

Planning Without History or Cultural Perspective

A Monograph

by

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Abstract

Planning Without History or Cultural Perspective, by MAJ Alexis Perez-Cruz, 53 pages.

In October 2001, less than a month after 9/11, the US Defense and State Department started to study Iraq as a likely adversary in the Global War on Terror. For a year, the State Department organized over 200 expatriate Iraqi professionals into seventeen working groups to look at life in Iraq after Saddam Hussein. These Iraqi participants understood the realities and the cultural dynamics involved with such an endeavor; unfortunately, their recommendations and cautions went unheeded. In the ensuing conflict and reconstruction efforts, it became clear that State and Defense Department leaders and planners made three key mistakes which directly affected the outcomes of Iraqi reconstruction. First, the compartmentalized pre-war planning efforts did not enable unity of effort. Second, the military planners ignored cultural aspects of planning provided by the State Department, which then allowed incorrect planning assumptions to promulgate. Finally, the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance lacked State Department expertise due to parochialism.

Ultimately the lack of understanding about Iraq's cultural diversity and social construction caused US operational planners to apply an improper developmental training model to stand up and employ indigenous security structures. Additionally, operational decisions heightened the security dilemma between ethnic and religious groups. In Iraq, newly independent groups assessing neighboring groups as a threat after the collapse of central government characterize this "security dilemma." What one group does to enhance its security causes reactions that are perceived as offensive and thus threatening. The security dilemma between ethnic and religious groups inside the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) impeded the development of a cohesive state and ultimately severely affected their ability to operate effectively against the Islamic State in Iraq, and the Levant (ISIL).

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Acronyms

CENTCOM	Central Command
DOD	Department of Defense
DOD	Department of State
ISF	Iraqi Security Forces
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq, and the Levant
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq, and Syria
IS	Islamic State
JIACG	Joint Interagency Coordination Group
OIF	Operation Iraqi Freedom
OND	Operation New Dawn
OSD	Office of Secretary of Defense

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Introduction

“Cultural knowledge and linguistic ability are some of the best weapons in the struggle against terrorism. Mastering these weapons can mean the difference between victory and defeat on the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan.” — Representative Gabrielle Giffords, Commencement Address at the Defense Language Institute, August 2009

Iraq has struggled to exist under a single, united national banner since the post World War I partition of the Ottoman Empire by the European Allies. The Ottoman partition re-drew existing boundaries within the empire based on European strategic and economic interests under the Sykes-Picot Agreement. By establishing international borders around the Ottoman Provinces of Mosul, Baghdad, and Basra, the regional area historically known as Mesopotamia became the British Mandate for Mesopotamia (Iraq).¹ From 1920 to 2003, though keeping Iraq together as a state, its national leaders failed to unify Kurds, Shia, and Sunni into a cohesive nation. In the pivotal war against Saddam Hussein’s regime in 2003 the US and Coalition partners believed they understood how to bring about stability and unity to Iraq.² The Coalition’s plan to train, man, and equip a modern National Iraqi security force culminated in a trained and independent force that was prepared to maintain Iraqi sovereignty and stability when the last foreign forces left Iraq in 2011. The Coalition success proved to be illusory and fleeting.

The Iraqi Security Forces’ (ISF) stunning collapse against the Islamic State of Iraq, and the Levant (ISIL) in 2014 put into question US and coalition forces training and investment in that security apparatus.³ Since completing Operations Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and New Dawn

¹ Dr. Ferruh Demirmen, “Oil in Iraq: The Byzantine Beginnings,” *Globalpolicy.org*, last modified 2003, accessed January 25, 2015, <https://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/185/40548.html>.

² Gema Martín Muñoz, *Iraq* (Barcelona: Tusquets Editores, 2003), 9.

³ In Arabic, ISIL is known as Al-Dawla Al-Islamiya fi al-Iraq wa al-Sham, or the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham. The term “al-Sham” (Levant) refers to a region stretching from southern Turkey through Syria to Egypt (also including Lebanon, Israel, the Palestinian territories and Jordan). The group’s stated goal is to restore an Islamic state, or caliphate, in this entire area.

(OND), Iraq experienced an increase in sectarian violence that continued to fracture the weakened state and rendered its security forces incapable of securing its infrastructure or state.⁴ After a relatively brief offensive by opposing forces Iraq lost control of cities in the Western and Northern portion of Iraq to ISIL.⁵ The Islamic State of Iraq, and the Levant now claims that it is the sixth Caliphate and subsequently began calling itself the “Islamic State (IS).”⁶ The Islamic State of Iraq, and the Levant disintegrated the Iraqi Security Forces and “erased” the Sykes-Picot Agreement border between Syria and Iraq by bulldozing the border area bringing into question the viability of Iraq as a nation.⁷

The challenges that the ISF faced in 2014, such as the growth of ISIL, are directly attributable to the strained relationships between intrastate ethnic and religious groups and its resulting corrosive effect on the security force effectiveness. The purpose of this monograph is to identify whether the setbacks of the ISF are attributable to the errors made by planners during the transitional stages of OIF and OND. This monograph postulates that failure of ISF is directly attributable to US and Coalition inability to take into account cultural differences between the coalitions and ISF when training and equipping these forces. The lack of cultural competency was a proximate cause of the inability to adequately train the ISF from 2003-2011. The first factor that led to incorrectly assessing the requirements for a competent ISF occurred when Coalition

⁴ Dan Morse, “Iraq Violence Up Sharply since U.S. Exit,” *Washington Post*, last modified 2015, accessed October 8, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/iraq-violence-up-sharply-since-us-exit/2012/01/17/gIQAUteX6P_story.html.

⁵ Whitehouse.gov, “5 Things to Know: The President Lays Out the U.S. Plan to Degrade and Destroy ISIL,” last modified 2015, accessed July 17, 2014, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2014/09/17/5-things-know-president-lays-out-us-plan-degrade-and-destroy-isil>.

⁶ Jessica D. Lewis, *Middle East Security Report 21 The Islamic State: A Counter-Strategy For Counter-State* (Washington, DC: the Institute for the Study of War, 2014), accessed July 2014, <http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Lewis-Center%20of%20gravity.pdf>. 9

⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

planners used a flawed model in developing the force structure for this new Iraqi Army. With little input from Iraq's leaders, the coalition modeled the structure of the ISF after US and coalition force structure models. The flawed developmental model used false assumption for planning because the planners did not value cultural differences and failed to see historic fault lines. The lack of understanding during the initial phases of OIF did not take Iraqi history and culture into consideration. Therefore, the coalition leaders failed to identify the rise in intrastate ethnic and religious security dilemma. Finally, the security dilemma that existed and continued to permeate within the greater Iraqi population manifested itself within the ISF and led to an ineffective force.

The causal effect of changing a pre-existing structure and imposing an unfamiliar one is best analyzed through the lens of Dr. Barry R. Posen's "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict."⁸ Dr. Barry Posen, a Professor of Political Science at MIT sought to explain the variance across regions in the risks and intensities of inter-group conflict. His theory explains that newly independent groups must first determine whether their neighboring groups are a threat.⁹ Thus, "group solidarity" of the ethnic, religious, or cultural groups that emerge from collapsed empires gives each of them an inherent, though possibly latent, offensive military power, driving groups to fear each other.¹⁰ The security dilemma is seen in Iraq through the Kurd, Shia, and Sunni relationship. Furthermore, a history of armed clashes or bitter rivalries between groups furthers the tendency of groups to perceive each other as offensive threats. The exploration of Iraq's history will determine if this tendency existed within this context.

⁸ Barry R. Posen, "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict," *Survival* 35, no. 1 (1993): 27-47.

⁹ Posen, "Security Dilemma," 24.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

The criteria to test this hypothesis in the case of Iraq should include the variables articulated by Dr. Posen that underlie the risks and intensities of inter-group conflict. Posen explains that the risk of intergroup violence depends upon the following: (1) perceived group solidarity, (2) history of rivalries and clashes, (3) presence of "isolated ethnic islands," (4) presence of small bands of fanatics, (5) interventions by allies, and (6) large number of conflicts and crises in the international environment.¹¹ Using these criteria will help explain why, after thirteen years of manning, equipping, and training the ISF the resulting, fielded force was not cohesive enough to maintain security in Iraq.

Methodology

This monograph will address the impact of cultural competence on the conduct of military planning, specifically with respect to the development of foreign security forces. This study consists of five sections. The first section evaluates security assistance planning during the initial months of OIF and subsequent nation building efforts in Iraq. Additionally, the section addresses how planning considerations shaped policy and strategic options for military and civilian leaders. This will expose the problems of Interagency and Joint planning efforts before the invasion to include incorporation of advice from various experts from both inside and outside the various branches of government. Primary source document exploration will show when the nation building and security forces assistance effort began, planners ignored cultural analysis capabilities resident within military and civilian organizations.

The second section examines the framework US planners established to reconstitute the ISF. This section aims at showing how decision-making without cultural competencies led the US to engineer the ISF in its own image, commonly referred to as "mirror-imaging." To mitigate the effects of structural deficiencies the US used a large cadre to train, advise, and assist the ISF,

¹¹ Posen, "Security Dilemma," 29.

which superficially improved short term Iraqi unit performance at the expense of enduring effectiveness.

The third section examines the complexity of Iraqi society. The historical perspective from the Ottoman Empire to the Sykes-Picot Agreement helps the development of a theoretical supposition that structural construct, religious identities, and ethnic identities change perception of priorities for individuals in the Iraq society. Furthermore, a comparison between Iraqi Shia, Sunni, and Kurdish people and their growth as separate groups within Iraq explains the reasons why a security dilemma endures today.¹² The bias that exists within the Iraqi society when Shia, Sunni, and Kurdish Iraqis interact cultivates mistrust. Viewing the societal mistrust through the lens of Dr. Barry Posen's theory, "Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict," reveals this high level of mistrust.¹³

The fourth section synthesizes how the study of social construction of ethnic and religious groups in Iraq and its impact on the Iraqi Security Forces to operate effectively helps the operational planner see patterns within the stated norms, values, and behaviors of groups. Comparing the effects of ethnic and religious groups in a given environment can better inform operational planners. Cultural understanding will increase cultural competence, which allows planners greater appreciation for patterns of behavior before recommending decisions. Behavior assessments based on ethnic and religious preferences may lead to the identification of continuities or change, which may manifest itself as risks and opportunities for commanders.

Finally, the fifth section addresses the potential techniques that may increase cultural competence when planning future operations in ethnic and religiously complex environments. This will include suggested practices for American operational planners.

¹² Mahir A. Aziz, *The Kurds of Iraq*, 1st ed. (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 8.

¹³ Posen, "Security Dilemma," 28.

