, National Security Council official Zalmay Khalilzad and State Department official Ryan Crocker met with Ambassador to the United Nations Mohammad Javad Zarif and IRGC officers.<sup>25</sup> The Americans asked Iran to seal its borders against escaping Iraqi officials and suggested that the United States would target Iraqi bases of the Mujahedin-e Khalq Organization.<sup>26</sup> Tehran denied that the meetings took place and said the two countries had reached no agreements on Iraq.<sup>27</sup>

That summer, a British Arabic-language newspaper reported that an American delegation that included a White House envoy met with representatives of Iranian Expediency Council chairman Ayatollah Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani in London.<sup>28</sup> They reportedly discussed Iranian activities in Iraq, Iranian nuclear activities, and Iranian support for terrorist groups. The Iranian envoys tried to convey the impression that only Hashemi-Rafsanjani could secure

acceptance of Washington's demands, and this would be done in exchange for U.S. backing of Rafsanjani's bid for the 2005 presidential election. The U.S. side was unenthusiastic about the offer and about such secret dialogues.

#### *Iran and the Iraqi Opposition*

Washington began to review its Iraq strategy in early 2002-- "serious planning [for a] campaign against Iraqi President Saddam Hussein"-- and explore the opposition inside and outside Iraq.<sup>29</sup> Iran's long standing relationship with Iraqi opposition groups made it clear that it would be involved in any pre-war calculations, as was the case before Operation Enduring Freedom.

In the Afghan case, Tehran-Mujahedin ties from 1979-1988 were mostly limited to the Shi'a resistance groups, such as Shaykh Assef Muhseni's *Harakat-i Islami* (Islamic Movement). After the Taliban take-over, Iran's contacts with the Afghan opposition were more diverse. It provided the Northern Alliance with weapons, large-scale funding, and training. Iran was involved with two of the three "processes"-- the Rome Process and the Cyprus Process-- that aimed to resolve the Afghan conflict. The Rome Process centered on exiled Afghan monarch Zahir Shah, and the Cyprus Process was organized by the son-in-law of Hizb-i Islami leader Gulbudin Hekmatyar, who was in exile in Iran. Iran also participated in the "6+2" group, which consisted of Afghanistan's immediate neighbors, Russia, and the United States.

Iran had contacts with most of the main Iraqi opposition organizations. Its most extensive ties were with the predominantly Shi'a organizations that were based mainly in Iran-- the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), al-Da'wah al-Islamiyah, and the Islamic Action

Organization.<sup>30</sup> It had a good relationship with the two main Kurdish ones-- the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP). Less commonly known was Iran's relationship with Kurdish Islamists-- the Islamic Movement of Kurdistan (IMK), the Ansar al-Islam, and the Kurdistan Islamic Group (KIG).<sup>31</sup> The Iraqi National Congress (INC) claimed to have a training facility in Iran, and there were later reports that INC leader Ahmad Chalabi provided Tehran with information about U.S. signals intelligence capabilities.<sup>32</sup>

SCIRI made clear that it did not care for Tehran's attitude towards an attack against Iraq. SCIRI's leader said that under Iran's declared policy of neutrality, SCIRI guerrillas would not be able to enter Iraq in the event of war.<sup>33</sup> "The policy of neutrality is not good," he said, adding, "It would be good if Iran stood beside the Iraqi people." He continued, "It is not good that the Iraqi people are caught between a rock and a hard place and they could hold it against those who leave them isolated."

Despite its professed neutrality, Tehran continued its involvement with the opposition. The heads of the KDP, PUK, SCIRI, and INC met in Tehran in advance of the December 13-15, 2002 Iraqi opposition conference in London. Although the Iraqi National Accord was one of the six main opposition groups that met in London, it did not participate in the Tehran meetings. Secretary of the Iraqi National Accord Ayad Allawi described his organization's relationship with Iran: "We respect Iran and hope to have excellent relations with it. But regrettably we have not had such relations so far. Iran is almost the only country in the region with which we maintain no relationship."<sup>34</sup>

PUK leader Jalal Talabani met with President Khatami in Tehran in January 2003, at which time the Iranian president said, "Iran's policy is to support and strengthen the Iraqi opposition, and it is prepared to give every form of cooperation in this matter in order to bring about a democratic and united Iraq, in which people can rule themselves."<sup>35</sup> Talabani told reporters that he conveyed U.S. assurances that Iran would not be targeted.<sup>36</sup>

Later that month, a bigger opposition meeting took place in Tehran. Participants included the INC's Ahmad Chalabi, Brandeis University Professor Kanan Makiya, Iraqi National Movement leader Muzar Shukat, Kurdish representatives Latif Rashid and Kuran Talabani; and Major General Wafiq al-Samarrai, a former chief of Iraqi military intelligence who defected in 1994.<sup>37</sup> Makiya said the oppositionists rejected an Iranian offer to protect them in Iraq, and he added that they did not meet with anybody from President Khatami's office or from the Foreign Ministry. "We're not involved with the Khatami group. They have absolutely no say over Iraqi affairs," Makiya said.

Representatives of SCIRI, Da'wah, Islamic Amal Organization, and the INC's Ahmad Chalabi met in Tehran shortly before the launch of Operation Iraqi Freedom.<sup>38</sup> The goal of the meeting was to reunite the groups and insure that the Shi'a would have a place in Iraq's future.<sup>39</sup> By that time, furthermore, SCIRI's military arm, which is known as the Badr Corps and which is linked with the IRGC, had established itself in northern Iraq.<sup>40</sup>

#### *A Mixed Reception for Iraq*

Baghdad, meanwhile, was trying to garner Iranian support. Iraqi Foreign Minister Naji Sabri Hadithi met with President Khatami, Foreign Minister Kharrazi, and other Iranian

officials in Tehran in January 2002. The Iraqi foreign minister's meeting with Iranian Minister of Intelligence and Security Ali Yunesi resulted in a preliminary agreement that Baghdad would restrict the activities of the Mujahedin Khalq Organization, while Tehran would force the SCIRI's Badr Corps to stay five to ten kilometers from the border.<sup>41</sup>

Saddam Hussein's son, Qusay, allegedly visited Iran secretly and "without the knowledge of President Khatami and his aides" in the first half of 2002.<sup>42</sup> Qusay allegedly met with deputy IRGC commander Mohammad Baqer Zolqadr and expressed an interest in buying Iranian military equipment and Shihab 1, 2, and 3 missiles. He also offered to buy back the more than 100 Iraqi aircrafts flown to Iran at the outset of the 1991 Gulf War. The Iranians rejected the prospect of military and security cooperation with the Iraqis.

Iraqi Foreign Minister Naji Sabri visited Tehran in late-September 2002, only to be told by his Iranian counterpart, Kamal Kharrazi, that it was up to Iraq to avoid a war by cooperating with the UN and giving access to UN weapons inspectors.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, any expectations of a sympathetic ear were misplaced. A vice-president said that Iran would prefer any regime in Iraq to that of Saddam Hussein.<sup>44</sup> And the deputy speaker of parliament said, "The overthrow of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein through whatever means will be the happiest day for all the Iranian people."<sup>45</sup>

Sabri returned to Tehran in February 2003 to discuss the possibility of a U.S. attack. He reportedly conveyed a message from Saddam Hussein to President Khatami proposing that Iran and Iraq settle all their outstanding issues.<sup>46</sup> Iraq would end its support for the Mujahedin-i Khalq Organization if Iran

ended its support for Iraqi opposition groups, according to Hussein's proposal, and they would settle border-demarcation issues in compliance with the 1975 Algiers accords. Foreign Minister Kharrazi reportedly encouraged cooperation with United Nations inspectors.<sup>47</sup>

*Playing All Sides Has Domestic Repercussions*

Given the heavy cost of the Iran-Iraq War and their more than two decades of bad relations, Baghdad's expectation of a sympathetic Iranian ear was misplaced. The Iranian government's effort to serve as some sort of regional peacemaker had domestic repercussions, furthermore, as parliamentarians took umbrage with what appeared to be the government's flirtation with Saddam Hussein's regime.

