

Pilgrims has compiled this report, drawing on information from a variety of media, open and privileged sources.

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The aim of this report is to provide clients with a strategically based overview of the current insurgency and an assessment of its future course.

**SPECIAL
REPORT**

The Iraq Insurgency

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Trends in Insurgent Attacks

Statistical analysis of attacks by Iraqi insurgents suffers from a number of problems.

The Iraqi government no longer publicises the number of Iraqi deaths, while the US only records its own casualties. The figures typically do not identify those responsible for killings, whether insurgents, party militias or criminal elements. The most recent estimates of the total number of Iraqi civilian casualties since 2003 range from 33,000 to over 85,000. Coalition counts of losses also tend to underplay the amount of sabotage and criminal damage, while the losses of Iraqi military and police forces receive less focused attention. Estimates of insurgent losses remain unreliable, a result of the continued failure to extend intelligence networks into their ranks. Although the statistics illustrate peaks and troughs in insurgent attacks, they do not provide a basis from which to extrapolate any real conclusions about underlying trends in the insurgency, much less make judgements about whether the insurgents or the US is "winning" the conflict.

The figures available are worth considering as they provide the only empirical source of information on the scale and intensity of the insurgency. The total number of attacks increased from 26,496 in 2004 to 34,131 in 2005 – an increase of 29%. The number of attacks surged prior to the January 2005 elections, fell back thereafter, but surged again in April 2005; since then the number of effective (not overall) attacks has remained at a fairly constant level of 24%. Some sources note that apparent drops in insurgent attacks for some months are accounted for by a change of target (e.g. Iraqi instead of US) – and hence not reflected in the figures – rather than an absolute decline in the level of violence. The problems of using diverse sets of statistics in an attempt to 'measure' the extent of the insurgency was highlighted by a report by the US National Intelligence Council, leaked to *Newsweek* in May 2005, which said that available figures came from so many different sources, compiled in such different ways, that drawing an overall conclusion from the statistics was impossible. Broadly speaking, insurgents have shifted the focus of their attacks from US forces to Iraqis. 673 US troops were killed in 2005, down from 714 in 2004; the number of US wounded also dropped by 29% from 2004 to 2005. This was partly because there have been no recent large scale urban battles, such as Fallujah in 2004, partly because insurgents have chosen to target more vulnerable Iraqi victims to gain more political capital and partly because some insurgent elements are seeking to pursue a sectarian agenda within Iraq.

The majority of insurgent attacks are concentrated in a relatively limited geographical area. The four governorates which experience by far the majority of incidents are Baghdad, Al-Anbar, Salah al-Din and Ninawa. 59% of US casualties are suffered in the Baghdad and Al-Anbar provinces.

Suicide attacks have become an increasingly frequent feature of the insurgency. Whereas the number of car bombs doubled from 2004 to 2005, the number of suicide car bombs quadrupled in the same period. The number of suicide attacks involving a bomber carrying explosives stood at 7 in 2004, but had increased to 67 in 2005. The use of suicide bombers in situations where other means of attack (e.g. unmanned roadside bombs) would have been equally as effective suggests that the practice is being used for ideological or publicity reasons rather than out of tactical necessity.

The number and effectiveness of attacks using Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) increased significantly throughout 2005. Although the IEDs used at the start of the insurgency were crude devices, most often based on pressure-detonation devices detailed in old US field manuals and translated into Arabic, by mid-2005 the insurgents had developed increasingly sophisticated devices. A fairly consistent level of 40% of IEDs are located and disarmed by coalition forces, though the insurgents have benefitted from adopting technology used by Lebanon's Hizbullah in the 1980s and, according to some reports, technology transferred to them by Iran. Insurgents are now reported to have learned to cluster anti-tank mines and use large charges (e.g. 500lb) explosives in IEDs.