Coalition Strategic Approach

In October 2001, less than a month after 9/11 the US Defense and State Departments started to study Iraq as a likely adversary in the Global War on Terror. For a year, the State Department organized over 200 Iraqi expatriates including doctors, lawyers, and businesspeople into seventeen working groups to look at life after Saddam Hussein.¹⁴ These Iraqi participants understood the realities and the cultural dynamics involved with such an endeavor, but unfortunately, their recommendations and warnings went unheeded due to lack of collaborative planning. In the ensuing conflict and reconstruction efforts, it became clear that State and Defense Departments leaders and planners made three key mistakes, which directly affected the outcomes of Iraqi reconstruction. First, the compartmentalized pre-war planning efforts did not enable unity of effort. Second, the military planners ignored cultural aspects of planning provided by the State Department, which then allowed incorrect planning assumptions to promulgate. Finally, the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA), created by the Department of Defense to handle the post-war effort, lacked State Department expertise due to parochialism.¹⁵ In the case of pre-war planning, parochialism developed between organizational priorities at Department of State (DOS) and Department of Defense (DOD) in which DOD wanted to look at how to change Iraq and DOS looked at how the US would affect the pre-existing dynamics in Iraq.

The State Departments approach to planning used all available cultural tools to conduct an analysis of potential reconstruction plans, but the compartmentalized pre-war planning efforts between DOD and DOS did not enable unity of effort. The State Department effort was led by Thomas Warrick, former international lawyer and Senior Adviser, to the Assistant Secretary of State

¹⁴ Thomas Warrick, "Future of Iraq Working Group Confidential Cable," *The Security Archives*, last modified 2015, accessed December 4, 2014, <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB163/iraq-state-01.pdf>.

¹⁵ Robert K. Mendenhall, "Pre-War Planning for a Post-War Iraq" (Master Thesis, The U.S. Army War College, 2005), 6.

for Near Eastern Affairs.¹⁶ Mr. Warrick's assembled a planning team to include Ryan C. Crocker, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for near Eastern Affairs participated and future ambassador to Iraq, recruited Iraqi Opposition Groups to participate in the process.¹⁷ The State Department relied heavily on cultural competence and the human dynamic to inform their understanding of the problem that laid ahead.

The same could not be said for the post-war planning efforts in the Department of Defense. This is perhaps unexpected as US Joint doctrine claims cultural competence plays a key role in helping the commander understanding future operational environment.¹⁸ Population demographics and dynamics help determine critical relationships between various actors and aspects of the operational environment. DOD did not collaborate in the DOS effort.¹⁹ The DOD and DOS lacked inter-agency cooperation because each saw themselves as competitors in providing recommendations and ultimately lead to a divorced planning process.²⁰ According to some leaders within the administration, Secretary Rumsfeld did not trust Mr. Warrick and his Future of Iraq experts because he did not think they were truly committed to support change in Iraq.²¹ Marc Grossman, the Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs, testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that the working groups were “not to have an academic

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ *Joint Publication 3-0*, September 10, 2001, page IV-1

¹⁹ Farrah Hassen, “New State Department Releases on the ‘Future of Iraq’ Project,” *Www2.Gwu.Edu*, last modified 2015, accessed February 25, 2015, <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB198/>.

²⁰ Julian Borger and Ciar Byrne, “Rebel Groups Reject CIA Overtures Down on the Farm,” *The Guardian*, July 10, 2002, accessed March 16, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/jul/10/iraq.usa>.

²¹ Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004), 284.

discussion but to consider thoughts and plans for what can be done immediately.”²²

Understanding the complex dynamics of a poly-ethnic Middle Eastern country needed a disciplined and detailed discussion to inform planning.

Among Mr. Warrick’s planning teams, three working groups stood out as having clear security implications. These were the Transparency and Anti-Corruption Measures, the Democratic Principles, and Defense Policy and Institutions working groups. A key finding for all these groups was that it was critical to retain the ISF during the de-Ba’athification process (removing Saddam Hussien’s Arab-nationalist Ba’ath Party’s influence in the new Iraqi political system) as a means to prevent lawlessness in the war’s aftermath. Recommendations that came out of the Future of Iraq project included the need for “rapid police reform and training for new police force to deal with both the normal routine preservation of law and order and...the exceptional circumstances of popular acts of vengeance as well as to combat the further development of criminal syndicates.”²³ The information garnered from the Future of Iraq project provided planners and leaders relevant information about the current security trends and recommended possible actions to mitigate the expected problems that were likely to surface.²⁴

The Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance also lacked access to State Department expertise due to the intense parochialism evident between State and Defense. In January 2003, National Security Presidential Directive number 24 established the Office of

²² Erick Schmitt and Joel Brinkle, “The Struggle for Iraq: Planning; State Dept. Study Foresaw Trouble Now Plaguing Iraq,” *New York Times*, October 19, 2003, accessed February 11, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/10/19/world/struggle-for-iraq-planning-state-dept-study-foresaw-trouble-now-plaguing-iraq.html?pagewanted=1>.

²³ Thomas S. Warrick, “Transparency and Anti-Corruption Measures,” *The National Security Archives*, last modified 2002, accessed December 10, 2014, <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB198/FOI%20Transparency.pdf>, Tab 7.

²⁴ CENTCOM OPT, “Top Secret/ Polo Step Compartmented Concept,” *The National Security Archives*, last modified 2015, accessed February 10, 2015, <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB214/Tab%20L.pdf>.

Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA) under retired Army Lieutenant General Jay Garner's leadership and subordinate to the Department of Defense.²⁵ The organizational divide between DOD and DOS also caused Mr. Warrick to remain an onlooker in the planning process. By April 9, 2003, it had become evident to the administration that the ORHA did not have the appropriate diplomatic and political skills to conduct the reconstruction efforts so the administration turned to retired ambassador Lewis Paul Bremer III to lead the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA).²⁶ Bremer's twenty-five years in the State Department and service for Presidents Ford, Reagan, George H.W. Bush, and George W. Bush made him the leader that would bridge the gap between DOD and DOS.²⁷

On May 23, 2003, Paul Bremer issued CPA Order 3, which dissolved the 400,000 member Iraqi military.²⁸ The Iraq Project recommendations cautioned against taking such a measure. Unfortunately, Bremer did not have the ability to explore any of the findings from the Iraq Project because no one from that project had a significant role in the CPA. The Defense Policy and Institutions group, one of seventeen "Futures of Iraq Project" working groups which met from 2002 to 2004, authored "A New Iraq: Democracy and the Role of the Army" on May

²⁵ Department of Defense, *Humanitarian Assistance and Network Governance: The ORHA Case* (Washington, DC: HQ, US Army Corps of Engineers, 2015), 74.

²⁶ Jeremy M. Sharp and Christopher M. Blanchard, Congressional Research Service Report, *Post-War Iraq: A Table and Chronology of Foreign Contributions* (Washington, DC: The Library of Congress, 2006), accessed October 14, 2014, <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/44124.pdf>

²⁷ James Dao, "At the Helm in Shattered Iraq: Lewis Paul Bremer III," *New York Times*, May 8, 2003, accessed February 10, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/05/08/international/worldspecial/08BREM.html>.

²⁸ L. Paul Bremer, "Coalition Provisional Authority Order Number 2 Dissolution of Entities," *The National Security Archives*, August 23, 2003, accessed December 10, 2014, <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB418/docs/9b%20-%20Coalition%20Provisional%20Authority%20Order%20No%20-%2008-23-03.pdf>

24, 2002.²⁹ The working group which included Iraqi expatriates and State Department officers, recommended having the Iraqi army size gradually transform rather than dissolving it. Furthermore, the report also cautioned against a total abolition of the current administration since, in addition to its role of social control, that structure provided a framework for social order.³⁰ The group foretold that former members of the Iraqi army “may...present a destabilizing element, especially if they are left without work or ability to get work.”³¹ This arguably most notable divergence between the DOS study group findings and DOD execution indicated a lack of inter-agency collaboration, reveals a lack of common operational and strategic problem framing and in doing so began a chain of events that significantly increased risks of intra-state ethnic violence.

In addition to ignoring the structural requirements recommended by the State Department, military planners also ignored key cultural aspects. This became quite evident as Central Command (CENTCOM) planners began to formulate their plans in support of the strategic objective to topple the Iraqi regime. General Franks, the (CENTCOM) Commander, understood the need for a plan with extensive reconstruction effort, but also believed the State Department needed to handle this effort under civilian leadership. This stance exacerbated the problems caused by compartmentalized planning. In 2002, the US Department of Defense and State Department began the initial Campaign planning in accordance with JP 5-00.1, *Joint*

²⁹ The National Security Archives, “A New Iraq: Democracy and The Role of the Army,” last modified 2002, accessed December 7, 2014, <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB198/FOI%20Defense%20Policy%20and%20Institutions.pdf>.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Thomas S. Warrick, “The Democratic Principle and Procedure,” *The National Security Archives*, last modified 2014, accessed November 20, 2014, <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB198/FOI%20Democratic%20Principles.pdf>, 4.3.1

Doctrine for Campaign Planning.³² According to the personal account of planning by General Tommy Franks, the CENTCOM operations plan team (OPT) developed OPLAN 1003V focused primarily on combat operations.³³ Post-OIF After Action Reviews (AAR) explained “by a CENTCOM OIF planner and other senior-level DOD officials that the OIF war plan did not develop a branch plan for an insurgency or otherwise document risk mitigation strategies.”³⁴ Without a reconstruction plan and or recommendations given in the Future of Iraq Project to inform a possible decision, planners failed to plan beyond first contact.

Lack of unity of effort set the stage for misunderstanding in the reconstruction effort and rebuilding the security forces. Through the lens of JP 5-0, two doctrinal mistakes took place at CENTCOM. First, without the expertise of the State Department CENTCOM planners did not frame the nature of the physical environment and nature of society.³⁵ The lack of trust inhibited strategic planners from understanding cultural aspects of planning. Without the expertise from the Near Eastern Affairs department and the use of the Future of Iraq Project, OSD and CENTCOM framed the problem with lines on a map and not in the complex environment that existed.

The Future of Iraq Project helped DOS understand potential future issues while most military planners assumed the idea best summed up by Vice President Cheney on Meet the Press

³²Gpo.gov, “Operation Iraqi Freedom: DOD Should Apply Lessons Learned Concerning the Need for Security over Conventional Munitions Storage Sites to Future Operations Planning,” last modified 2004, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/GAOREPORTS-GAO-07-444/html/GAOREPORTS-GAO-07-444.htm>.

³³Tommy Franks, *American Soldier* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, Inc., 2004), 385.

³⁴Gpo.gov, “Operation Iraqi Freedom: DOD Should Apply Lessons Learned Concerning the Need for Security over Conventional Munitions Storage Sites to Future Operations Planning,” last modified 2004, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/GAOREPORTS-GAO-07-444/html/GAOREPORTS-GAO-07-444.htm>.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

when he declared, “I really do believe we will be greeted as liberators.”³⁶ The administration’s strategic communication set the stage for international disappointment due to oversimplifying the poly-ethnic cultural interest of the people of Iraq and other actors in the Middle East.