During the May 26, 2002 session of parliament, a parliamentarian questioned the timing of Sabri's visit to Tehran.<sup>48</sup> "In view of the sensitive and particular situation in the region, what was the reason for a visit by the Iraqi foreign minister [to Tehran] in the second week of last Bahman [late January 2002], two days before the American president termed Iran, Iraq, and North Korea as an 'axis of evil.'?"

At the end of the year, members of the legislature's National Security and Foreign Affairs committee met with deputy ministers of foreign affairs and of intelligence and security to discuss Iraqi affairs and its affect on Iranian interests.<sup>49</sup> A parliamentarian said afterwards, "The officials gave some answers, some of which were accepted. But on the whole, most of the commission members did not think that Iran's policies in respect of regional developments would safeguard our people's interests."

The Iranian media reported in January 2003 that the Iraqi Foreign Minister might visit Tehran soon. A member of parliament announced that he had prepared a motion for a vote of no confidence in Foreign Minister Kharrazi as soon as Sabri sets foot in Iran.<sup>50</sup>

"Far from seeing any reason why Naji Sabri should visit Iran, the Iranian nation is counting the minutes so they can see the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime at the earliest opportunity," the parliamentarian added. The parliamentarian said he and his colleagues believed Iraq must fulfill four conditions before Sabri could visit Iran:<sup>51</sup> Saddam Hussein must declare valid the 1975 Algiers Accord which would confirm the land border and eliminate disputes regarding the Shatt al-Arab waterway; He must apologize to Iran for attacking it in 1980; He must implement fully UN Security Council Resolution 598, which effectively ended the war, and pay compensation; And he must release all Iranian prisoners of war still remaining in Iraq.

Another legislator criticized the Foreign Ministry's dealings with Iraq.<sup>52</sup> Iranian diplomacy should not create new enemies for the country, he said, and inviting Sabri to Iran is not beneficial. An influential conservative newspaper editor said Iran should be negotiating with the United States, not holding meetings with Sabri.<sup>53</sup> He questioned the timing of such meetings and warned that "siding with [Iraqi President Saddam Hussein] today does not mean supporting the Iraqi nation but implies supporting Saddam himself."

After Sabri visited Tehran in early-February 2003, 100 legislators submitted a motion to interpellate Foreign Minister Kharrazi, and President Khatami was forced to speak out on his behalf.<sup>54</sup> Khatami said, "Our friends must know that if our minister



of foreign affairs makes a decision, that is a decision made by the state, and we support it." Khatami criticized the legislators' timing, saying, "I expect them not to publicly raise issues that run counter to our interest at this current sensitive juncture."

*Multilateralism and Anti-Americanism*

As all these events took place in the background, Tehran loudly denounced U.S. intentions and Iranian diplomats participated in numerous international meetings on Iraq and the regional crisis. This duality reflected Iran's real antipathy to the United States, its apprehension about a long-term U.S. presence in the region, and its reluctance to see the U.S. exert power at will and without checks.

In a January 2003 speech, Supreme Leader Khamene'i asked rhetorically whether the United States would attack Iraq as part of its war on terrorism, "or is it for Iraq's numerous oil wells, for dominating the region, for defending Israel, for lording it over the Islamic Republic of Iran? Today, these are the secrets of the global arrogance that have been exposed. Everyone knows about them."<sup>55</sup> On the same day, Foreign Minister Kharrazi said Iran was ready to work with the European Union to avoid a war in Iraq.<sup>56</sup> "Any war in Iraq would have its impact on Iran," he explained. "The simplest impact is the refugees that may come over to Iran, but there are many other issues: deportation to Iraq, the future government of Iraq, the use of chemical weapons, and many other issues that are a matter of concern to Iran and other neighboring countries."

The second most powerful official in Iran, Expediency Council Chairman Ayatollah Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani, accused the United States of having ulterior motives.<sup>57</sup> He said that the United States was facing an

energy shortage, so "they think that acquiring energy from this region necessitates their military presence." He also dismissed U.S. concerns about weapons of mass destruction: "Even if [the U.S.] takes control of Iraq and puts a ruler in power over there, it will use the same instruments against Iraq's neighbors.... What is even worse than Saddam's possession of such weapons is the American presence in our region. Therefore, we explicitly oppose America's coming here."

Two weeks later, Kharrazi was in Istanbul to discuss Iraq with his counterparts from Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Turkey.<sup>58</sup> "We have to stick to multilateralism and urge the United States not to resort to unilateralism," Kharrazi said.<sup>59</sup> "The United Nations system has to be the center of any decision to be made." Kharrazi went to London in early February and discussed Iraq with Prime Minister Tony Blair and Foreign Secretary Jack Straw. Blair's official spokesman said both the United States and the United Kingdom assured Iran of their commitment to Iraq's territorial integrity.<sup>60</sup> Kharrazi said after the meeting, "That is, of course, one of the concerns of all neighboring countries to Iraq: the concern of [the] partition of Iraq. Nobody agrees with that, and everyone believes that the territorial integrity of Iraq has to be maintained." Kharrazi stressed the need to give United Nations inspectors more time, and said that Iran was worried about the potential influx of refugees.<sup>61</sup>

Kharrazi then proposed, during a tour of Persian Gulf states, that the Iraqi opposition reconcile with Saddam Hussein while the UN supervised a referendum in Iraq.<sup>62</sup> Kharrazi described this as the only way to have a peaceful change of government in Baghdad that could preclude a regional war, and he emphasized Iran's concern about Iraq's

territorial integrity. An Iranian government spokesman described this as Kharrazi's personal initiative and not an official proposal.<sup>63</sup>

Khamene'i, meanwhile, continued his denunciations of the U.S. He told IRGC naval personnel, "The Americans, with their 21st-century equipment and with today's slogans, intend to do what the colonialists of the 18th and 19th century did...under the pretext of democracy, under the pretext of human rights, under the pretext of campaign against terrorism."<sup>64</sup> Khamene'i warned, "There is no end to the expansionist policies of the aggressor, America, which is today, with the temptation of the Zionists, entering into a situation that is dreadful for mankind."

In the weeks immediately preceding the commencement of hostilities, Kharrazi visited Jeddah and Sana'a to discuss regional developments, and his predecessor as foreign minister, Ali Akbar Velayati, went as a presidential envoy to Jakarta and Islamabad. While there, Velayati emphasized the importance to Iran of multilateralism: "Iran and Pakistan have been consulting and coordinating at different world fora such as the UN, OIC [Organization of the Islamic Conference], and NAM [Non-Aligned Movement]."<sup>65</sup>

Yet Tehran was not fully confident that these diplomatic efforts would succeed. The Foreign Ministry announced on March 19 that it had recalled its personnel from Baghdad.<sup>66</sup>

## **OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM BEGINS**

Military operations against Iraq began on the night of March 20-21, 2003. The first official Iran reaction was a statement from Kharrazi: "American military operations on Iraq are unjustifiable and illegitimate."<sup>67</sup>

Supreme Leader Khamene'i sounded his usual theme when he described the allied attack on Iraq as an "unjust war...that is based on high-handedness and bullying."<sup>68</sup> Khamene'i dismissed stated American and British goals, saying, "Their aim is to occupy Iraq, dominate the Middle East region, and gain total control of this precious treasure, namely oil.... They want to protect and safeguard the existence of the illegitimate Zionist government."