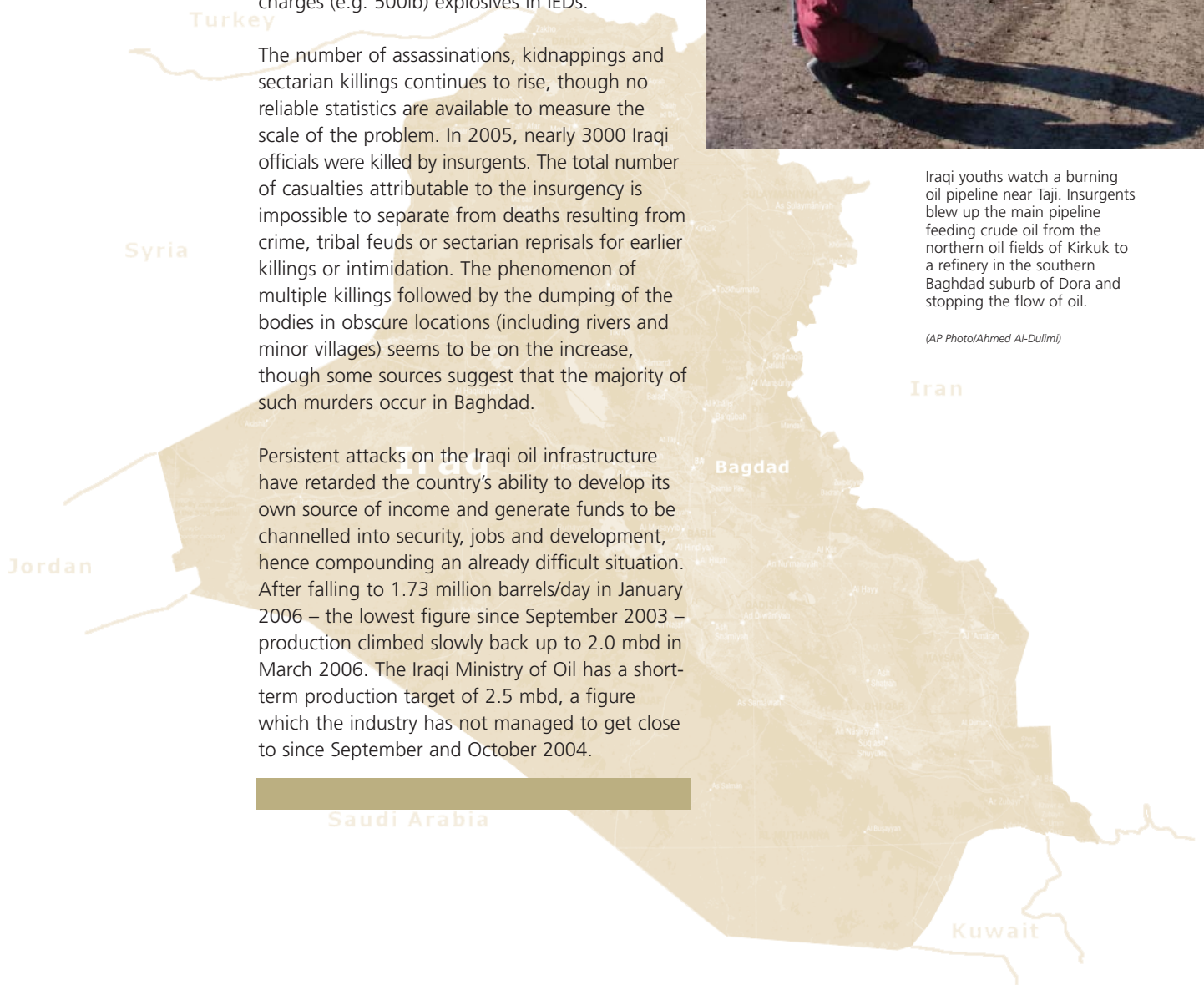
The number of assassinations, kidnappings and sectarian killings continues to rise, though no reliable statistics are available to measure the scale of the problem. In 2005, nearly 3000 Iraqi officials were killed by insurgents. The total number of casualties attributable to the insurgency is impossible to separate from deaths resulting from crime, tribal feuds or sectarian reprisals for earlier killings or intimidation. The phenomenon of multiple killings followed by the dumping of the bodies in obscure locations (including rivers and minor villages) seems to be on the increase, though some sources suggest that the majority of such murders occur in Baghdad.

Persistent attacks on the Iraqi oil infrastructure have retarded the country's ability to develop its own source of income and generate funds to be channelled into security, jobs and development, hence compounding an already difficult situation. After falling to 1.73 million barrels/day in January 2006 – the lowest figure since September 2003 – production climbed slowly back up to 2.0 mbd in March 2006. The Iraqi Ministry of Oil has a short-term production target of 2.5 mbd, a figure which the industry has not managed to get close to since September and October 2004.