Reconstruction Planning

By May 2003, as per Presidential direction relating to Iraq relief and reconstruction, multiple agencies [including representatives from DOD, DOS, Program Management Office (PMO), US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), US Agency for International Development (USAID)] deployed with the CPA and began to serve as implementing partners for reconstruction. Military leaders and planners assumed that Iraq would normalize quickly towards a democratic republic and that the security forces would secure its borders under the banner of Iraqi union.³⁷ Instead, what occurred was an internal security dilemma between ethnic and religious cultural factions that could not be overcome within the ISF simply by introducing a democratic process and election procedures. The desired end state for U.S. operations in Iraq, first established by the CPA in 2003 was to establish “a peaceful, united, stable, secure Iraq, well integrated into the international community, and a full partner in the global war on terrorism.”³⁸ Moving Iraq toward a western democratization model framed the context of the mission in Iraq regardless of circumstances on the ground.

³⁶ James Fallows, “Blind Into Baghdad,” *The Atlantic* (January/February 2004): 9, Accessed January 10, 2015, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2004/01/blind-into-baghdad/302860/>

³⁷ Joyce Battle and Thomas Blanton, “Top Secret Polo Step: Iraq War Plan Assumed Only 5,000 U.S. Troops Still There By December 2006,” *Www2.Gwu.Edu*, last modified 2015, accessed February 9, 2015, <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB214/>.

³⁸ L. Paul Bremer, “Coalition Provisional Authority Order Number 3,” *Iraqi Coalition*, August 23, 2003, accessed November 10, 2014, http://www.iraqcoalition.org/regulations/20030823_CPAORD_2_Dissolution_of_Entities_with_Annex_A.pdf accessed.

The US state building operations in the post Saddam Iraq became an issue due to miscalculations, false assumptions, and cultural misunderstandings. For the military, the issue was best described through Dr. Barry R. Posen's "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict."³⁹ Accordingly, political science describes security dilemma as the perspective of an actor or meta-actor that facing an inherently insecure environment seeks to increase its own security, but in doing so, decreases the perceived security of other actors in the system.⁴⁰ Regrettably for the US this also describes the vicious cycle that occurred during OIF and OND in Iraq. Additionally, this cycle did not just affect the populace, but it also affected the way in which the individuals within the Iraqi Security Forces related to each other.

In 2003, Saddam's regime maintained strong and coercive leadership between all actors in Iraq and the security dilemma never became an issue.⁴¹ During the post-conflict years rival factions, tribes, religious sects, and ethnic groups began to seek their own security through sectarian divide, balancing power through rival militias, and external aid from state and non-state actors, which caused former adversaries to do the same.⁴² The larger issue with a security dilemma in this intra-state case is that if a group sees their own identity threatened they will not work together for a common good. This becomes particularly important in a state where multiple identity groups form a part of the security institutions required to protect the national union. This

³⁹ Robert Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* 30, no. 2 (January 1978): 167-214.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Senate Select Intelligence Committee, *Saddam's Human Rights Record* (Washington, DC: Senate, 2003), 402.

⁴² Barbara F. Walter, *Committing to Peace: The Successful Settlement of Civil Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

was precisely the case in Iraq. If individuals within the military did not feel like their group was included in the government process, then they would not commit to a lasting peace.⁴³

From 2003 to present day Iraq, institutional memories of involving atrocities against opposing groups in Iraq exacerbated fear and distrust.⁴⁴ The de-Ba'athification of the ISF increased this security dilemma by disenfranchising the Sunni minority rulers and pointing out the heated sentiments associated with the ruling class of the Iraqi society before US intervention. The security dilemma immediately became an issue as those disenfranchised began to secure themselves and subsequently their historical adversaries felt threatened by the action. The US reaction to sectarian and factional violence was to reconstitute the army. The purpose of reconstituting the Army was to monopolize violence through the legitimate means in the ISF. The challenge for the US became understanding cultural preferences among actors. The issue of understanding preference in Iraq is that cultural competence was very low among military leaders, which aggravated the situation.⁴⁵

⁴³ Paul Collier, Anke Hoeffler, and Dominic Rohner, "Beyond Greed and Grievance: Feasibility and Civil War," *Oxford Economic Papers*, Vol. 61, 2009, pp. 1–27.

⁴⁴ Paul K. Davis, *Dilemmas of Intervention: Social Science for Stabilization and Reconstruction* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2009), 42.

⁴⁵ Rochelle Davis, "Culture as a Weapon" in the Middle East Research and Information Project, *Merip.Org*, last modified 2015, accessed March 16, 2015, <http://www.merip.org/mer/mer255/culture-weapon>.

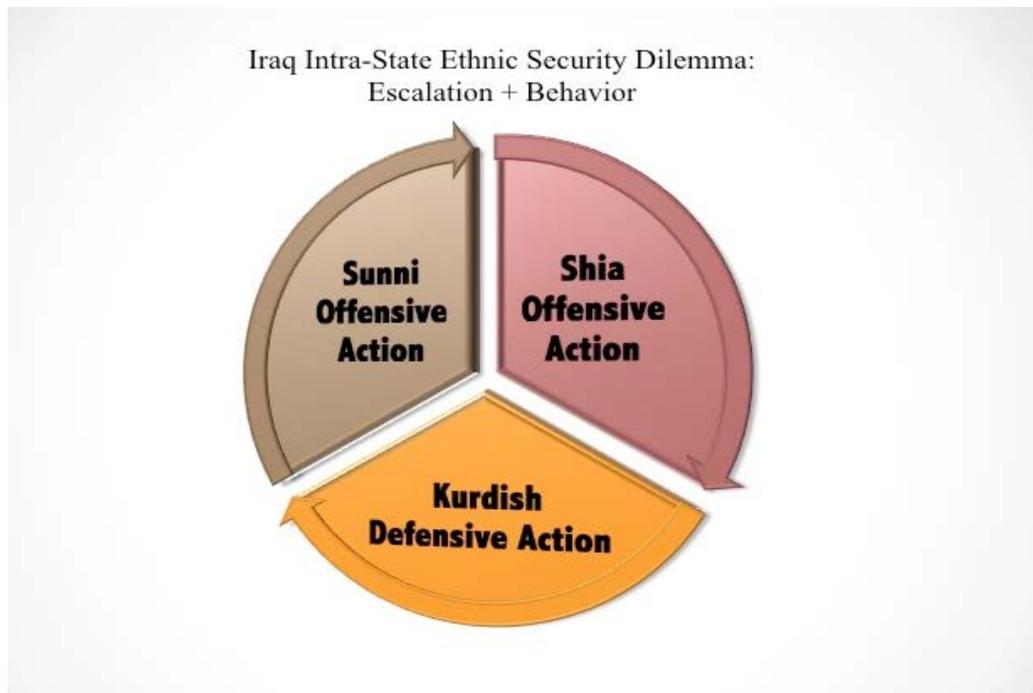


Figure 1. Iraq Intra-State Ethnic Security Dilemma

Source: Created by the Author

The US involvement changed the Iraqi cultural landscape so quickly that some groups, particularly the Sunni, longed for the previous regimes' stable, but coercive system and thereby intensified the security dilemma. The anticipated popular support that was assumed in most CENTCOM pre-war planning documents never manifested itself. In May 2004 a poll by the Independent Institute for Administration and Civil Society Studies showed that 92% of Iraqis viewed foreign troops as occupying forces and only 2% as liberators.⁴⁶ Based on perceived relations to Saddam's regime, the Shia and Kurdish population should have seen the US as liberators, but they did not. In the opinions of many Iraqis not only did the US not liberate Iraq, but also became its occupier when it fired every Iraqi soldier and every member of the Ba'ath

⁴⁶ Guilherme Henrique Simionato and Natália Regina Colvero Maraschin, *The Situation in Iraq* (New York: United Nations, 2014): 305, accessed November 10, 2014, <http://www.ufrgs.br/ufrgsmun/2014/files/UNSC2.pdf>.

party. With this measure, the US government sanctioned the sectarianism within the society that it was trying to bring together (see Figure1).

Through lens of Dr. Barry R. Posen's "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict," the US magnified two elements. First, by firing all Ba'ath party members and the Army, approximately 400,000 individuals became victims of relative shift of power within the country.⁴⁷ According to Posen, if a central authority has recently collapsed, groups must calculate their power relative to the other groups to maintain a position of advantage. This shift caused individuals from all major cultural groups to begin aligning themselves along the sectarian and ethnic divides. Saddam's actions in 1991 against the Shia Intifada and the multiple chemical attacks against the Kurdish populations allowed these groups to maintain solidarity and have recent memories of historic rivalries and clashes.⁴⁸

Unfortunately for the US and Coalition forces, the post-colonial division of Iraq previously established what Dr. Posen called "isolated ethnic islands" in Kurdistan and in the southern historically Shia cities. As 400,000 unemployed former Ba'ath party members began to take arms against the invaders so did their rivals. (Figure 1, Sunni Offensive Action) In the north the Peshmerga began to secure, every road leading into Kurdistan and in the South Shia Militias began to protect the holy cities and the surrounding communities. (Figure 1, Kurdish and Shia Actions) As one ethno-religious group began to arm either for defense, such as the Peshmirga, or for offensive, such as Mehdi Army, neither of these organizations were very distinguishable in intent and both caused the former Ba'ath party member to believe they had to continue arming themselves. Eventually sectarian violence permeated throughout Iraq.

⁴⁷ L. Paul Bremer, "Coalition Provisional Authority Order Number 2 Dissolution of Entities," *The National Security Archives*, August 23, 2003, accessed December 10, 2014, <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB418/docs/9b%20-%20Coalition%20Provisional%20Authority%20Order%20No%202%20-%208-23-03.pdf>.

⁴⁸ Senate Select Intelligence Committee, *Saddam's Human Rights Record*, 393-403.

Blank Slate at Ministry of Defense (MOD)

Dr. Robert N. St. Clair, a leading expert of cultural communications explains that “it is only when one compares the social beliefs and practices of one group with another that it becomes evident that there are differences and that these differences are of a cultural nature.”⁴⁹ Strategists, military planners, and US policymakers tend to look at problems through their own cultural lens without accounting for foreign multi-cultural aspects.⁵⁰ Reducing problems to a western reflective image or “mirror-imagery,” opponent’s look like ourselves, does not account for cultural facets that affect interactions. Building cultural preference within a group or institution comes from living with other people and different ways of life.⁵¹ Cultural elements that create preferences include shared values, rituals, and heroes (history), and symbols (communication).⁵² Strategic and operational problem solving requires cultural competence to achieve sustainable outcomes. Becoming culturally competent is a dynamic process that requires cultural knowledge and skill development or access to experts who can contribute to the planning process.