### *Allegations of Iranian Interference*

Less than a week after the war started, U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld referred to the "unhelpful" presence of small numbers of Iranian-backed Iraqi forces, and a few days later he said hundreds of combatants from the Badr Corps were operating in Iraq and that more were waiting in Iran.<sup>69</sup> Rumsfeld added, "The Badr Corps is trained, equipped, and directed by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard, and we will hold the Iranian government responsible for their actions and will view Badr Corps activity inside Iraq as unhelpful. Armed Badr Corps members found in Iraq will have to be treated as combatants."

Rumsfeld put this in stronger terms a month later, saying, "There is no question but that the government of Iran has encouraged people to go into the country [Iraq] and that they have people in the country attempting to influence the country."<sup>70</sup> Rumsfeld added, "If you're suggesting, how we would feel about an Iranian-type government with a few clerics running everything in the country, the answer is: That isn't going to happen."<sup>71</sup> Anonymous U.S. government officials said Iranian-trained operatives-- from the Badr Corps and the IRGC-- were promoting friendly Shi'a clerics and advancing Tehran's interests in Najaf, Karbala, and Basra.<sup>72</sup>

U.S. military personnel briefly detained Islamic Action Organization spiritual leader Ayatollah Muhammad Taqi al-Mudarissi, Secretary-General Ibrahim al-Mutairi, and others in April.<sup>73</sup> Al-Mudarissi, who has lived in Iran for 32 years, and his companions were in a four-vehicle convoy that was heading for Karbala.

In May, American forces detained and disarmed Badr Corps personnel and accused them of firing on U.S. troops.<sup>74</sup> In July, Rumsfeld described "recent reports of Iranians moving some of their border posts along about a 25-kilometer stretch several kilometers inside of Iraq," and the American administrator in Iraq said Iran moved seven border posts 1.5-3 kilometers inside southern Iraq.<sup>75</sup>

U.S. officials reiterated their concerns about infiltrations from Iran in September. Rumsfeld, for example, said, "We are unhappy about the fact that people come across the Syrian and Iranian border."<sup>76</sup> At the same time, American, Arab, and European intelligence sources described a February 2002 meeting at a safe house in eastern Iran between Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and al-Qa'ida military leader Saif al-Adel in which they planned their future activities in Iraq.<sup>77</sup> The Iranian authorities reportedly placed Zarqawi under house arrest after the meeting, but Tehran rebuffed repeated Jordanian requests for his extradition. Tehran eventually released him and he made his way to Iraq.

It was not just the United States that was concerned about Iranian interference. In early June, the British envoy to Baghdad said Iran was supporting the Badr Corps and was trying to exercise "undue and unwelcome influence in support of fundamentalist groupings."<sup>78</sup> The U.K. special representative to Iraq struck a stronger note in the autumn,

saying, "There are elements in the Badr Corps who are malign and interested in using violence against the coalition."<sup>79</sup> He added, "We are making it very clear to Iran that that is unacceptable, that [there] will be further marks against them [for] stirring it up in Iraq and we will deal with the violence on the ground accordingly."

Iraqi officials had similar complaints. A security official in Al-Salihyah described the arrest of 12 Iranian intelligence agents who intended to conduct bombings in Baghdad in August 2003, and a border police commander claimed that Iranians pretending to be pilgrims were entering the country.<sup>80</sup>

Tehran consistently rejected all such allegations, but some Iranian actions amounted to the incitement of violence. In April 2003 Supreme Leader Khamene'i gave a sermon in Arabic, instead of his usual Persian, in which he described:

...massacres committed against an unarmed people...the groaning of bereaved women and the injured...cries of hungry, injured children...demolition of people's homes...arrest and imprisonment of passersby...disparaging of the sanctity of families...spreading of widespread terror and fear...humiliation of proud men and the shameful acts committed against them in front of their children and womenfolk...destruction of the vital infrastructure of the country...dropping of thousands of bombs and missiles and the cannon shelling of cities....<sup>81</sup>

Khamene'i accused anybody who helped the coalition forces of committing treason, and he said American and British dreams for Iraq would not come true because of the

resistance that would emerge. Iran had a neutral stance during the war, Khamene'i said, but it would not be neutral in any struggle between the Iraqi people and occupiers.

A more explicit sermon was provided by Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati one month later.<sup>82</sup> He said that the Iraqi people "have no option but to resort to Intifada [uprising] and martyrdom-seeking operations. That is the only solution. They are learning from the Palestinian experience."

#### *Who is Muqtada al-Sadr?*

A new Shi'a political figure emerged in the immediate post-war jockeying for power, and his relationship with Iran was not clear. Muqtada al-Sadr, the son of the murdered Ayatollah Muhammad Sadeq al-Sadr, was not connected with SCIRI or Da'wah. Iraqi-born cleric Kazim al-Husseini al-Haeri based in Qom, Iran, issued a religious edict in early April 2003 that said, "We hereby inform you that Mr. Muqtada al-Sadr is our deputy and representative in all fatwa affairs."<sup>83</sup> "His position is my position," the decree added. Al-Haeri once had a close relationship with the Shi'a Al-Da'wah al-Islamiyah party, but split with the group because al-Haeri was excessively pro-Iranian and called for the party to respect the guidance of Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamene'i.

Iran's official news agency referred to al-Sadr as al-Haeri's envoy, and he traveled to Iran in June 2003.<sup>84</sup> Al-Sadr met with Expediency Council Chairman Hashemi-Rafsanjani and other regime leaders in Tehran, and in Qom he met with an IRGC officer who allegedly dealt with foreign opposition organizations.<sup>85</sup> Al-Sadr and his hosts reportedly made a deal that in exchange for financial aid to him and his followers, he would accept the Iranian theocratic model of

Vilayat-i Faqih (Guardianship of the Supreme Jurisconsult) and advocate it in Iraq, reject the Anglo-American presence in Iraq, and oppose the main source of emulation in Najaf, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani. Moreover, al-Sadr and his followers would replace the traditional Shi'a groups, particularly SCIRI. SCIRI's leadership reportedly resented the support given to al-Sadr by the IRGC and the Supreme Leader's office.<sup>86</sup>

Al-Haeri subsequently renounced his relationship with al-Sadr. "Sadr speaks for himself and we speak for ourselves," al-Haeri's spokesman said in April 2004.<sup>87</sup> "People thought that everything he said he got directly from Ayatollah Haeri. But we've said that's not true. As a result, the Sadr group doesn't have much of a relationship with the ayatollah anymore." A few months later, al-Haeri's website made this point more emphatic: "Mr. al-Sadr used to be our representative...but that was on condition of obedience to and coordination with our office in Al-Najaf."<sup>88</sup> Al-Sadr "does not coordinate with our office, so his agency became void," according to the website, which added that al-Sadr "does not seek our advice in his stances, so we cannot endorse what he does." Al-Haeri reportedly withdrew his support after Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani informed senior clerics in Qom that the Imam al-Mahdi Army caused some of the battle damage at the Imam Ali shrine in al-Najaf.<sup>89</sup>

The Iranian stand on al-Sadr was mixed. He had traveled to Iran and met with top officials, but President Khatami reportedly refused to meet with him. A reformist parliamentarian said, "The policy of the country's senior officials is by no means support for Muqtada al-Sadr."<sup>90</sup> A conservative parliamentarian, on the other hand, said, "The Islamic Republic of Iran

must support Muqtada al-Sadr, who is a figure against the forces of occupation."<sup>91</sup> He added, "Iran must have a more active presence in the Iraqi crisis. We must not be afraid of the fact that our actions may be regarded as interference."