Iraqi youths watch a burning oil pipeline near Taji. Insurgents blew up the main pipeline feeding crude oil from the northern oil fields of Kirkuk to a refinery in the southern Baghdad suburb of Dora and stopping the flow of oil.

(AP Photo/Ahmed Al-Dulimi)



Insurgent Groups

It is still correct to say that the “Iraq Insurgency” is not a unified movement with an identifiable leadership hierarchy or logistical infrastructure.

It can perhaps best be characterised as a chaotic assortment of diverse groups with varying degrees of organisation, effectiveness and strategic vision. Nevertheless, over the past couple of years it has been possible to identify four major groupings within the insurgency, groups which have developed what appear to be relatively coherent positions on the occupation and the strategies they espouse to oppose it. These main groups have spent considerable time and energy developing the means by which they communicate their position to their followers: mostly via internet sites, video and audio recordings and the publication of journals and magazines.

The most important of these groups are:

**Tanzim al-Qa’ida fi Bilad al-Rafidayn
(the Organisation of Al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia)**

**Jaish Ansar Al-Sunna
(The Army of the Companions of the Sunna)**

**Al-Jaish al-Islami fi’l-’Iraq
(The Islamic Army in Iraq)**

**Al-Jabha al-Islamiyya li’l-Muqawama
al-’Iraqiyya
(The Islamic Front for the Iraqi Resistance)**

Islamic Jihad Brigades of Muhammad’s Army

Tanzim al-Qa’ida fi Bilad al-Rafidayn (the Organisation of Al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia),

founded by the Jordanian Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, is by far the most nefarious of the Iraqi insurgent groups. Formerly named *al-Tawhid wa’l-Jihad* (Monotheism and Jihad), the group is thought to have been established while Zarqawi was based in Iraqi Kurdistan from 2001-2003, where US officials believe he made contact with the Ansar al-Islam organisation at the request of the al-Qaeda leadership. *Tanzim al-Qa’ida* is thought to be responsible for the videotaped beheading of American engineer Eugene Armstrong in late 2004, as well as for a host of similar murders across the country. The group’s influence is often thought to extend beyond Iraq: Jordanian authorities accuse Zarqawi of masterminding the killing of USAID worker Lawrence Foley in October 2002 and the Amman hotel bombings in November 2005; Jordanian courts have given him the death sentence in absentia. Zarqawi was also implicated in the Madrid and Casablanca bombings. Some analysts suggest that *Tanzim al-Qa’ida* is a loose-knit association of smaller groups, rather than a coherent organisation, and argue that its importance to the insurgency has been exaggerated by the US for political reasons. Nevertheless, the group claims to have some 15 “brigades” operating under its aegis and maintains a fairly consistent, hardline political position in its communiqués. Although *Tanzim al-Qa’ida* has been categorised by Washington as an organisation of “foreigners”, in 2005 it appeared to have taken significant steps to bring Iraqis into its ranks, though its sectarian agenda and horrific tactics have not been universally welcomed by all members of the insurgency.

Jaish Ansar Al-Sunna (The Army of the Companions of the Sunna) is thought to have

grown from the fragments of *Ansar al-Islam* (the Companions of Islam), a Kurdish Islamist group first formed in Iraqi Kurdistan in late 2001 under the name *Jund al-Islam*. Ansar al-Islam was attacked and effectively destroyed by PUK peshmerga forces, supported by US Special Forces and air strikes, in March 2003; has extended its activities to Baghdad. The US has repeatedly connected *Ansar al-Islam* to a number of attacks, including the 19 August 2003 bombing of UN headquarters in Baghdad. The group claimed responsibility for the 1 February 2004 simultaneous attacks on PUK and KDP offices in Irbil, and the 17 March 2004 bombing of the Mount Lebanon Hotel in Baghdad. Nevertheless, many independent analysts are sceptical that this small Kurdish group would have been capable of

developing its infrastructure to the extent suggested by the US – especially after its ranks were decimated during the war. The 12 January 2005 assassination of Sheikh Mahmoud al-Maidani, representative of Shia spiritual leader Grand Ayatollah Sistani in the mainly Sunni town of Salman Pak, was claimed by a group named Ansar al-Islam; the group also claimed responsibility for a number of kidnappings throughout 2005. What appears to be the group's successor organisation, going by the name of *Ansar al-Sunna*, claims to have 16 "brigades", issues daily communiqués and ran a website until it was closed down, presumably by the US, in late 2005.