From 2001-2003 the strategic and operational planners at CENTCOM and on the Joint Staff had to make bold assumptions as to the reaction of the people in Iraq during an impending invasion into Iraq. Investigation of declassified documents show that planning assumptions

⁴⁹ Robert N. St. Clair, “Institute for Intercultural Communication: The Social Construction of Culture,” *Commcourses.Com*, last modified 2014, accessed December 2, 2014, http://commcourses.com/iic/?page_id=344.

⁵⁰ Colonel Jiyul Kim, “Cultural Dimensions of Strategy and Policy,” *Air and Space Power Journal-Africa and Francophonie* (3rd Quarter, 2010): 34-45, accessed January 16, 2015, http://www.au.af.mil/au/afri/aspj/apjinternational/aspj_f/digital/pdf/articles/2010_3/kim_e.pdf.

⁵¹ Aaron Wildavsky, “Choosing Preferences by Constructing Institutions: A Cultural Theory of Preference Formation,” *The American Political Science Review*, 81, no. 1 (1987): 3.

⁵² Joyce Battle and Thomas Blanton, “Top Secret Polo Step: Iraq War Plan Assumed Only 5,000 U.S. Troops Still There By December 2006,” *Www2.Gwu.Edu*, last modified 2015, accessed February 9, 2015, <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB214/>.

included complete cooperation from opposition groups and a credible broad based government established by D-Day. Some in the mainstream media have accused planners of oversimplifying the assumption, but this narrative does not address the reason why planners made these simplified assumptions (see Figure 2).⁵³ The issue is the lens used by operational planners to analyze the problems that the command would face throughout the phases of the operation. Additionally, as the coalition transitioned from a purely combat role to a nation-building role, planners only looked through a purely western, classical realist lens based on the United States' interest. After a close analysis of the model force structure and training used to reconstitute the Iraqi Army, it is evident that the coalition partners and US imposed a familiar model and did not account for Iraqi historical or societal traditions.⁵⁴

⁵³ Michael R. Gordon, "A Prewar Slide Show Cast Iraq in Rosy Hues," *New York Times*, 2015, accessed February 9, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/15/washington/15military.html?hp&ex=1171602000&en=ad512b1b8c4bfb32&ei=5094&partner=homepage>.

⁵⁴ Anthony H. Cordesman, Sam Khazai, and Daniel Dewit, *Shaping Iraq's Security Forces* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic International Studies, 2014), 11.

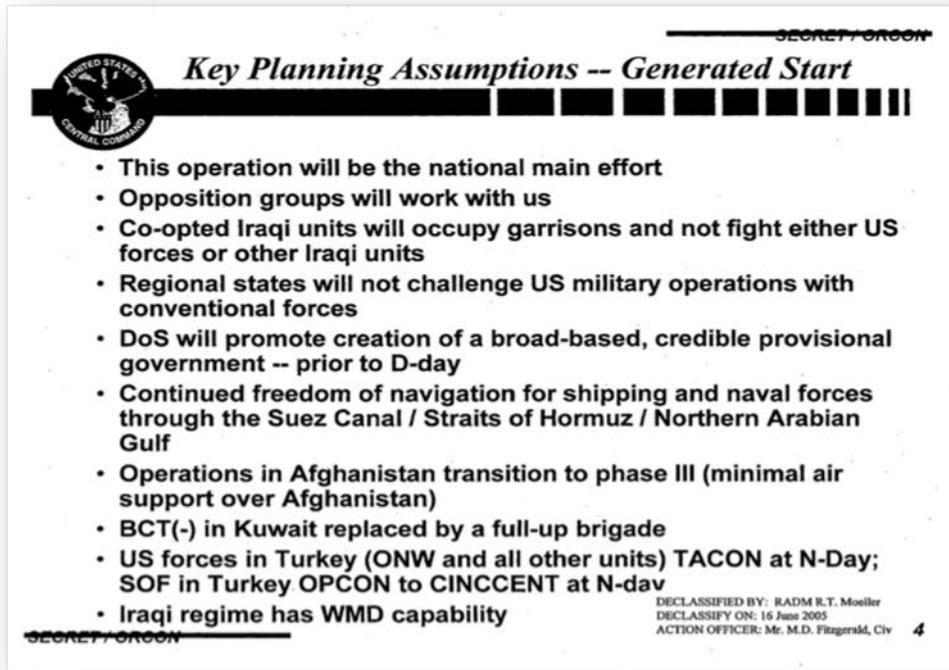


Figure 2. Key Planning Assumptions for Generated Start

Source: accessed <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB214/Tab%20I%20-%20page%204.pdf>

For the western world, building military institutions in partner nations brings about change in societies by promoting security, which enables civil control and long term development.⁵⁵ Since Sykes-Picot, Iraq was influenced by four schools of external military assistance. This assistance is (generally divided into four phases), which gave Iraq a military

⁵⁵ Overseas Development Institute London, *Reconnecting Joined-Up Approaches: Nation-Building Through State-Building*, Strategic Policy Impact and Research Unit (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2009), accessed March 16, 2015, <http://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/4255.pdf>.

tradition and organizational culture;⁵⁶ these phases are: (1) the post Mandate period, (2) the post Iraqi revolutionary period, (3) the post Gulf War period of isolation and (4) the post Iraq Freedom period. For nearly a century the post Ottoman Empire Iraqi state had developed military tradition, which included unit schools, doctrine, and a command structure.

The post-Mandate period between the 1920 and 1950s, Great Britain created, staffed, equipped, and trained the first military force.⁵⁷ Great Britain formed Levies, or small tactical units, under one command consisting of two branches: a Striking Force in each administrative area to serve as an armed reserve and a District Police subordinate to each political officer. The total forces consisted of 5,467 mounted and dismounted personnel.⁵⁸ The Levies chiefly functioned as an internal security apparatus where they served “the executive needs of the Civil Administration.”⁵⁹

The security apparatus formulated by the British became a means to control the civil administrators. Not surprisingly, the majority of the Iraqi Army’s officer corps (nearly all ex-Ottoman trained) and their Iraqi counterparts in the civil administration resented the ‘al-Wad al-Shadh,’ or “the perplexing predicament which gave an outward appearance of self-rule whilst preserving the essence over state and army alike.”⁶⁰ The British established a military with

⁵⁶ Oleg Svet, “Baghdad’s Security Cooperation Dilemma: Military Assistance to Iraq in 2012 and Beyond,” *E-International Relations*, last modified 2014, accessed October 30, 2014, <http://www.e-ir.info/2012/08/30/baghdads-security-cooperation-dilemma-military-assistance-to-iraq-in-2012-and-beyond/>

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Gilbert Brown, *The Iraq Levies, 1915-1932* (London: The Royal United Service Institution, 1932), 2-4.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Paul Hemphill, “The Formation of the Iraqi Army, 1921-33,” in *The Integration of Modern Iraq*. In Abbas Kelidar, ed. 88-109 (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1979), 101.

previously trained Ottoman Officers in order to bring about order and control while creating a new state.

In 1958, the post Iraqi revolutionary period began and transformed the country from a British-installed monarch to a republic. With this transformation came new ideas and a new sponsor. In this period, Pan-Arab nationalism made its debut and the Soviets became the primary equipment supplier and trainer for Iraqi forces. By the 1980s, the Iraqi military had become one of the strongest militaries in the Middle East with the fifth largest combat aircraft fleet. In this period, Iraq had access to military assistance from both the Soviets and the US as each side in the Cold War sought to court new allies. While the Soviets continued to be Iraq's patron, the US also saw value in supporting Iraq in its own struggle with the Iranian revolution and regime. This period marked the Iraq military's high point as it was flush with resources and had great latitude in organizing its own institutions.

The 1990 invasion of Kuwait began the third phase of the modern Iraqi military. Not only did a US led coalition defeat Iraq, but also the years of sanctions and military isolation diminished the Iraqi military. During this time, the Iraqi military did not acquire new technology and did not receive outside military assistance. As a result, the Iraqi military capabilities diminished.

The final phase began with the destruction of Saddam's military in 2003 and subsequent disbanding of all security forces during the initial month of the reconstruction. The CPA started with a blank slate on August 7, 2003 after dissolving the former regime's military apparatus.⁶¹ The US took the lead in developing the ISF by creating a new Iraqi MOD and Armed Forces and

⁶¹ Crisisgroup.org, "Iraq: Building a New Security Structure - International Crisis Group," last modified 2003, accessed October 20, 2014, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/iraq-iran-gulf/iraq/020-iraq-building-a-new-security-structure.aspx>.

repurposing the Ministry of Interior (MOI), which remained largely intact.⁶² The CPA appointed Fred Smith, a US Defense Department senior executive, to lead the Defense Ministry's re-establishment. Under the Office of Security Affairs (OSA) Smith lead a combined staff comprise of British, Australian, Czech, Spanish, and Estonian military and civilian representatives.⁶³ The OSA designed the MOD with minimum Iraqi input using familiar defense system models. From May 2003 until March 2004, the OSA functioned as the MOD and imposed new structures and processes on the MOD with limited input and no historic references.⁶⁴

The OSA wanted to infuse civil control over the Iraqi military via a western democratic institutional structure that proved to be a break from its traditional, historical and cultural context. In addition, without a transitional period between the former regimes' military technocrats and younger bureaucrats the OSA relied on recruiting inexperienced staff to fill the MOD's ranks. With an uncertain security environment and limited Iraqi expertise, the MOD began to operate independently on July 2004.⁶⁵ Sectarian strife manifested itself with two early issues that arose during the formation of the MOD and the new Iraqi Army. First, the vacated Sunni officers and soldiers who could not disprove Ba'athist membership became disenfranchised from new embryonic Iraqi government. These Sunni Officers and soldiers became the initial insurgent cadre in Iraq and those that did not initially join the insurgent cause became the symbolic struggle against the new government.⁶⁶ Second, due to quick formation of MOD by OSA the Kurds did

⁶² Crisisgroup.org, "Iraq: Building A New Security Structure - International Crisis Group," 10.

⁶³ Andrew Rathmell et al., *Developing Iraq's Security Sector the Coalition Provisional Authority's Experience* (Arlington: RAND Corporation, 2015): 37, accessed October 20, 2015, http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2005/RAND_MG365.pdf.

⁶⁴ Rahtmell et al., 29.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Donald P. Wright and Timothy R. Reese, *The United States Army in Operation Iraqi Freedom, May 2003-January 2005* (Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2008), 92.

not trust the process because they were not involved.⁶⁷ After nearly \$26 billion and almost twelve years of training, advising, and assisting the Iraqi security apparatus continues to rebuild the country's twenty-six "intact and loyal" brigades.⁶⁸ The new ISF structure became a tool for sectarianism instead of a tool for unification due to lack of historical and cultural understanding.