#### *A Politicized Media Reaction*

Operation Enduring Freedom commenced during the No Ruz holiday in Iran, when newspapers are normally not published for up to two weeks. Iranians who did not have Internet access had to depend on the traditionally conservative state radio and television (Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting, IRIB) for their news. Typical of its fare was a state radio analyst claiming several times that coalition forces were intentionally targeting civilians, and state television reporting that Karbala was "the target of lengthy aerial bombings" and the Imam Ali Mosque in Najaf was another coalition target.<sup>92</sup>

Amidst such inaccurate reporting, leading Shi'a clerics in Iran, such as Ayatollah Hussein Ali Montazeri-Najafabadi and Grand Ayatollah Nasser Makarem-Shirazi, spoke out against the war. The Association of Qom Seminary Lecturers and Researchers sent a letter to UN Secretary General Kofi-Annan calling for an immediate end to the war in order to protect the Iraqi population and the holy cities of Najaf and Karbala.<sup>93</sup>

This was not a universal reaction, however. The managing editor of the relatively conservative Baztab website said the official news outlets' coverage is not balanced.<sup>94</sup> For example, the editor said, official news agencies carried "dozens" of reports about the water shortage in Basra but did not file even one report about the Americans' restoration of the water supply. A Tehran University professor added, "Reports

such as 'America is being defeated,' 'all their plans have failed,' 'America has been bogged down on the battlefield,' 'the Iraqis have been successful,' and suchlike, which one can deduce from the news reports and analyses of the Voice and Vision, are unreal."<sup>95</sup>

Two legislators also criticized state radio and television's war coverage. One complained that events in Iraq were being depicted in such a way that viewers were likely to believe that the Iraqi regime would win the war.<sup>96</sup> Another legislator complained that the war coverage was so biased that it violated the country's stated policy of neutrality.<sup>97</sup>

#### **AN IRANIAN POLICY SHIFT**

Tehran's official stance-- hostility towards and concern about the U.S. presence on its borders-- never subsided. But the gradual transfer of power to Iraqis themselves, as well as repeated U.S. statements that the U.S. forces did not intend to have a permanent presence in Iraq, may have soothed Iranian nerves. Leading members of the Iraqi Governing Council, which was created in July 2003, frequently traveled to Tehran to confer with Iranian officials. President Khatami expressed his government's view of the council when he said at an October 2003 Organization of the Islamic Conference summit, "The [council] can provide the blueprint for drawing up an independent and progressive constitution for Iraq compatible with the religious and cultural identity of the Iraqi people and put it to public voting."<sup>98</sup>

The Iraqi Governing Council, Foreign Minister Kharrazi said, needed to increase its interaction with its neighbors.<sup>99</sup> Kharrazi added, "We believe that the Iraqi Governing Council is the first step in handing over affairs to the Iraqi people and in establishing national rule and the formation of a

provisional government in order to draw up a constitution and form a legal and nationally-elected government in Iraq."

Tehran also welcomed the late June 2004 transfer of power to Iraq's interim government. In September, Mohammad Majid al-Shaykh began work as the first Iraqi ambassador to Iran since 1980.<sup>100</sup>

*Continuing Allegations of Direct Interference*

Allegations of Iranian interference in Iraqi affairs and complaints about porous borders continued regardless of who was in charge in Baghdad. Tehran dismissed the U.S. allegations with its usual rhetoric about being used as a scapegoat. Nor did the situation seem as clear as it had in the past. During intense unrest in April 2004 the U.S. secretary of defense said, "We know the Iranians have been meddling [in Iraq] and it is unhelpful to have neighboring countries meddling in the affairs of Iraq."<sup>101</sup> Yet the State Department was less certain. A spokesman said, "We've seen, generally speaking, reports of suggestions of Iranian involvement, collusion, provocation, coordination, et cetera, et cetera. But I think there's a dearth of hard facts to back these things up."<sup>102</sup>

That summer, an anonymous "former senior official of the just-dissolved American-led occupation authority" said during a discussion about the continuing insurgency that Iranian and Syrian activity in Iraq had increased over the past year.<sup>103</sup> The Iranians, he said, have "become more active over time, and not helpful." The source speculated that Tehran might have been financing Muqtada al-Sadr. As the months went by, officials from the State and Defense departments, as well as military officials, continued to assert that money, arms, and

even personnel were getting to al-Sadr from Iran.<sup>104</sup>

Iranian officials dismissed all the American allegations. Yet events in Iran contributed to suspicions about Tehran's intentions. In May 2004, the Headquarters for Tribute to the Martyrs of the Global Islamic Movement-- which is affiliated with the IRGC-- began enrollment of volunteer suicide bombers to go to Iraq.<sup>105</sup> The headquarters announced, "We are confident that expelling the British and American occupiers from Iraq is not possible in any way other than martyrdom-seeking operations." Among the headquarters' supporters was at least one parliamentarian.<sup>106</sup> During the August violence in al-Najaf, furthermore, an Iranian official appeared to encourage violence: "The Americans, by affronting holy sites across Iraq, have now sown the seeds of combat and resistance [which] will be irrigated with the blood of martyrs and grow up stronger."<sup>107</sup>

More and more often, complaints about Iranians came from Iraqi officials at both the national and the local level. For example, in July 2004 police in Baghdad's al-Rasafah district arrested two Iranian intelligence officers who were trying to plant explosives.<sup>108</sup> During the August unrest, 1,000 Iranians were deported from Karbala, and the governor of al-Najaf said, "There is Iranian support for al-Sadr's group, and this is no secret. We have information and evidence that they are supplying the [Imam] Al-Mahdi Army with weapons and have found such weapons in their possession."<sup>109</sup> In December 2004, police closed the offices of six Iranian tourism firms in Karbala and expelled their staffs.<sup>110</sup>

More controversial were Iraqi Defense Minister Hazim al-Sha'lan al-Khuza'i's frequent accusations. In July 2004 he accused

Iran of "blatant interference," and a month later he described Iran as Iraq's "first enemy."<sup>111</sup> When pressed on his claims that a neighbor is fueling unrest in Iraq, the defense minister erupted, "Yes, it is Iran. I have said it before.... and I say Iran, Iran, Iran."<sup>112</sup> He said Iran was promoting violence in his country as a way to "settle its scores" with the United States.

Iraqi President Ghazi al-Yawir and Jordanian King Abdullah made similarly controversial statements.<sup>113</sup> "Iran has very obvious interference in our business...especially in the southeast side of Iraq," Yawir said. He said Iran was advising the parties sympathetic to Tehran and was spending a lot of money to produce a Shi'a theocracy similar to its own. King Abdullah said more than one million Iranians had entered Iraq to vote in the January 30 election, that Tehran was spending money on social services and welfare to create pro-Iranian sentiments, and that some people had been trained by the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps. The Jordanian monarch also warned that this Iranian interference could have dire consequences for the region: "If Iraq goes Islamic republic, then, yes, we've opened ourselves to a whole set of new problems that will not be limited to the borders of Iraq."

The Iraqis' allegations were dismissed, too. Indeed, the absence of serious proof reduced this issue to a series of unproven accusations and denials. But it eventually became clear that the issue was having an adverse impact on Tehran-Baghdad relations. An early-December 2004 conference in Tehran of Interior Ministry and security officials from Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Turkey turned into a debate between Tehran and Baghdad over who was more responsible for

insecurity in both countries. In December 2004, Iraq stopped issuing visas to Iranians in light of the deteriorating security situation.<sup>114</sup>

#### *'Humanitarian and Outreach Programs'*

During peace time there has always been a great deal of cross border traffic between Iran and Iraq. Iranian pilgrims travel to Iraq every year to visit shrines in Karbala, Najaf, and the Baghdad suburb of Khazimiyah, and Iraqi pilgrims travel to Iran to visit important shrines, such as the tomb of Imam Reza in Mashhad. From March-September 2004, approximately one million people used the Mehran border crossing in western Iran.<sup>115</sup> Pilgrims are supposed to secure visas, but they frequently cross the border illegally with smugglers. Goods are often smuggled across the long and porous borders.