Al-Jaish al-Islami fi'l-'Iraq (The Islamic Army in Iraq) claims to comprise thirteen "brigades" and has an active internet presence. It combines religiosity with a fierce nationalism: the names of its brigades include not only the familiar Caliphs and other religious figures, but also include famous Arab political leaders from Islamic history.

Al-Jabha al-Islamiyya li'l-Muqawama al-'Iraqiyya (The Islamic Front for the Iraqi Resistance), also known by its acronym '*Jami'*' (meaning a mosque, or a gathering). Some reports suggest this organisation is even less than a "loose-knit network" of smaller groups and describe it as something like a PR organisation for numerous lesser bodies, such as the *Salah al-Din* Brigades.

Other groups appear at frequent intervals, though many of these seem to be short-lived associations of local elements banding together in pursuit of criminal purposes, rather than in favour of the political objective of ending the occupation. In other cases, they may be either offshoots of existing groups or else fronts for organizations seeking to add to the confusion. The proliferation of these smaller groups means it is impossible to say which of them might eventually come to play a major role in the insurgency. The known smaller groups include:

Islamic Jihad Brigades of Muhammad's Army, an umbrella organization thought to incorporate nearly a dozen smaller groups; it claimed responsibility for the April 2003 bombing of the UN headquarters in Baghdad and for shelling coalition positions, including the CPA headquarters. ***Jaish al-Ta'ifa al-Mansoura*** claims three brigades, while ***Jaish al-Rashidin*** claims six. ***Al-Mujahidin Brigades*** sent a videotape to *Al-Jazeera* television, broadcast on 10 May 2004, claiming that all those working for Arab and foreign companies in Basra would be targeted for kidnappings and killings. ***The Islamic Movement for the Mujahidin of Iraq*** claimed

to the Associated Press in October 2004 that it grouped together over 18 Sunni militant groups in western Iraq; it killed an Italian hostage in December 2004. The *Salah Al-Din* Brigades claimed responsibility for attacks on at least seven Iraqi policemen in the Ramadi area in early 2004 and was still active in late 2005.

A number of other organisations are often described by the press as forming part of the Iraqi insurgency, though they differ from the above groups in that they are typically "legitimate" bodies with a presence within the political structures of post-Saddam Iraq, or in that they are grassroots organisations with widespread popular support, rather than a clandestine, members-only network. Such groups include:

Jaish al-Mahdi (the Mahdi Army) is the informal "militia" which follows firebrand Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr. Estimated to be comprised of between 6,000 and 10,000 men, the loose-knit body is mainly formed of increasingly experienced Shia from poorer urban centres. In the US Department of Defence's quarterly report, *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq (November 2006)*, highlighted the group as 'currently having the greatest negative affect on the security situation in Iraq' and have 'replaced al-Qaeda in Iraq as the most dangerous accelerant of potentially self-sustaining sectarian violence in Iraq.' The group also has significant influence within the political sphere, with 30 MPs and 6 cabinet members loyal to Muqtada al-Sadr.

The Badr Organization (formerly known as the Badr Corps) is the military wing of SCIRI, one of Iraq's main Shia political parties which has traditionally had close ties with Iran. SCIRI leaders seized the opportunity presented to them by the Shia success in the January 2005 elections to manoeuvre their people into key positions in the Ministry of the Interior. From April 2005 Interior Minister Bayan Jabr oversaw efforts to repress the primarily Sunni insurgency, which allegedly included the creation of a number of elite commando units – Wolf, Hawk, Volcano, Two Rivers – accused by some Sunni figures of acting as death squads and operating secret detention centres. Allegations of harassment of Sunni areas, summary executions and the torturing of prisoners have fed the anger of Sunni communities and deepened their feelings of disempowerment in an Iraq now dominated by the Shia.



The Killing of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi

Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, leader of *Tanzim al-Qa'ida fi Bilad al-Rafidayn (the Organisation of Al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia)*, was killed by a US Air Force bombing of an isolated farmhouse near Baqubah, north of Baghdad, on 7 June.

The air strike took place after the capture of Qasim al 'Ani, one of the organisation's commanders in Baghdad, on 4 June. Al 'Ani's arrest reportedly provided intelligence which, in addition to leading the US to Zarqawi, resulted in a series of raids on at least 17 locations across central Iraq which provided what a US military spokesman described as a "treasure trove" of documentation on the Al Qaeda organization in Iraq. Lebanon's *al Nahhar* newspaper reported that Iranian intelligence had worked with the US to locate Zarqawi, but the story was not corroborated by other sources and seems unlikely given Zarqawi's known hostility to Iraqi Shias, much less Iranian ones.