Iraqi History and Ottoman State Building

Coalition forces did not consider the cultural differences and history of Iraqi nationalism. Modern Iraqis do not have a core identity; instead, religion, ethnicity, and culture make it a highly diverse society. A thorough historic investigation into the development of modern day Iraq plays into the argument that this society developed a national history based on ethnic and religious difference. These ethnic and religious differences hindered the society's sense of overall nationalism, which in turn hampered the formation of a collective and national will to fight for the overall good of the nation. A study of Iraqi history reveals that social structures, religious identities, and ethnic identities change the perception of priorities for individuals within these groups. From the first Ottoman rulers until Saddam Hussein's regime, the rulers of Mosul, Baghdad, and Basra used ethnicity and religion to separate the rulers from the ruled. Through the lens of Dr. Posen's variables in "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict" the development of the modern Iraqi state may be understood through the following: (1) the history of rivalries and clashes, (2) Ottoman approach that allowed ethnic islands to form, and (3) the perceived group solidarity as represented in the Kurds and Shia. These three variables show historic patterns and natural tendencies that underlie risks and intensities of inter-group conflict if brought out.⁶⁹

⁶⁷Andrew Rathmell et al., *Developing Iraq's Security Sector*, 37.

⁶⁸ Helene Cooper and Micheal R. Gordon, "U.S. is Carrying Out Vast Majority of Strikes on ISIS, Military Officials Say," *New York Times*, September 24, 2014, accessed February 11, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/24/world/middleeast/us-is-carrying-out-vast-majority-of-strikes-on-isis-military-officials-say>

⁶⁹ Posen, *Security Dilemmas*, 29.

Historically, the struggle to carve a nation out of Mosul, Baghdad, and Basra has exacerbated pluralism.⁷⁰

No other event in Islamic history demonstrates the history of rivalries and clashes like the origins of the Shia-Sunni split. The struggle for modern day Iraq between the Shia and Sunnis started in 657 at the Battle of Saffin. *Ali b. Abi Talib*, who became the fourth Caliph in 656 after the assassination of *Uthman*, won many battles as Caliph, but at Saffin he agreed to arbitration. His followers believed that Ali had denied God's will on the battlefield.⁷¹ His followers, the Kharajites, forced Ali into the Battle of Nahrawan in 658, where he defeated them. Three years later while leading service, a Kharajite assassinated Ali in Kufa, Iraq. Ali symbolizes the first split for the leadership in Islam and is the first representation of Shia martyrdom (*shahadat*).⁷² The rivalry between the *Shiat-Ali* (partisans of Ali), today known as Shia continued with the next generation of Muslims Leaders.

Early Muslims fought battles for control of the faith. The followers of the Prophet (Sunnis) believed that Abu Bakr, an early follower of the Prophet Mohammed, could lead the Muslims. While *Shiat-Ali* maintained that the Muslim leader (caliph) should have lineage to the Prophet.⁷³ On October 10, 680 (10th of Muharram or Ashura) at the "Battle of Karbala" Ali's youngest son Hussein ibn Ali made his way from Mecca with his family and surviving Companions of the Prophet to offer their lives in "the path of God."⁷⁴ The Shia (*Shiat-Ali*) lost the struggle for control of Islam at Karbala and became the minority sect in Iraq and around the

⁷⁰ Toby Dodge, *Inventing Iraq* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 56.

⁷¹ David Cook, *Martyrdom in Islam* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 54.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Karen Dabrowska and Geoff Hann, *Iraq* (Chalfont St. Peter: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 14.

⁷⁴ Cook, *Martyrdom in Islam*, 54.

world. Shia identification with the Hussein ibn Ali, the Prophet's grandson and martyr at the battle of Karbala, made Shia a permanent split with Sunni. This event made Karbala, Iraq an important sight for Shia tribes. The Shia and Sunni struggle represents an early bifurcation in Iraq and a significant rivalry.

Basra's Arab Shia communities developed as two major fragmented tribes, but developed under a single religious identity. The Iraqi Arab Shia population settled in the central southern regions of modern day Iraq and along the marsh areas along the modern day Iranian border. Shia populations are historically divided into two major groups, the Muntafiq and the Ma'dan tribes.⁷⁵ Through the lens of "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict" these groups represent a perceived solidarity. Understanding these groups as separated tribes with one religion also shows why during a security dilemma perceived solidarity would lead to further escalation of the security dilemma. Viewing multiple groups as homogeneous gives these groups a greater perceived offensive power in a security dilemma.

For the Arab Shia in Basra tribalism took on a form of political identity based on common claimed descent with the Ma'dan and the Mutifiq. Some general characteristics apply to the cultural narrative of the Shia in Basra.⁷⁶ Within the tribal make up in Basra a loyalty to family, clan, and tribe exist with a desire to preserve autonomy.⁷⁷ Based on geographic separation from Baghdad and harsh living conditions in southern Iraq both tribes had a higher level of autonomy. Access to the geographically separated population caused difficulty for the Ottomans

⁷⁵ Stephen Hemsley Longrigg, *Four Centuries of Modern Iraq* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1925).

⁷⁶ Connable, Ben. "All Our Eggs in a Broken Basket: How the Human Terrain System Is Undermining Sustainable Military Cultural Competence." *Military Review* 89, no. 2 (March-April 2009): 57-64.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

to extend authority over distance.⁷⁸ This separation allowed the Shia to become ethnic islands and continue autonomous rule at the tribal level.

The Muntafiq tribes occupied the Euphrates valley from Chabaish to Kut. The Mutafiq were a nomadic and seminomadic tribe led by the al-Sa'dun family. These tribes lived within the Ottoman Empire in modern day Basra, but remained self-governed through the Mamluk period.⁷⁹ After the Mamluk lost control of modern day Iraq the Ottoman's began imposing duties and rule of law from Baghdad. Ottoman oversight began to erode their tribal power within the Ottoman Empire, but remained a point of contention, as the Muntafiq did not have cultural ties with Baghdad. With diminished tribal influence in Basra, the Muntafiq generally became a sedentary agricultural society based in and around the city of Nasiriya in southern Iraq.⁸⁰ A unique difference between other Shia tribes in Basra is that Muntafiq also began to settle into the central cities, intermarry with Sunni, and become more educated.⁸¹ By the twentieth century many Muntafiq lived in the central cities on the outer perimeter of Basra and had become less traditional Shia.

Ma'dan are another important branch of the Shia population in modern day Iraq. The Ma'dan, also known as the Marsh Arabs, live in southern and east Iraq along the marshlands. The marsh landscape and environment shaped the Ma'dan culture, history, and economy. The Marshland society is best described by The Marsh Arabs Heritage Project director, Dr. Ayyad Ismail Saleh, as "based on attitudinal homogeneity, i.e. a set of firmly rooted customs, traditions,

⁷⁸ Jeffrey Herbst, *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 21.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ P.J. Bearman, *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

⁸¹ Christiane Thompson, "Iranian Tentacles into Iraq" (MMAS, School of Advanced Military Studies, 2009).

values, and beliefs prevails.”⁸² These cover all aspects of life, from eating habits and hospitality, to marriage, kinship and lineage, to mutual dealings, weddings and funerals, conflict settlement and language. The marshland people also represent a regional sub-culture—an important part of the cultural fabric of the Iraqi society with its multiple values, habits and traditions.⁸³ The Ma’dan represent a distinct culture within the fiber of modern day Iraq. Although the Ma’dan are Shia and Arabs, these two characteristics are distinct from each other; their customs and traditions are unique based on traditions centered on their environment in the wetlands.

Although both the Muntafiq and Ma’dan are distinct cultures within the Iraqi society, their strongest link remained the Shia Muslim beliefs. Within the religious social construction, Shia Islam is deeply enshrined with martyrdom.⁸⁴ The entrenched belief started with the death of Ali and then his son and Muhammad’s grandson, Imam Hussein, at Karbala. The Shia Imamate doctrine is central to the distinction between the spiritual and profane realms. Shia profess humankind’s sovereignty comes from God. God’s infallible representative on earth, the Prophet, and the Imams exercised authority on God’s behalf and all authorities that came after the Prophet

⁸² Ayyad Ismail Saleh, “The Marsh Arabs Heritage Project,” *Amarfoundation.org*, last modified 2014, accessed October 13, 2014, <http://www.amarfoundation.org/heritage/>.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Charles Selengut, *Sacred Fury* (Walnut Creek: Altamira Press, 2003), 178.

are not legitimate.⁸⁵ Remaining the minority sect in Islam, the Shia remained a passive group willing to be subservient to their rulers under Quietism.⁸⁶

While the Shia society in the south formed an almost homogeneous society based on religion, the Kurdish unique society developed an isolated culture with a distinctive perspective.⁸⁷ The Kurds, unlike the rest of modern Iraq, redefine nationalism because of “territory, language, culture, history, common myth, economic resources, and population” in that they believe in the protection of Kurdistan as a nation.⁸⁸ Through the lens of Posen’s Security Dilemma, the Kurds were an isolated ethnic island that gave them inherent offensive military power due to historic narrative. Without historical and cultural contextual understanding, Coalition planners were forced to make bold assumptions to the ability to unite opposition groups during Phase IV operations in Iraq.

The Kurds are the decedents of the “Karduchi,” who, in their narrative, were fierce mountain warriors. The Kurdish territory historically covered the area within modern day Turkey, Syria, Iran, and Armenia. The Kurds are also unique because they speak a distinct Kurdish language, with two main dialects, Kumanji and Sorani (Kurdi).⁸⁹ Kurdish language originated in

⁸⁵ Moojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shi’i Islam: The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shi’ism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 191-2.

⁸⁶ Quietism occurred after the Twelfth Imam went into occultation, and when his exertion of authority ended, the Shiite community was left without a leader. Without an authority on earth traditional Shia did not exercise political power instead relying on their religious and legal advisors, known as *ulama*, for guidance. Without legitimate authorities the Shia were at the mercy of non-Shia, especially the Sunni rulers within the Ottoman Empire. *Ulama’s* help with conflict resolution and education as the religious scholars who specialized in *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) and as arbiters of *sharia* law. See M. Ismail Marcinkowski, *Religion And Politics In Iraq* (Singapore: Pustaka Nasional, 2004), 94.

⁸⁷ Aziz, *The Kurds Of Iraq*, 8.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 31-40.