Less than one month after Operation Iraqi Freedom began truckloads of Iranian goods-- such as food and medicine -- were arriving in southern Iraq. Furthermore, radio and television stations based in Iran were easily received in information-starved Iraq. CIA Director George Tenet expressed suspicion about many of Iran's "humanitarian and outreach programs" during February 2004 testimony before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence.<sup>116</sup> A glance at Iranian activities in the Balkans explains Tenet's concerns.

In the Balkans, Tehran provided humanitarian services through Iran's Red Crescent Society opening a clinic in Bihac, western Bosnia. Iranian music and Koranic recitals were broadcast from the Fatah radio station in Sarajevo, which had "one of the most powerful transmitters throughout the region."<sup>117</sup> Iran also sent Koran reciters to Bosnia, although in February 1996 Bosnian Croat policemen arrested them for espousing Islamic revolution.

Such humanitarian activities were just one side of Iran's relationship with Bosnia. In 1992 there were reports that Iranian shipments of humanitarian aid also contained arms and ammunition. Bosnian officials cooperated with Tehran, in at least one case exposing an American intelligence officer to the possibility of an Iranian terrorist attack.<sup>118</sup> Iranian spies infiltrated the American program to train the Bosnian Army.<sup>119</sup> Islamic Revolution Guards Corps personnel came to Bosnia and stayed in the guise of relief workers or through marriage with Bosnian females.

#### Broadcasting

Tehran tried to influence events in Iraq indirectly, through Arabic-language television and radio broadcasting. It already had the Sahar news channel. Shortly before the war, Iran launched its new 24-hour Arabic-language news television channel, al-Alam. Al-Alam was available via the Arabsat, Asiasat, Telstar, and Hot Bird satellites. Its programming was critical of the occupation, terming the conflict a "War of Control," using gory imagery, and making frequent comparisons with events in Palestine. Sahar and al-Alam could be seen and heard in Baghdad. Two other television channels from Iran-- the religious al-Thiqalayn Television and SCIRI's Resistance Channel-- could be viewed in Iraq.

The external service of the Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran could be heard on AM and shortwave in Iraq even before the war. Tehran ran two radio networks with a Palestinian focus-- the Voice of the Palestinian Islamic Revolution and the Voice of the al-Aqsa Intifada-- for many years. The two radio stations, using Iranian radio's external service transmitters and broadcasting on frequencies that also carry Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting's Arabic

programs, carry pro-Intifada commentary, glorify violence against Israel, and encourage future acts of "resistance." After the fall of Baghdad, furthermore, SCIRI began broadcasting its Voice of the Mujahedin radio programming on a frequency formerly used by Iranian state radio. Its programs feature statements from SCIRI and Iranian leaders, and it espouses views advocated by Tehran.

Of the 59 AM radio broadcasts audible in Baghdad on October 7, 2003, according to the U.S. government's Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS), transmissions originating in Iran could be heard on 33 AM frequencies. Four of the frequencies broadcast programming in Arabic, one was in Kurdish, and 28 were in the Persian language. Reception varied from poor to good. Four FM broadcasts originated in Iran, including Tehran radio's Arabic service, SCIRI's Voice of the Mujahedin, and Tehran's youth-oriented Javan radio. A new entry-- Voice of Rebellious Iraq-- began transmitting from Ahvaz on AM for seven hours a day. According to a June 28, 2004 FBIS survey, 22 channels originating in Iran could be heard in Baghdad. The audibility varied from poor to good, but the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting's Arabic-language services were consistently good, as were SCIRI's Voice of the Mujahedin.

The director of IRIB met with clerics from al-Najaf in July 2003 and offered to help them establish a TV station.<sup>120</sup>

#### Commercial Connections

In addition to opportunities for humanitarian and information operations, post-war Iraq provided Iran with a potentially lucrative business situation. On the eve of an October 2003 international donors' conference in Madrid, it was estimated that over a four-year period \$55 billion would be



needed to rebuild Iraq. Kharrazi said beforehand, "Our companies are already active there and we will help with Iraq's reconstruction."<sup>121</sup> He later added, "We stand ready to supply our electricity and gas to Iraq and to facilitate its oil exports through our oil terminals or enter into a swap arrangement that can amount to 350,000 barrels per day."<sup>122</sup>

The Export Guarantee Fund of Iran (EGFI) took steps in July 2004 to provide risk coverage for Iranian exports to Iraq, and the next month Tehran hosted a conference intended to strengthen business ties between the two countries.<sup>123</sup> The Iraqi Finance Minister visited Tehran in January 2005 to discuss the expansion of bilateral trade.<sup>124</sup> The two sides discussed free trade agreements, cooperation in banking, trade exchanges, border markets, letters of credit, and insurance coverage.

Railways are another area of potential cooperation for the two countries. The Iraqi transport minister discussed the issue with the Iranian charge d'affaires in September 2003, and an Iranian railways official announced a few months later that Iran and Iraq had agreed to the construction of two railway lines.<sup>125</sup>

Iran participated in a June 2005 donors conference in Brussels with representatives from some 80 countries and international organizations. The Iranian foreign minister mentioned that plans were under way for oil swaps of up to 400,000 barrels per day, and added that other projects dealing with oil, gas, banking, and finance were being considered.<sup>126</sup>

#### *Tehran Welcomes Iraq's Elections*

Iran played an important part in the January 30, 2005 elections for an Iraqi national assembly. The International

Organization for Migration estimated that there were 100,000-120,000 eligible Iraqis living in Iran, and 60,908 people registered to vote at 11 sites in Tehran, Qom, Urumiyeh (West Azerbaijan Province), Kermanshah, Ahvaz (Khuzestan Province), Shush (Khuzestan Province), and Mashhad (Khorasan Province). A total of 56,568 Iraqis voted in Iran, according to the IOM

Groups backed by Iran previously had leading roles in the United Iraqi Alliance, a coalition of 22 political parties and groups supported by Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani. The alliance includes the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) and al-Da'wah al-Islamiyah. Amidst accusations that this alliance would seek to emulate Iran's theocracy, one of its leaders said, "There is no intention of forming an Islamic or religious state in Iraq, or a Shi'ite state or an Iranian-style government."<sup>127</sup>

Many in Iran welcomed the election results. Expediency Council Chairman Ayatollah Ali-Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani said, "The fact that the people of Iraq have gone to the ballot boxes to decide their own fate is the result of efforts by the Iraqi clergy and sources of emulation, led by Ayatollah [Ali] al-Sistani."<sup>128</sup> A prominent Friday Prayer leader said the majority of votes favor the United Iraqi Alliance and Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, and every vote is a "no" to the U.S. presence in the country.<sup>129</sup>

President Khatami congratulated Patriotic Union of Kurdistan leader Jalal Talabani on his election as Iraq's president in April 2005.<sup>130</sup> In a conversation the next month, Khatami told Talabani, "We regard Iraq's security and stability as important as Iran's national security."<sup>131</sup>

#### **CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

The nature of Iran's decision-making system is the key to assessing Iranian behavior before, during, and after the 2003 war in Iraq. The Supreme Leader determines general policies, and he is advised by the Expediency Council. The Supreme National Security Council, which is chaired by the president, determines national security and defense policy within the framework of the general policies specified by the Supreme Leader, and it coordinates all activities related to national security. Other organizations involved with the foreign policy process are executive branch agencies, the parliament, and the Guardians Council. The Ministry of Intelligence and Security and the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps are involved with terrorist organizations and covert activities in Iraq.

The powerful influence of individuals who do not have a formal role in the system makes this process even more obscure. Therefore, the statements of a top official may not be translated into action. Similarly, the actions of the Ministry of Intelligence and Security or the IRGC in Iraq may be motivated by concerns not voiced by the country's leaders. Furthermore, there is a lack of oversight by elected institutions, and the media's watchdog function is circumscribed by governmental repression and journalists' self-censorship.