The Iraqi and US governments were keen to point out the impact that Zarqawi's death would have on *Tanzim al-Qa'ida* in Iraq. Iraqi National Security Advisor Muwaffaq al Ruba'i announced that documents and computer drives obtained from the house Zarqawi was staying in had provided the means for Iraqi and US security forces to 'dismantle' the organisation. In the first week following his death, US-led forces undertook some 450 raids on the basis of the new intelligence, killing over 100 militants and leading to the arrest of over 750 people. Ruba'i said the documents revealed that the group was in poor shape in terms of its training, weapons and media. One document released to the press suggested that *Tanzim al-Qaeda* was seeking to draw the US into a conflict with Iran, though doubt was cast on its authenticity by some analysts, who noted linguistic inconsistencies with previous statements from the organization.

Despite the blow dealt to the organization by the death of Zarqawi, it was quick to reassure its

followers it remained a player in the insurgency. A statement posted on the internet on 11 June declared that it would seek vengeance for the death of its leader. The US military subsequently announced that a man named Abu Ayyub al Masri had assumed Zarqawi's position as the leader of *Tanzim al-Qa'ida*, though a statement from the organisation said that Abu Hamza al-Muhajir had been appointed. The US authorities believe that the two names are both pseudonyms used by the same individual. Abu Ayyub al Masri is known to have trained in Afghanistan and is believed to have formed the first al Qaeda cell in Baghdad.

Analysts do not share the US and Iraqi governments' optimism that the death of Zarqawi marks a turning point in the campaign against the insurgency. Many note that Zarqawi's real significance to the insurgency was much less than that attributed to him by Washington, which found it more convenient to emphasize the role of a foreign militant than acknowledge the true extent of Iraqi participation in the insurgency against the occupation. Several other insurgent groups actually refused to work with Zarqawi's organization, which they accused of the indiscriminate killing of Iraqis, the incitement of sectarian conflict and the use of unnecessarily bloody tactics.

The future of *Tanzim al-Qa'ida* will be determined as much by the direction its new leaders decide to adopt as by the success of US and Iraqi military operations against it. So long as there remains a pool of Iraqis and foreign militants willing to join the organization, then it will be able to regenerate any capability lost to counter-insurgency operations. Possibly of greater significance is whether the new leader decides to adhere to Zarqawi's firmly anti-Shia sectarian agenda, which was making the organization unpopular with the mainstream of the insurgency, or whether he decides to step up efforts to "Iraqify" the organization, by reducing its reliance on foreign militant participation. The fact that Zarqawi's replacement is Egyptian born may suggest a continuation of the group's previous policies, rather than their modification.

Political Aims of the Insurgency

Although the popular media may speak of the threat of an Islamic Iraq should the US withdraw, the main insurgent groups have so far been careful not to elaborate any political vision of the future should their military activities eventually result in the end of the occupation.

This was a prudent decision, as it has meant the various insurgent groups have been able to focus their energies on waging jihad rather than discussing potentially divisive political agendas. Furthermore, the salafi strain of Islam to which the majority of the groups tend to subscribe is essentially concerned with the moral status of the individual, rather than addressing the question of how the community as a whole should be organised. As such, the insurgents' communiqués give voice to an unsophisticated discourse of opposition to the occupation and do not feel obliged to outline an alternative vision for Iraq.

The main insurgent groups mentioned earlier have consistently rejected any suggestion that they should take part in the political process in Iraq or that they should "negotiate" with the US. Their communiqués often denounce Iraq's politicians, who claim to be close to them or to be their representatives. US sources have confirmed that there have been talks with some insurgent groups, though a recent survey of Iraqi jihadist literature by the International Crisis Group fails to find any hint of compromise in their discourse – a possibility which they might be expected to communicate to their supporters if they were genuinely considering such a move.

Political Context

The elections of December 2005 did little to calm the insurgency.