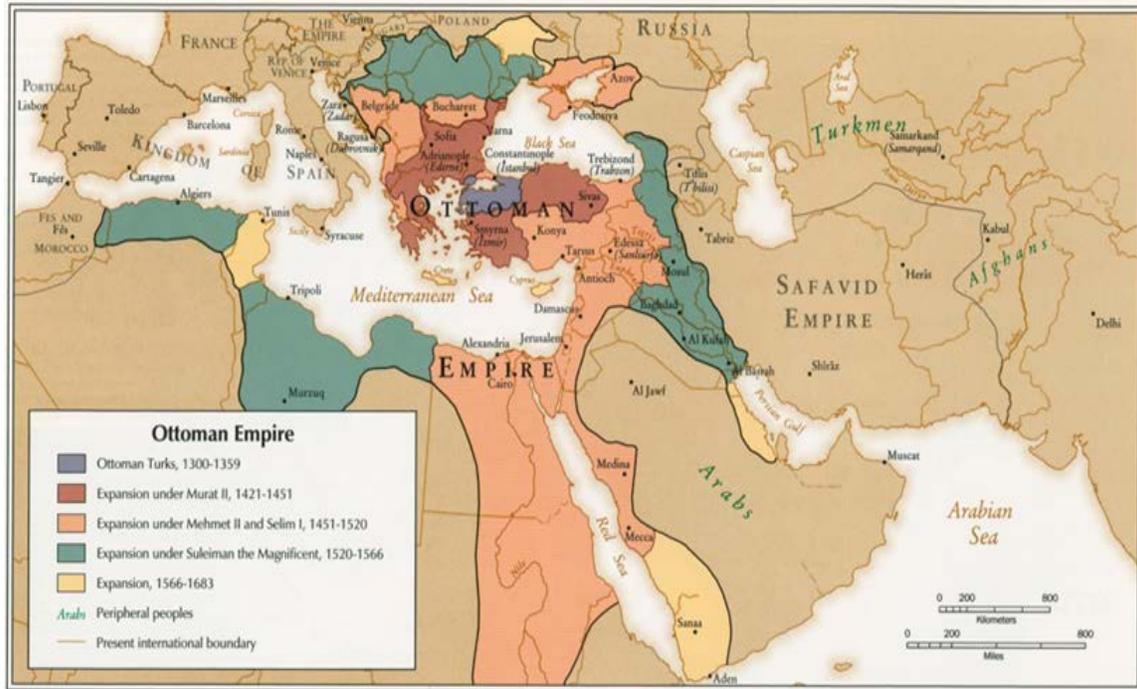


Figure 3. Map of Iraq

Source: Published in U.S. Central Intelligence Agency’s “Atlas of the Middle East” (Washington, DC: January 1993).

northwest Iran and is rooted in Farsi and Pashto languages.⁹⁰ The Kurd identity, as described by Francois-Xavier Lovat in *Kurdistan Memory*, describes the Kurds as one distinct culture at the crossroads of multiple religions. For twenty-five centuries, the Kurds have shifted religious preferences, but throughout this time their one culture and one language have defined their existence. The Kurds practiced Yezidism for 1500 years, which is still alive today.

Distantly related to the Cult of Angels, Yezidism is a specifically Kurdish religion. Today all Yezidis are Kurds. There was a time when most Kurds were Yezidis. But Yezidis are still considered the living memory and conscience of the Kurds.⁹¹

In 800 AD the majority of Kurds converted to Islam and in present day Iraq they are predominately Sunni. Regardless of religious affiliation, the Kurds are a distinct culture.

⁹⁰ David McDowall, *The Kurds* (London, UK: Minority Rights Group, 1991), 23.

⁹¹ François-Xavier Lovat, *Kurdistanmemory.Com*, last modified 2015, accessed January 20, 2015, <http://www.kurdistanmemory.com/site/english/biographie.html>.

Tribalism is also a factor in Kurdish life, but unlike the Arab Sunni and Shia to their south, the Kurds lobbied and fought for autonomy.

As the Ottoman Empire grew to include the Kurds and the Shia tribes, the Sultan's pragmatic approach to ruling lands away from Istanbul created ethnic islands and consequently the provincial areas became semi-autonomous regions with no real connections to a centralized government. Ottoman isolated ethnic islands and loose centralized governance was an early approach for Sunni control. Through the lens of Posen's "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict" Ottoman rulers' understanding of an external threat is representative of interventions by allies, which in effect caused risk of intergroup violence. The Kurds in Mosul and the Shia in Basra represent isolated ethnic islands with history of rival clashes against the central government that intermittently tries to control these groups. The interference from the Persians and external Arab represented these interventions by allies. (see Figure 3) History shows that the Ottomans struggled against the Kurdish uprising and Shia tribal wars. The conflicts against centralized power are a significant factor within Ottoman history because they were never isolated. Triggers from centralization of power in Iraq could cause the desire to fight against artificial nationalism.

Iraqi Pluralism or Nationalism

The Ottoman legacy of intra-state ethnic separation and decentralization as seen in Posen's "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict" is a vehicle to show how ethnic islands were formed, but looking at the nearly 100 years that follow shows that this dynamic has not changed. The stable structure of the ethnic groups within Iraq persists and causes negative cultural interactions between perceived groups and the leaders. In 1889 the Young Turks, formed by four medical students, two of whom were Kurdish, became the foundation for a formation of a Turkish state based on nationalism and identity. This was the only means by which to stop the disintegration of the empire by holding on to its ethnically trusted core. Following various periods

of reform to centralize power within the Ottoman Empire, the Young Turks' movement was the support of the military elite.

The officer corps was increasingly dissatisfied with the continuing military reverses and the growing foreign encroachment in the administration of the Empire. These officers were armed with the broader education provided by the military reforms and became the vanguard of the Young Turk movement. This provided the Young Turks with what their predecessors lacked, a broader appeal backed by the force of arms.⁹²

In Mosul, Baghdad, and Basra this movement became an assortment of loosely associated provinces with various disparate tribal allegiances and continued heavy handed rule. This Turkish attempt to unify the Ottoman Empire culminated with Baghdad and Basra backing the British during World War I and Mosul agreeing to back British interests in return for eventual independence.

The British desires to control The Partition of the Ottoman Empire is seen in the 1916 Sykes-Picot agreement set the stage for the first patriotic effort by Sunnis and Shia. Under the Sykes-Picot agreement three Ottoman *vilayets*, or provinces of Mosul, Basra, and Baghdad became the British Mandate of Mesopotamia (Iraq). As with many postcolonial states, Iraq was born on European negotiation tables, the British and French correspondence of the Skykes-Picot agreement and subsequent negotiations in Sevres, France and San Remo, Italy became the base for today's Middle East.⁹³

The idea of a British controlled Arab state brought out Arab nationalist sentiments for the first time in Iraq.⁹⁴ According to the Oxford American dictionary, nationalism is defined as patriotic feelings, principle, or effort. Pluralism, on the other hand, exists when groups maintain

⁹² Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence Of Modern Turkey* (London, New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), 153.

⁹³ Melvin E. Page and Penny M. Sonnenburg, *Colonialism* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2003), 567.

⁹⁴ William L. Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (Oxford, UK: Westview Press, 1994), 191.

their individual identities.⁹⁵ Nationalist sentiment became the rallying call for Ottoman-educated Sunni Arab and tribal Shia sheikhs out of resistance to British interference in domestic affairs. Failure to ratify a promised autonomous Kurdistan under Treaty of Sevres in 1920 became a rallying call for the Kurds. After Sykes-Picot the enforcement of new national boundaries impeded movement between tribes on opposing sides of multiple borders which threatened the Kurdish way of life. The period following the partition of the Ottoman Empire the Kurds wanted autonomy; the Shia believed that “Iraq was born of sin” and the Ottoman-educated Sunni wanted to retain power.⁹⁶ “The Mandate system was established, which was based on the view that people in the conquered areas were entitled to self-determination. However, because they were not sufficiently developed politically and educationally they were incapable of self-rule, so that the two Great Powers were given a mandate by the League of Nations.”⁹⁷ This system assumed that the Arabs and Kurds needed and wanted British assistance to ensure “proper” European rule. Historically, like the Ottomans the British believed they understood the desires of Mosul, Baghdad, and Basra.

Iraq’s tribal society maintained a strong influence across Iraq, but particularly in the southern Shia areas. *Shi’a mujtahid* (Islamic scholar versed in sharia law), Ayatollah Muhammad Taqi al-Shirazi, issued a *fatwa* “declaring that service in the British administration was unlawful.”⁹⁸ New British policies such as new land ownership laws and new tax for burials in

⁹⁵ John C Hawley, *Encyclopedia of Postcolonial Studies* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2001), 38.

⁹⁶ Yitzhak Nakash, *Reaching for Power* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 86.

⁹⁷ Rakian Dawud al-Kayssi, “Iraq Under Saddam Husayn and the Ba’ath Party” (PhD Dissertation, University of Glasgow, 1998), 7. Retrieved from <http://theses.gla.ac.uk/1031/1/1998alkayssiphd.pdf>

⁹⁸ Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 41.

Najaf, where Shi'a from all over the world came to be buried upset tribal leaders.⁹⁹

Dissatisfaction with British rule materialized in May 1920 with demonstrations in Baghdad. Sunnis and Shia protestors demanded more autonomy and led to an armed revolt, which lasted from June to October 1920. After 6,000 Iraqis and 500 British and Indian soldiers died in the revolt, the British decided to rule indirectly through former officials friendly to the British government.¹⁰⁰ During the Cairo Conference of 1921 King Feisal, supported by British troops, became the first Arab leader of the British Mandate of Mesopotamia Iraq.

The British installed monarch became the first of many Arab Sunni administrations, which minimized the role of Shia in government through the 1940s. The only Shia that maintained power were the land owning southern tribal sheikhs who brokered deals to maintain political advantage. The Shia as a group lost influence while the tribal leaders maintained authority. British government control helped to foster an early Iraqi identity, but did not lead to a natural nationalistic feeling. Instead old sectarian and tribal ties became more apparent, "nationalism did not displace the old loyalties."¹⁰¹

The years that followed the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Arab independence movement began a period of Pan-Arab nationalism. Reacting to the Young Turk movement, thinkers such as Zaki al Arsuzi and Michel Aflaq, both Arab Christians who later established the Ba'ath Party began promoting a secular anti-colonialist ideology that advocated Arab unity.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Amal Vinogradov, "The 1920 Revolt in Iraq Reconsidered: The Role of Tribes in National Politics," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol.3, No.2 (April, 1972): 133.

¹⁰⁰ Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 43.

¹⁰¹ Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq*, 25-26.

¹⁰² Sami Zubaida, "Islam and Nationalism: Continuities and Contradictions," *Nations and Nationalism* 10, no. 4 (2004): 407-420.