This goes some way in explaining the Iranian Foreign Ministry's interaction with Washington on Afghan and Iraqi war-related topics, while the Supreme Leader and other officials decry alleged U.S. ambitions in the region. Muqtada al-Sadr's June 2003 visit to Iran is illustrative, too. Al-Sadr met with Expediency Council Chairman Hashemi-Rafsanjani and IRGC officers, but President Khatami allegedly refused to meet al-Sadr, preferring instead to interact with SCIRI's Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim.<sup>132</sup>

Bureaucratic rivalries also affected Iran's post-war diplomacy. The executive branch resisted pressure to appoint an IRGC officer responsible for dealing with the Iraqi opposition, Brigadier General Reza Seifollahi, as the first ambassador to Baghdad.<sup>133</sup> Iran's first post-Taliban consul in the western Afghan city of Herat, former IRGC officer Hassan Kazemi Qomi, subsequently served as charge d'affaires in post-Saddam Hussein Baghdad.

After September 11, 2001, the Iranian foreign policy community debated whether or not the new regional security environment was beneficial to the country's national security.<sup>134</sup> The general conclusion appears to be that the elimination of the Taliban threat was accompanied by the introduction of another threat, American power. The war has an impact in three other areas: the Iraq-based Iranian opposition, Shi'a leadership, and ethnic minority politics.

The elimination of Saddam Hussein's regime in 2003 strengthened Iranian apprehension about U.S. intentions, and there is a persistent view in Tehran that Iran comes after Afghanistan and Iraq on the U.S. target list.<sup>135</sup> The U.S. is unlikely to withdraw from either Afghanistan or Iraq right away. Therefore, inclusion of Iran in regional security discussions could allay some of its fears. In light of international and particularly U.S. concern about Iran's pursuit of a nuclear capability and support for terrorist organizations, it is not all that likely that the inclusion of Iran in such discussions would yield startling results. Nevertheless, it would be worth the effort and is unlikely to have harmful side-effects.

The obscure status of the Mujahedin Khalq Organization (MKO) in Iraq, almost two years after the war, also worries Iran. The MKO conducted armed operations

against the Iranian regime from Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War and afterwards on behalf of Saddam Hussein. After Operation Iraqi Freedom, its personnel were confined to a facility called Camp Ashraf, and they were granted "protected status" under the Geneva Conventions in July 2004. Hundreds of MKO members have accepted Tehran's offer of an amnesty. The MKO's leaders and thousands of others refuse to go back. The U.S. cannot continue to keep these people in Iraq, but it should secure guarantees from Tehran that these people will not be harmed before expelling them. European governments should make a concentrated effort to shut down MKO activities in their countries.

Another Iranian concern relates to its status as a Shi'a Muslim theocracy. The Iraqi city of Najaf was the center of Shi'a learning for centuries, and the most important Shi'a shrines are in Iraq. It was mainly because of Saddam Hussein's repression of the Shi'a community, which coincided with Iran's Islamic revolution, that the Iranian city of Qom came to be the preeminent center of Shi'a Islam. The Iranian government depends on the status of Qom, which is home to many leading Shi'a clerics, for much of its legitimacy, and the resurgence of Najaf threatens this status.

The resurgence of Najaf and developments in Iraq coincide with the increasing disdain some Iranian clerics have for their government. For example, eight of the top twelve ayatollahs reportedly refused to vote in the February 2004 parliamentary elections.<sup>136</sup> After the Iraqi elections, furthermore, a prominent Iranian cleric urged Iraqis not to recreate the system of Islamic government that exists in Iran.<sup>137</sup> "I think the Iraqis can make what we wanted to create but were unsuccessful: a real Islamic Republic." He continued, "If they have a good

government with Islamic democracy and without any special or divine rights for the clergy, the Iranian government won't be able to justify its situation to the Iranian citizens."

A final concern for Iran- and also for Turkey and Syria- is its Kurdish minority and the remote possibility that it will begin militating for some sort of autonomy. West Azerbaijan, Kurdistan, Ilam, and Kermanshah Provinces are heavily populated by Kurds, about 75 percent of whom are Sunni Muslims. The Central Intelligence Agency estimates that some 4.8 million Kurds live in Iran. These regions are underdeveloped and have high unemployment, and locals occasionally protest against government measures and call for greater government representation. This has always been a sensitive issue for the Iranian government, and in February and March 2005, a top Iranian election official warned prospective presidential candidates against appealing to minorities.<sup>138</sup> Developments in Iraq indicate that the Kurds are satisfied with their share in the country's central government. It remains to be seen how this will affect Iran's Kurds.

These factors explain Iran's continuing interference in Iraqi affairs and its simultaneous cooperation with the country's government. This is also why Iranian behavior is unlikely to change soon.

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#### NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Views expressed here are solely those of the author.

<sup>2</sup> Kenneth Katzman, Julie Kim, and Richard Best, "Bosnia and Iranian Arms Shipments," *Congressional Research Service Report for Congress*, April 24, 1996, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Vision of the Islamic Republic of Iran, September 11, 2001

<sup>4</sup> Vision of the Islamic Republic of Iran, September 17, 2001.

<sup>5</sup> Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran, September 26, 2001.

<sup>6</sup> See Daniel L. Byman, Shahram Chubin, Anoushiravan Ehteshami, Jerrold Green, *Iran's Security Policy in the Post-Revolutionary Era*, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2001), and A.W. Samii, "Order out of Chaos," *Hoover Digest* 2004, No. 3 (Summer 2004).

<sup>7</sup> *RFE/RL Iran Report*, Vol. 4, No. 40 (October 22, 2001).

<sup>8</sup> Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran, October 8, 2001.

<sup>9</sup> Vision of the Islamic Republic of Iran, October 15, 2001.

<sup>10</sup> In an initial message to Tehran sent shortly after the bombing of Afghanistan began on October 7, 2001, the White House promised to respect Iranian territorial integrity; John Ward Andersen, "Iran Vows to Rescue U.S. Pilots Who Crash on Its Soil," *The New York Times*, October 18, 2001. In exchange,

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Washington asked Tehran to aid any American aviators who either were forced to land in Iran or whose survival, evasion, resistance, and escape activities took them into Iran. Minister of Intelligence and Security Ali Yunesi said, "We have told them that if any plane crashes inside Iran we will help and hand it over, but we will not allow the Americans to enter Iran," the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) reported on October 18, 2001. On the other hand, Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Assefi said on October 18, 2001, "No offer has been made by the Islamic Republic of Iran to America." On the Bonn Accords, Richard Haass testimony to Senate Foreign Relations Committee, December 6, 2001.

<sup>11</sup> Brigadier General Mohammad Baqer Zolqadr, IRNA, November 30, 2001.

<sup>12</sup> Brigadier General Mohammad Baqer Zolqadr, Vision of the Islamic Republic of Iran, February 7, 2002; General Yahya Rahim-Safavi, IRNA, February 22, 2002.

<sup>13</sup> Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Assefi, Vision of the Islamic Republic of Iran, September 30, 2002.

<sup>14</sup> Abbas Maleki and Kaveh L. Afrasiabi, "Iran's Foreign Policy after 11 September," *The Brown Journal of World Affairs*, Vol. IX, No. 2 (Winter/Spring 2003), p. 3.

<sup>15</sup> *Tehran Times*, July 16, 2002.

<sup>16</sup> Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid-Reza Assefi and government spokesman Abdullah Ramezanzadeh, IRNA, July 17, 2002.

<sup>17</sup> Vision of the Islamic Republic of Iran, July 17, 2002.

<sup>18</sup> dpa, July 23, 2002.