The insurgents disavow any ties with groups that have chosen to take part in the political system, which they see as tainted by the involvement of infidels and deliberately biased by the US in favour of the Shia. Nevertheless, the hardline attitude during the January 2005 elections that some groups demonstrated – *Tanzim al-Qa'ida* notably called for polling stations and voters to be targeted for attack – was modified in the December elections in favour of threatening attacks against those who were overly involved in promoting the elections, rather than all voters. Other groups urged a boycott and a campaign of what they described as civil disobedience. Such a shift suggests that the insurgents remain sensitive to the broader trends of Iraqi public opinion in support of the elections and that they are concerned not to overly alienate their grassroots support.

The prolonged failure of Iraqi politicians to agree the composition of the new coalition government – which went on for some four months after the polls – indirectly aided the insurgents' cause. It meant that Iraq continues to lack any sense of progress or normality and suggested that the insurgents might have been right to criticize political leaders that many Iraqis already regarded critically. The absence of a government prolonged the sense of anomaly – the feeling that things are not yet "back to normal" – that the insurgents wished to encourage and exploit. Although a Prime Minister, Nouri al-Maliki, was finally agreed, the prolonged delay in making appointments to key government positions such as Ministers of Defence and the Interior and National Security Advisor was unlikely to inspire much confidence that the new government will be able to deal with the insurgency in a decisive manner. The death of Zarqawi, claimed by the Maliki government as a major success, may have gained it some new supporters, but subsequent major attacks in Kirkuk, Baghdad and elsewhere meant this honeymoon was short-lived.

The Threat of Civil War

The international media has focused on the recent surge of sectarian killings in Iraq, mainly between the Arab Shia and Arab Sunni communities.

Some insurgent groups have long espoused a campaign against Iraqi Shia: *Tanzim al-Qa'ida*, in particular, is noted for this position. Even so, *Tanzim al-Qa'ida* never directly refers to attacks against the Shia, instead employing euphemisms such as *al-Rawafid* ("those who refuse")

– a historical epithet for the Shia dating back to the early Islamic period. Zarqawi himself denied accusations that he was encouraging attacks against Iraqi Shia and blamed the US for fostering such beliefs. Nevertheless, his followers – indeed, most Iraqis – had little difficulty deciphering his euphemisms and understood the meaning behind the words. Other elements within the insurgency disagreed with Zarqawi's policy of attacking Shia targets; they noted that Zarqawi was not Iraqi and did not understand the local context. Such observations encouraged *Tanzim al-Qa'ida* to bring more Iraqis into its ranks, to deflect such criticisms, though it remains to be seen which direction Zarqawi's successor will take.

Sectarian tensions are running higher than ever before in Iraq. This is in part a counter-reaction to decades of enforced Sunni dominance and Shia repression under Saddam Hussein and in part a consequence of understandable but entirely avoidable decisions made by the US as it sought to develop new political structures for post-Saddam Iraq. Washington's desire to have fair representation for all ethnic and religious groups encouraged political groups to mobilise along those same lines to compete for a role in government. Ministries were seen as being distributed to particular sects, which led to them using government resources to feed their own networks of patronage. The constitutional right to devolve power to the Kurdish north, and potentially to a group of Shia governorates in the south, also fuelled sectarian issues. Shia domination of the state security apparatus has led to Sunni complaints of discrimination, intimidation and even reprisal killings for insurgent attacks or alleged sympathies.

Nevertheless, Iraq remains some way away from the intra-communal model of civil war, as seen for example in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s. For the moment, sectarian killings are a sporadic phenomenon which does not have the support of most Iraqis. Shia religious leaders such as Ayatollah Ali Sistani have urged their communities to show restraint and to resist the temptation for revenge. However, as the attacks continue, popular anger will inevitably increase and the calls of moderates like Sistani may well go unheeded. The existence of sect-based militias and military groups within supposedly national state institutions does not bode well for the future, should such killings continue. The threat of civil war, Lebanese style, is a very real one.



An Iraqi soldier guards a group of suspected insurgents at an Iraqi military camp west of Baghdad.

(AP Photo/Mohammed Uraibi)

Attitudes to Reconstruction

The growth of the insurgency, the absence of infrastructural improvements and the failure to improve Iraq's economic situation has contributed to a widespread disillusionment with the reconstruction process.

The inability of the reconstruction effort to deal with even the most basic problems of water and electricity provision, not to mention the squabbling between Iraqi political leaders over positions in the new government, has led to the growth of cynicism and fatalism regarding the future. Whilst the majority of Iraqis may not support the armed insurgency, which they blame for the increasing levels of violence, neither do they seem to support the continued occupation of Iraq by foreign forces which are unable to guarantee their security, much less successfully reconstruct their economy.