Arab nationalism is the belief that all Arab Nations are connected by a common language, history, and culture, while pan-Arabism is a movement for a single, unified Arab nation.¹⁰³

By the 1950 the Ba'athist principles based on Arab socialism as a counter narrative to the formation of a Jewish state led the elite landowners to support Pan-Arab nationalism under the Ba'ath party.¹⁰⁴ In 1963, the Ba'ath Party controlled the Iraqi government and in 1968 Admad Hassan al-Bakr led a coup, which allowed only a few to control the Ba'ath party agenda. The coup ended the Iraqi monarchy's rule by deposing the King. In the 1970s al-Bakr's cousin, Saddam Hussein disposed al-Bakr's supporters and his rivals and took over the Ba'ath Party.¹⁰⁵ By 1979, Saddam Hussein took over the Ba'ath party agenda to keep him in power. Instead of uniting Arabs, the Ba'ath Party movement in Iraq kept one family in power while suppressing the rights of all.¹⁰⁶

Saddam Hussein's leadership became a negative legacy of political manipulation of ethnic and religious groups. His failure to reconcile and promote social trust among the major Iraqi groups separated Arab Shia, Arab Sunni, and Kurds during his reign. Only through coercion did he inspire loyalty through two wars. When faced with internal tensions Saddam responded by using violence to maintain power and project a strong appearance.¹⁰⁷

History of Rivalries, Clashes, and Group Solidarity

Beginning as early as 1980, Saddam Hussein reignited historic Ottoman pluralism. First, the Iran-Iraq War began, which looked like a modern version of the Ottoman Safavid wars of old.

¹⁰³ Laurie Collier Hillstrom and Julie Carnage, *War in the Persian Gulf Almanac* (Detroit: UXL, 2004), 10.

¹⁰⁴ Hillstrom and Carnage, 11.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 186.

Saddam, much as the Ottoman's did in the past, kept coercive control of the Kurds to the north. Kurds have always lived on the seams of every empire and as such have always been on the losing side of battle lines. During the Iran-Iraq war, many Kurds sided with Iran and this gave Saddam the opportunity to reduce Kurdish hopes of independence. The infamous chemical attack on the town of Halabja showed all groups in Iraq the extent to which Saddam would go to maintain power. In the last days of the war Saddam shifted focus at his internal political enemies by slaughtering the population in the town of Halabja in southern Kurdistan. Casualty estimates ranged between 3,000 and 10,000.¹⁰⁸

Following the Gulf War in February 1991, President H.W. Bush called on the Iraqis to rebel by saying "In my own view . . . the Iraqi people should put (Saddam) aside, and that would facilitate the resolution of all these problems that exist and certainly would facilitate the acceptance of Iraq back into the family of peace-loving nation."¹⁰⁹ In March and April 1991 the Kurds and Shia began an uncoordinated insurgency.¹¹⁰ In Basra the Shia insurgency, also known as the Shia intifada (also known as Shia uprising), caused Saddam to react with a strong anti-Shia campaign. The violence resulted in over 100,000 dead Kurds and Shia.¹¹¹ The campaign against Shia included educational reforms with strong references to Islamic traditions in textbooks published during the 1990s as "vaguely and somehow generic Sunni preference."¹¹² Saddam's versions of early Arab Islamic history described the Prophet's life, the age of the righteous

¹⁰⁸ Senate Select Intelligence Committee, *Saddam's Human Rights Record*, 395.

¹⁰⁹ Jason Embry, "Uprising in Iraq May Be Slow Because of U.S. Inaction in 1991 By," *Seattle Pi*, 2003, accessed January 16, 2015, <http://www.seattlepi.com/national/article/Uprising-in-Iraq-may-be-slow-because-of-U-S-1111482.php>.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Hrw.org, "Endless Torment - The 1991 Uprising in Iraq and Its Aftermath," last modified 1992, accessed February 11, 2015, <http://www.hrw.org/reports/1992/Iraq926.htm>.

¹¹² André Elias Mazawi and Ronald G Sultana, *World Yearbook of Education 2010* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 21.

caliphs, the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties, and the history of Al-Andalus without ever mentioning any splits in the Muslim umma.¹¹³ These textbooks did “not even mention the dispute over the succession to the caliphate in 661 C.E. that led to a split between Sunnis and Shi’is.”¹¹⁴ Through the lens of Posen’s “The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict,” US intervention and attempt to subvert Saddam’s regime ignited an intra-state conflict of historic proportions pinning Saddam a merely a Sunni dictator against the oppressed Shia and Kurds.

Through physical repression and by minimizing the importance of Shia and Kurds in Iraqi life, Saddam set a base for future etho-religious issues within the country of Iraq. Through shared experiences, Saddam enabled the Shia to reassert their differences and unite as a separate and distinct group within the tapestry of Iraq. Although in 1958 Iraqi Army brigadier Abd-al-Karim Qasim siezed power and eliminated the Iraqi Monarch as a Sunni-Shia Kurd who saw an Iraqi-first policy toward nationalism in Iraq it never became a reality. By the 1990s, Iraq became three separate states as if the Ottomans still ruled the lands.

Failed To Analyze Iraq Under A Security Dilemma

The DOD planners had a very narrow understanding of the Iraqi social system including the ethnic and religious and how they historically evolved. Pre-war planning assumptions included complete cooperation from opposition groups and a credible broad based government established by D-Day.¹¹⁵ Both of these conditions were not met. Starting with the decision to disband the former Iraqi Army a quick descent into sectarian violence ensued causing the security dilemma. The lack of a cohesive Army had three immediate and related effects. First, the security

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Achim Rohde, “Change and Continuity in Arab Iraqi Education: Sunni And Shi’I Discourses in Iraqi Textbooks Before and After 2003,” *Comparative Education Review* 57, no. 4 (2013): 711-734.

¹¹⁵ Joyce Battle and Thomas Blanton, “Top Secret Polo Step: Iraq War Plan Assumed Only 5,000 U.S. Troops Still There By December 2006,” *Www2.Gwu.Edu*, last modified 2015, accessed February 9, 2015, <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB214/>.

dilemma caused members within each of the Sunni, Shia, and Kurdish groups to identify with the group and not the nation of Iraq. Secondly, it allowed the emergence of small band of fanatics to rise in order to protect their sectarian communities. Finally, it created opportunities for outside parties; namely Al-Qaida and Iran to exert pressures on Iraq through sectarian factions.¹¹⁶

Group solidarity was so strong that “Group Think” occurred with such strong sentiment that individual members of Shia Majority, Sunni Minority, and Kurdish Minority could not and cannot function together for the greater good of Iraq. The inter-relationship can be visualized in a basic Venn diagram (Figure 3). For Iraq to become a unified and cohesive state three parties need to be in balance- ethnic groups, the state and the ISF. Each circle is inherently unstable: groups (#3) by historical rifts, the state (#2) by de-Ba’athification, and the ISF (#1) by lack of experience and sectarian strife within the Army. The point (represented by the blue triangle #4 in Figure 4) at which the Iraqi union, the Security Forces, and the greater ethnic groups that make up the society meet is not balanced and thus the ethnic group will not fight for the state as a part of the security forces unless all have trust and demonstrate integrity. US actions initiated a delayed cycle of causation where groups begin to perceive each other’s actions as directly opposed to the others survival.

¹¹⁶ Posen, *Security Dilemmas*, 24.

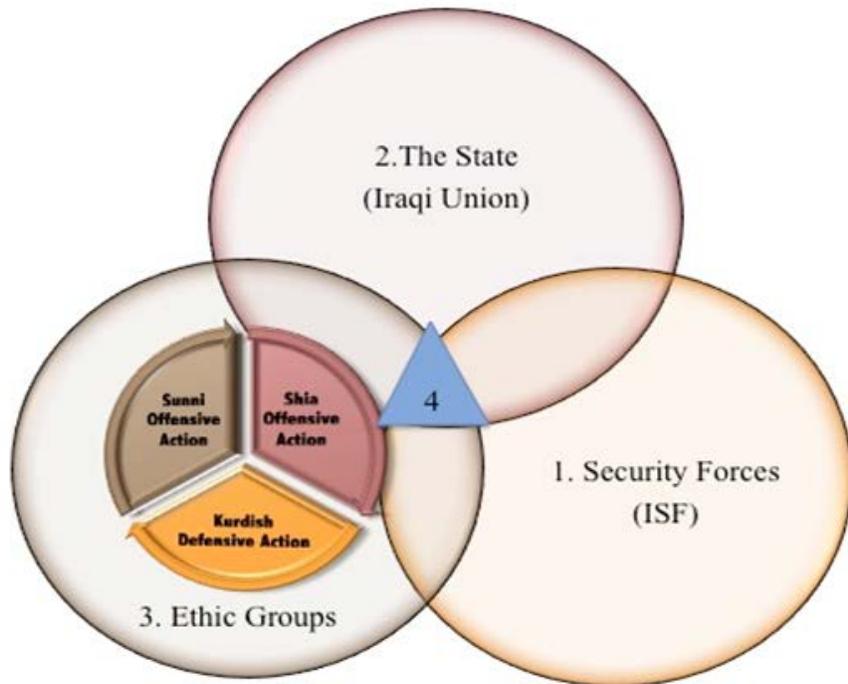


Figure 4. Iraq in a Security Dilemma

Source: Created by the Author.¹¹⁷

Small Bands Of Fanatics And Interventions By Allies

Through the lens intra-state security dilemmas, each sect had groups set up to defend itself because the ISF could not. Outside parties used groups for their strategic ends. For the Shia in the south the toppling of Saddam’s regime meant an opportunity to rule Iraq. Ruling Iraq meant political power, however, power, when viewed through an inter-subjective lens, increases the risk of unintended systemic change. The Sunni majority began an insurgency aimed at attacking American occupiers, but also took the opportunity to strike at the Shia population. Within the Shia community the security dilemma that occurred, when the Sunni began the “war

¹¹⁷ Venn diagram in Figure 4 illustrates Iraq in a Security Dilemma within the ethnic groups while simultaneously illustrating the ethnic groups within a state and the ISF. This unbalanced central point (represented in the blue triangle) cannot balance until security dilemma ends.

after the war” triggered a security dilemma where Shia began to arm themselves and support militia violence.¹¹⁸ Cleric Muqtad al Sadr’s *Jaish al-Mahdi* (JAM), represents what Posen called bands of fanatics. Beginning in June 2003 until present day Iraq, JAM has increased sectarian violence and continuing the security dilemma cycle among the ethnic and religious Iraq groups.¹¹⁹

Muqtada is the fourth son of Ayatollah Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr, who was, between 1992 and 1999, one of the most renowned leaders in the *Hawza*, the center of Shi’ite religious seminaries and scholarship. Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr cultivated good relations with the predominantly Shi’ite tribes of central and southern Iraq, even publishing a book on tribal Islamic jurisprudence.¹²⁰

Muqtada al-Sadr’s Shia activism captured the hearts of many Shia including politicians, ISF soldiers, and leaders, and simultaneously garnered external support and gained Wahhabi Sunni enemies.¹²¹

The chaos that ensued after Baghdad fell at the hands of the US-led coalition opened the door for outside actors to intervene in Iraq. Muqtada’s coercive influence also extended to religious and political realms in Iraq, which opened the door for support from Iran. Sadr and other Shia leaders wanted a state lead through jurisprudence from Najaf like that of the Islamic Republic in Iran based on Ayatollah Khomeini’s theory that a Shia authority could “rule over its people while the Imam is serving his Major Occultation.”¹²² Since the Iranian Revolution in the 1970’s, the *Ulama* such as Ayatollah Khomeini and Ayatollah Sistani became the vocal leaders of

¹¹⁸ Mathew Price, 'BBC NEWS | Middle East | US Moves To Crush Shia Uprising', *News.Bbc.Co.Uk*, last modified 2015, accessed January 20, 2015, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3557446.stm.