<sup>19</sup> Vice President for Legal and Parliamentary Affairs Hojatoleslam Mohammad Ali Abtahi, *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, August 3, 2002.

<sup>20</sup> Former Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati, who served as the supreme leader's

foreign-affairs adviser, established the office in Dubai, according to reports in *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, August 28 and 29, 2002.

<sup>21</sup> Barbara Slavin, "Iranians may aid U.S. war on Iraq," *USA Today*, November 15, 2002.

<sup>22</sup> *cnn.com*, November 25, 2002.

<sup>23</sup> Peter Slevin, "U.S. Met With Iranians On War," *Washington Post*, February 8, 2003.

<sup>24</sup> Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Assefi said, "We deny the report published in *The Washington Post* on contacts with American officials in Europe regarding Iraq;" *dpa*, February 9, 2003.

<sup>25</sup> *UPI*, March 26, 2003.

<sup>26</sup> Glenn Kessler and Walter Pincus, "One Step Forward, Direction Uncertain," *Washington Post*, April 18, 2003.

<sup>27</sup> Hamid Reza Assefi, *IRNA*, March 21, 2003.

<sup>28</sup> Representing the Iranian side were Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance Tahmasb Mazaheri, Islamic Revolution Guards Corps founder Javad Mansuri, and Petroleum Ministry adviser and former Ambassador to Japan Hussein Kazempur-Ardabili. *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, July 23, 2003.

<sup>29</sup> Robin Wright, "Bush Team Targets Hussein," *Los Angeles Times*, February 10, 2002.

<sup>30</sup> See A.W. Samii, "Shia Political Alternatives in Postwar Iraq," *Middle East Policy*, Vol. X, No. 2 (Summer 2003); Juan Cole, "The United States and Shi'ite Religious Factions in Postwar Iraq," *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 57, No. 4, (Autumn 2003); and W. Andrew Terrill, *The United States and Iraq's Shi'ite Clergy: Partners or Adversaries?* (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, 2004).

<sup>31</sup> On PUK complaints of Iranian support for the Ansar al-Islam, see C.J. Chivers, "Kurds Face a Second Enemy: Islamic Fighters on

Iraq Flank," *New York Times*, January 13, 2003. On IMK-IRGC meetings, see *Hawlati*, January 27, 2003. On KIG leader Ali Bapir meeting with Iranian officials, see *Komal*, January 4 and 25, 2003.

<sup>32</sup> On INC facilities in Iran, see Seymour Hersh, "The Iraq Hawks," *The New Yorker*, December 24 and 31, 2001. On allegations that Chalabi gave information to Tehran, see James Risen and David Johnston, "Chalabi Reportedly Told Iran That U.S. Had Code," *The New York Times*, June 1, 2004, and Walter Pincus and Bradley Graham, "Coded Cable in 1995 Used Chalabi's Name," *The Washington Post*, June 4, 2004. Supreme National Security Council Secretary Hojatoleslam Hassan Rohani rejected these reports, saying Iran has had "no contacts or special relationship with Chalabi." Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Assefi also rejected such reports as "baseless." *IRNA*, June 2, 2004

<sup>33</sup> Ayatollah Baqer al-Hakim in an interview with *Al-Hayat*, as reported by *AFP*, December 1, 2002.

<sup>34</sup> *Al-Safir*, December 11, 2002.

<sup>35</sup> *Kurdistani Nuwe*, January 8, 2003.

<sup>36</sup> *Al-Hayat*, January 9, 2003; *IRNA* and *Al-Jazeera* television, 10 January 2003.

<sup>37</sup> *SCIRI's* Muhsin al-Hakim, cited by *IRNA*, January 25, 2003. Elaine Sciolino, "Iraqi Dissidents Meet in Iran to Plan Iraq Entry," *The New York Times*, January 26, 2003.

<sup>38</sup> *Iran News*, March 8, 2003.

<sup>39</sup> *Etemad*, March 6, 2003.

<sup>40</sup> Najmeh Bozorgmehr and Guy Dinmore, "Iranian-backed forces cross into Iraq," *Financial Times*, February 19, 2003; *AP*, March 5, 2003.

<sup>41</sup> *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, January 30, 2002.

<sup>42</sup> *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, July 21, 2002.

<sup>43</sup> *dpa*, September 29, 2002.

<sup>44</sup> Vice President Mohammad Ali Abtahi, cited by Reuters, September 27, 2002.

<sup>45</sup> Parliament Deputy Speaker Mohammad Reza Khatami, cited by AFP, September 26, 2002.

<sup>46</sup> *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, February 11, 2003.

<sup>47</sup> IRNA, February 9, 2003.

<sup>48</sup> Ardabil parliamentary representative Nureddin Pirmoazen questioning Foreign Minister Kharrazi, Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran, May 26, 2002.

<sup>49</sup> Elahe Kulyai, cited by ISNA, December 17, 2003.

<sup>50</sup> Ardabil parliamentary representative Nureddin Pirmoazen, *Aftab-i Yazd*, January 6, 2003.

<sup>51</sup> ISNA, January 7, 2003.

<sup>52</sup> Khoi parliamentary representative Ali Taqizadeh in a January 26, 2003 speech to the legislature, cited in *Tehran Times*, January 27, 2003.

<sup>53</sup> *Iran Daily*, January 27, 2003.

<sup>54</sup> IRNA, February 19, 2003.

<sup>55</sup> Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran, January 9, 2003.

<sup>56</sup> IRNA, 9 January 2003.

<sup>57</sup> Vision of the Islamic Republic of Iran, February 7, 2003.

<sup>58</sup> IRNA, January 23, 2003.

<sup>59</sup> Karl Vick, "Mideast Countries Issue Appeal to Iraq," *The Washington Post*, January 24, 2003.

<sup>60</sup> Prime Minister Blair's official website (<http://www.number-10.gov.uk>), February 6, 2003.

<sup>61</sup> *RFE/RL Iran Report*, Vol. 6, No. 6, (February 10, 2003).

<sup>62</sup> IRNA, March 4, 2003.

<sup>63</sup> Government spokesman Abdullah Ramezanzadeh, AFP, March 5, 2003.

<sup>64</sup> Vision of the Islamic Republic of Iran, March 12, 2003.

<sup>65</sup> IRNA, March 19, 2003.

<sup>66</sup> ISNA, March 19, 2003.

<sup>67</sup> IRNA, March 20, 2003.

<sup>68</sup> Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran, March 21, 2003

<sup>69</sup> <http://www.usinfo.state.gov>, March 25 and March 28, 2003.

<sup>70</sup> <http://www.usinfo.state.gov>, April 25, 2003.

<sup>71</sup> Robin Wright, "Rise of Shiite Religious Leaders in Iraq Gives U.S. Pause," *Los Angeles Times*, April 25, 2003.

<sup>72</sup> Julian Borger, "White House fears covert influence on Iraqi Shias," *The Guardian*, April 24, 2004.

<sup>73</sup> According to international news agencies, a press release posted on almodarresi.com, and Al-Jazeera television, April 22, 2003.

<sup>74</sup> Charles Clover, "Iran link to rocket attack against US troops," *Financial Times*, June 6, 2003, and Charles Clover, "US soldiers raid Baghdad office of Shia party," *Financial Times*, June 8, 2003.

<sup>75</sup> Rumsfeld testimony before the U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services, Reuters, July 9, 2003, and L. Paul Bremer, *RFE/RL Iran Report*, Vol. 6, No. 30 (July 21, 2003). An anonymous "senior British officer" said at a June 2004 conference in London that British forces defied U.S. Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez's order to repel the Iranian units that had crossed into Iraq. The British preferred a diplomatic solution, and the issue was resolved after a week of discussions between Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi and Foreign Secretary Jack Straw. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk>, June 30, 2004.