Although it is impossible to determine the size of the insurgency with any accuracy, coalition estimates have hovered around the 15,000 – 20,000 level since May 2004. Prior to that, the coalition systematically understated the extent of the resistance they were facing, claiming that the insurgents were a hardcore group of extremists numbering less than 5,000 in total. Since the start of the occupation, Washington has chosen to emphasize the role played by foreign elements in the insurgency. This has allowed them to portray the conflict as part of the wider war on global terrorism, with the Iraq insurgency being represented as a magnet for al-Qaida supporters throughout the Middle East, rather than an Iraqi-led phenomenon which might undermine US claims of local approval for the reconstruction project.

Although foreign fighters have undoubtedly played a significant role in the resistance, there is evidence that some Iraqi elements resent the intrusion of outsiders into "their" battle against the occupation. *Tanzim al-Qaida*, for example, has had to react to this current of disapproval by admitting more Iraqis to its ranks. Coalition sources estimate the number of foreign fighters in Iraq at between 700 and 2,000 in total. No figures are available which allow the breakdown

by nationality of insurgents so far apprehended by the coalition; the most commonly mentioned countries of origin are Saudi Arabia, Syria, Algeria, Yemen, Sudan, Egypt and Kuwait. A US source has stated that 96% of suicide attacks are carried out by non-Iraqi elements. This suggests that foreign volunteers may be seen by the insurgent leadership as low-worth "shock troops", a resource to be expended in preference to more valuable local elements.



Abass Abu Khudair, 60, assembles caskets in his shop in Baghdad. Demand for coffins have increased due to recent attacks by insurgents and sectarian violence.

Abu Khudair's production increased from two caskets a week before U.S. invasion in 2003 to 50, and the prices went up from \$10 to \$50.

(AP Photo / Samir Mizban)

Scenarios for the Future

Steady unravelling (60% likelihood):

In the absence of any credible leadership in Iraq, the various centrifugal elements will continue to pursue their own agenda, in the process further undermining the authority of the Iraqi state and rendering unlikely the possibility of finding a single, national approach to solving Iraq's problems. The continuing lack of success in eroding the insurgency will lead to the coalition eventually handing over to an Iraqi government whose political leaders send the right messages, but who lack the authority to implement a serious political programme. Iraqi political parties will continue to entrench the positions of themselves and their associates within the state bureaucracy, security services and reconstruction projects, carving out fiefdoms within Iraq's supposedly national institutions. The Kurdish north will maintain its efforts to pull away from the rest of Iraq, citing its relative absence of violence and its putative political unity as reasons for it to be considered as distinct from "Arab" Iraq. The efforts of the Shia-dominated governorates of the south of Iraq to increase their own autonomy from the central government in Baghdad may also gather steam, though at a much slower pace than the Kurdish north. The insurgency will continue to act as a "spoiler" for the reconstruction effort and will continue to act as an indicator of disapproval of the US-installed political system, but will remain unable to elaborate any real alternative to the deteriorating status quo. While this "steady unravelling" scenario may go on for some time, it may later give way to the civil war scenario outlined below.

Full scale civil war (20% likelihood):

Civil war is presently being kept at bay in Iraq by the religious leadership's calls for restraint and the absence of any broad-based communal involvement in the violence. Insurgent attacks alone are unlikely to cause this situation to change, even if they continue to focus on sectarian targets. Communal tensions are more likely to be enraged by the perception that state security forces – often thinly veiled vehicles for party political militias, organised along sectarian lines – are pursuing reprisal attacks against Sunni elements they accuse of complicity with the

insurgency. The developing influence of sect-based politics – a phenomenon initially enabled by the US approach to reconstructing Iraqi politics – is arguably a significant variable in the likelihood of an Iraqi civil war breaking out. Such a conflict is likely to resemble the Lebanese civil war, in which a bewildering array of competing militias with various external sponsors fought over the future of the country.

Moves towards re-integration (20% likelihood):

Early signs that the most radical insurgent groups may be responding to the broad sentiments of the Iraqi public, exhausted by decades of dictatorship and months of violence, may herald a movement towards the integration of insurgent elements into the political arena. Such a move would be dogged by problems, with more radical elements seeking to ruin the process. *Tanzim al Qa'ida* is likely to be a major spoiler in this scenario. Even so, major concessions would be required from other Iraqi groups for such a process of integration to happen.

Further Information

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