¹¹⁹ Nimrod Raphaeli, “Understanding Muqtada al-Sadr,” *Middle East Quarterly*, 11, no. 4 (Fall 2004), pp. 33-42.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Thomas R Mockaitis, *The Iraq War Encyclopedia*, n.d, 370.

¹²² L. Paul Bremer, “Coalition Provisional Authority Order Number 2 Dissolution of Entities,” *The National Security Archives*, last modified 2003, accessed December 10, 2014, <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB418/docs/9b%20-%20Coalition%20Provisional%20Authority%20Order%20No%20-%202008-23-03.pdf>.

the Shia community. From the establishment of the Islamic Republic in Iran of a “guardianship of the jurist” (velayat-e faqih) to Shia militant group support such as Hezbollah and JAM.¹²³ The link between Iranian activism and Iraqi Shia leaders increased the perception of a security dilemma within Iraq. Perception became reality when by 2006 US officials estimated that Shia militias were killing more Sunni’s than Sunni insurgents were killing Shia.¹²⁴ This dilemma became apparent in the increased Sunni jihadist movement.

The Sunni insurgency opened a new front for al Qaeda. As the new government of Iraq became a Shia-dominated political institution, the perception of a Shia Hegemon became a direct threat to the Sunni jihadist and foreign fighters began to move into Iraq.¹²⁵ The action and counteraction within the post 2003 security dilemma in Iraq brought about a large area known as the Sunni Triangle from Ramadi to Baghdad to Baquba.¹²⁶ The Ba’athist movement, which started as a pragmatic approach to reconciliation, became the counter-narrative to Muqtada al-Sadr’s JAM and allowed al Qaeda to dominate with its rhetoric. The rhetoric looked similar to Saddam’s old regime and resonated with Sunnis, but also helped usher in cooperation between Shia and Kurds.

In 2003, Shia and Kurd began cooperating when the Sunni insurgency began as they saw the insurgents as an extension of the former regime’s coercive government. The Peshmirga began to move out of the areas where they usually patrolled, but in doing this caused the

¹²³ Geneive Abdo, “The Sunni-Shia Divide,” *Cfr.Org*, last modified 2015, accessed January 20, 2015, http://www.cfr.org/peace-conflict-and-human-rights/sunni-shia-divide/p33176#!/?cid=otr-marketing_url-sunni_shia_infoguide.

¹²⁴ Rand Corporation, *Overview of Conflict in Iraq*, http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2008/RAND_MG595.3.pdf, 16.

¹²⁵ Robert McMahon, 'The Sunni-Shia Divide', *Cfr.Org*, last modified 2015, accessed January 11, 2015, <http://www.cfr.org/peace-conflict-and-human-rights/sunni-shia-divide/p33176#!/>.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 27.

Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) to move into safe havens in Kurdistan and out of Turkey. Turkey subsequently intervened in Iraq by requesting that the mostly Shia government to start targeting the PKK. Although most Iraqi Kurds do not advocate the PKK's socialist group's terrorist tactics against the Turks, this situation caused hostility from the Kurdish population towards the perceived ruling Shia population. In the case of the Kurds, both al Qaeda and Turkey's intervention caused tensions, which increased the risk of a security dilemma.

Non-state actors, and state interventions increased sectarian tendencies and caused a lack of cohesion among the population. Armed groups from 2003 to 2014 caused Iraqis to divide their loyalty between armed groups to ensure greater group security; but in doing so diminished ISF credibility and caused tensions between group members in the ISF institutions.

Integrating Culture into Joint and US Army Planning

In 1993, noted political scientist Samuel Huntington hypothesized that a new era of conflict was emerging in the post- cold war world. He wrote,

that the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics. The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future.¹²⁷

This new type of conflict may demand a new set of skills for operational planners to employ. The case of US intervention in Iraq illustrates where operational planners may not have these skills.

The final section of this monograph identifies shortfalls and makes recommendations for improving US military capabilities to conduct planning with the notion that the clash of civilizations is a dominant occurrence in global politics. Recommendations for improving cultural competence in military planning includes: (1) addition of Green Cells to Joint and Army

¹²⁷ Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (1993): 22.

Doctrine, (2) maximizing Foreign Area Officers, and (3) apply a whole of government approach to analysis.

In order to move towards cultural competence the military should include a Green Cell modeled after a program initiated by the US Marine Corps in 2010. The Green Cell is used to consider the population in order to promote a better understanding of the environment and the problem. At a minimum, the green cell provides an analysis focused on the independent will of the population. The green cell may also provide considerations for non-DOD entities, such as intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) or nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Green Cell membership can range from an individual to a task-organized group of experts that may include liaisons from the local populace and non-DOD agencies. The Green Cell is a good forcing mechanism that, if used correctly, can bring a level of cultural competence to a design or planning team. The recognition that most problems are complex in nature means that many problems may be beyond the scope of a single designer, thus requiring a team of experts ranging from logistics to culture. This relationship needs to match the complexity of the problem with the complexity of the organization. The group process, when conducted effectively, enables a more thorough analysis of the environment, alternate perspectives to the potential problems, and more innovative, diverse solutions.

Complementing this internal staff entity, the military needs to look at adding Foreign Area Officers (FAOs) at the operational level on planning staff at Division-level and above, especially during deployment cycles within their region. FAOs are specialized officers with language training, graduate degree from a civilian university, and experience overseas in regional specialization.¹²⁸ By incorporating these cultural military experts on operational staffs and formally staffing the Green Cell with FAOs who maintain the requisite cultural knowledge,

¹²⁸ Kurt Marisa, 'A Short History Of Foreign Area Officers Faos', *Faoa.Org*, last modified 2015, accessed March 19, 2015, <http://www.faoa.org/FAOA-A-Short-History-of-FAOs>.

regional expertise, and planning abilities, a commander can increase the effectiveness of operational planning.

Acknowledging that these problems frequently defy military solutions, military organizations need to adapt new approaches to military planning to avoid cultural bias. Organizational culture is defined as “the specific collection of values and norms that are shared by people and groups in an organization.”¹²⁹ Operational planners must understand that although organizational culture may hinder communications, it must not hinder cooperation. In 2006, DOD formerly recognized that in in both Iraq and Afghanistan interagency cooperation had been mismanaged due to parochialism. At the combatant command (COCOM) level where the majority of interagency coordination and operational planning and execution takes place had the most deficiencies. As a result of the formal recognition of issues in coordination, COCOMs created the Joint Interagency Coordination Group (JIACG), designed to facilitate coordination between the geographic combatant command staff and the staffs of the respective interagency members. In order to get to a better level of cooperation it is not enough to have a JIACG, but to constantly engage and understand the resources at the planners’ disposal. Interagency personnel including Foreign Service Officers from USAID and DOS have cultural competence beyond our own FAO and are a key resource in the whole of government approach to planning.

¹²⁹Charles W. L. Hill and Gareth R Jones, *Strategic Management* (Mason: South-Western, Cengage Learning, 2013), 8.

Conclusion

Dr. Anthony H. Cordesman, Chair of Strategy at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, described US involvement in Iraq as a

collapse of many functional aspects of Iraqi governance and often disruptive US and other outside efforts to reform Iraqi governance on the basis of difference values and standards... poorly planned and constantly changing advisory missions and efforts at reform, and the lack of effective transparency and accountability from 2003 onwards seriously weakened Iraqi central governance in a state that had had grossly over-centralized authoritarian control since at least 1979.¹³⁰

This paper argues that failure of the ISF is directly attributable to US and Coalition inability to take into account cultural differences between the coalitions and the ISF when training and equipping these forces. The coalition's lack of understanding about Iraq's cultural diversity and social construction caused US operational planners to apply an improper developmental training model to stand up and employ indigenous security structures. The flawed developmental model used false assumptions for planning because the planners did not value cultural differences and failed to see historic fault lines. This monograph also addresses the impact of cultural competence on the conduct of military planning, specifically with respect to the development of foreign security forces. Primary source document evidence showed that when the nation building and security forces assistance effort began, planners ignored cultural analysis capabilities resident within military and civilian organizations.

The operational decisions heightened the security dilemma between ethnic and religious groups. In Iraq, sectarian based groups, now free of Saddam's oppression viewed opposing sectarian groups as a threat and consequently created a "security dilemma." In this situation when one group acted to enhance its security, it caused an equal and retaliatory counter-reaction from

¹³⁰Anthony H. Cordesman and Sam Khazai, *Iraq in Crisis* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies), 13.

opposing groups. Thus, “group solidarity” of the ethnic, religious, or cultural groups that emerged from Saddam Hussein's collapsed empire gave each of them (Kurd, Shia, and Sunni) an inherent offensive military power, driving groups to fear each other. The security dilemma is seen in Iraq through this relationship. The exploration of Iraq’s history showed that these tendencies existed within this context.

Studying how the social construction of ethnic and religious groups in Iraq and its impact on the Iraqi Security Forces to operate effectively helps operational planners see patterns within the stated norms, values, and behaviors of groups. Comparing the relationships of ethnic and religious groups in a given environment can better inform operational planners. Cultural understanding will increase cultural competence, which allows planners greater appreciation for patterns of behavior before recommending decisions. Behavior assessments based on ethnic and religious preferences may lead to the identification of continuities or change, which may manifest itself as risks and opportunities for commanders. In the future cultural competence in military planning should include: (1) addition of Green Cells to Joint and Army Doctrine, (2) maximizing Foreign Area Officers, (3) apply a whole of government approach to analysis (4) employ culturally competent planners to complement the new construct of Regionally Aligned Forces. Military organizations need to adapt these recommendations for military planning to avoid cultural bias.

Unless the ethnic and religious groups that make up Iraq’s ISF can see themselves as one people, the ISF will continue to fracture within. To move forward, Iraq and its parties must focus on a reconciliation process that seeks to reduce the security dilemma. Instead of looking at Iraq as a failure in understanding the environment, the US as a current Iraqi security cooperation partner should re-frame and aid Iraqi leadership in seeing the problem so the ISF may be able to defeat ISIL in the future. The security dilemma between ethnic and religious groups inside the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) impeded the development of a cohesive state and ultimately severely affected their ability to operate effectively against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

Cohesion within the ISF will not grow until more extreme fanatic factions lose influence and intervention by allies is not perceived as a threat between the groups.

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