<sup>76</sup> Douglas Jehl and Dexter Filkins, "Rumsfeld Eager for More Iraqis to Keep Peace," *The New York Times*, September 5, 2003.

<sup>77</sup> Peter Finn and Susan Schmidt, "Al Qaeda Plans A Front in Iraq," *The Washington Post*, September 7, 2003. On Iran's relationship with Al-Qa'ida leaders and Jordan, see also John Mintz, "Saudi Says Iran Drags Feet Returning Al Qaeda Leaders," *The Washington Post*, August 12, 2003, and Robin Wright, "Jordan Promoting U.S.-Iran Contacts," *The Washington Post*, August 12, 2003. December 7, 2003.

<sup>78</sup> British envoy John Sawers, cited in Rory McCarthy, "Iran helping religious militias in Iraq, British envoy warns," *The Guardian*, June 4, 2003.

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<sup>80</sup> Al-Salihyah security patrols director Haytham Suleiman, *Al-Ahd al-Jadid*, August 21, 2003; Colonel Nazzim Sherif Mohammad, the Iraqi border police commander at the Al-Munthiriya border crossing, *Times*, August 28, 2003.

<sup>81</sup> Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran, April 11, 2003.

<sup>82</sup> Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati, Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran, May 2, 2003.

<sup>83</sup> Craig S. Smith, "Cleric in Iran Says Shiites Must Act," *The New York Times*, April 26, 2003.

<sup>84</sup> IRNA, June 8, 2003.

<sup>85</sup> *Corriere della Serra*, June 25, 2003.

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<sup>90</sup> Ardakan parliamentarian Mohammad Reza Tabesh, *Aftab-i Yazd*, August 24, 2004.

<sup>91</sup> Abadeh parliamentarian Mahmud Mohammadi, *Aftab-i Yazd*, August 23, 2004.

<sup>92</sup> Analyst "Mr. Kazemzadeh," Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran, March 29, 2003 and April 5, 2003; Vision of the Islamic Republic of Iran, April 3, 2003.

<sup>93</sup> IRNA, April 5, 2003.

<sup>94</sup> Fuad Sadeqi, Fars News Agency, April 2, 2003.

<sup>95</sup> Professor Sadeq Zibakalam, Fars News Agency, April 2, 2003.

<sup>96</sup> Lanjan parliamentary representative Ali Mohammad Namazi, IRNA, April 7, 2003.

<sup>97</sup> Elaheh Kulyai, IRNA, April 7, 2003.

<sup>98</sup> IRNA, October 17, 2003.

<sup>99</sup> *Sharq*, November 6, 2003.

<sup>100</sup> IRNA, 18 September 2004.

<sup>101</sup> *RFE/RL Iran Report*, Vol. 7, No. 14 (12 April 2004).

<sup>102</sup> State Department spokesman Adam Ereli, cited by UPI, April 9, 2004.

<sup>103</sup> David E. Sanger, "Ex-Occupation Aide Sees No Dent in 'Saddamists,'" *The New York Times*, July 2, 2004.

<sup>104</sup> Robin Wright and Justin Blum, "U.S. Targets Iran's Influence in Iraq," *The Washington Post*, September 25, 2004.

<sup>105</sup> *Kayhan*, May 22, 2004.

<sup>106</sup> Enrollment forms for volunteers were distributed after a June 2 meeting in Tehran, where Tehran parliamentary representative Mehdi Kuchakzadeh, military officials, and scholars spoke on topics such as "Martyrdom Operations and Military and Security Strategies" and "Martyrdom Operations -- The Last Weapon," the Iranian Labor News Agency (ILNA), June 4, 2004.

<sup>107</sup> Supreme Leader's adviser Ali Akbar Velayati, IRNA, August 8, 2004.

<sup>108</sup> Iraqi Interior Ministry official Major General Hikmat Musa Suleiman, *Al-Sabah al-Jadid*, July 6, 2004.

<sup>109</sup> Al-Najaf governor Adnan al-Zurufi, *Al-Sharqiyah*, August 8, 2004.

<sup>110</sup> *Al-Sharqiyah*, December 7, 2004.

<sup>111</sup> *RFE/RL Iraq Report*, Vol. 7, No. 27 (July 22, 2004). Al-Arabiyah television, August 9, 2004.

<sup>112</sup> AP, September 3, 2004.

<sup>113</sup> Robin Wright and Peter Baker, "Iraq, Jordan See Threat To Election From Iran," *Washington Post*, December 8, 2004. "I don't have any problem with Shi'ites," King Abdullah explained in an interview; *Middle East Quarterly*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (Spring 2005). "I have a real problem with certain Iranian factions' political influence inside Iraq."

<sup>114</sup> Iraqi Ambassador Mohammad Majid al-Shaykh, Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran, December 19, 2004.

<sup>115</sup> Ilam Province police official Colonel Manuchehr Cheraqi, IRNA, September 18, 2004.

<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> IRNA, January 8, 1997.

<sup>118</sup> James Risen, "Bosnia reportedly told Iran of U.S. spy," *Los Angeles Times*, January, 15 1997.

<sup>119</sup> Mike O'Connor, "Spies for Iran are said to gain a hold in Bosnia," *New York Times*, November 28, 1997.

<sup>120</sup> Ali Larijani, Vision of the Islamic Republic of Iran, July 22, 2003.

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<sup>123</sup> IRNA, July 26 and August 2, 2004.

<sup>124</sup> Adil Abd al-Mahdi met with Iranian Commerce Minister Mohammad Shariatmadari, IRNA, January 20, 2005.

<sup>125</sup> IRNA, September 21, 2003. Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran, April 1, 2004.

<sup>126</sup> IRNA, June 22, 2005.

<sup>127</sup> United Iraqi Alliance leader Mowafak Rubai, cited in Doug Struck and Bassam Sebti, "Iraqi Shiite Coalition Tries to Dispel Fears of Iran-Style Rule," *The Washington Post*, January 16, 2005.

<sup>128</sup> Rafsanjani cited by Islamic Republic of Iran News Network, January 31, 2005. Al-Sistani said he did not vote in the elections because he is Iranian by birth and not legally entitled to vote in Iraq, Iraq for All News Network ([www.iraq4allnews.dk/](http://www.iraq4allnews.dk/)), January 31, 2005.

<sup>129</sup> Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati, Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran, February 4, 2005.

<sup>130</sup> IRNA, April 7, 2005.

<sup>131</sup> IRNA, May 5, 2005.

<sup>132</sup> *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, October 8, 2003.

<sup>133</sup> *Hambastegi*, July 21, 2003; *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, July 29, 2003; *Iran Daily*, July 31, 2003. See also *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, January 26, 2002.

<sup>134</sup> Maleki and Afrasiabi, p. 1.

<sup>135</sup> Anoushiravan Ehteshami, "Iran-Iraq Relations after Saddam Hussein," *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 4 (Autumn 2003), p. 124.

<sup>136</sup> Grand Ayatollah Yusef Sanei, cited in Kim Barker, "Iran loses faith in clerics," *Chicago Tribune*, May 2, 2004.

<sup>137</sup> Hojatoleslam Mohsen Kadivar interview with Reuters, February 2, 2005.

<sup>138</sup> On ethnic groups' demands, see A.W. Samii, "The Nation and Its Minorities: Ethnicity, Unity, and State Policy in Iran," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*, Vol. XX, Nos. 1 & 2 (2000). Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati warned that the United States is determined to exploit rifts, and in Lebanon and Iraq it has "fanned the flames" of ethnic and religious differences; Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran, March 18, 2005. "The same plots are



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hatched against Iran," he said. "Some of the prospective candidates are raising such problems in order to win votes." As secretary of the Guardians Council, Jannati plays a major role in vetting prospective candidates for elected office.