

Islamist Parties, Democracy and Media in Iraq

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**Islamist Parties and Constituencies,
Domestic and External Mechanisms,
and Democratization**

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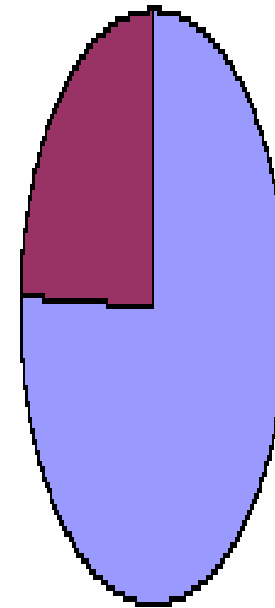
Project

- Survey of Satellite Channels in Iraq
 - Why satellite channels?
 - opposed to terrestrial channels can reach wider constituencies, especially during political campaigns
 - pluralistic mediated patronage networks
 - information for loyalty
1. Iraqis
 2. Iraqi diaspora (UK, US, Jordan, Iran)
 3. Arab world

Iraqi Ownership of Media

Equipment	Yes %	No %	DK/D R %
TV	98.8	1.2	0.0
Satellite Dish	70.3	29.7	0.0
Radio	87.6	12.1	0.3
Car Radio	53.3	46.5	0.2
Telephone (Land line)	65.4	34.1	0.5
Telephone (Cell)	17.2	82.7	0.1
Shortwave Radio	16.2	79.7	4.1
Personal Computer	13.0	86.6	0.4
Internet Connection	4.3	95.5	0.3

Availability of Home Satellite TV



■ Yes ■ No

Overview

- journalists and some politicians in Iraq argue that a professional & independent media that can allow views expressed by all of Iraq's communities is an important step towards establishing a democracy.
- In a country relatively new to independent media, freedom of expression can be abused.
 - How and why do Islamist parties express themselves in the media?
 - How and why do non-state Islamist movements communicate through other technological means?
 - What are the Islamist movements' stated opinions on Islam and Democracy?

Findings

- Iraq's ethno-sectarian media are providing the psychological groundwork for bitter divisiveness and conflict, with one channel already making direct exhortations for violence against other Iraqi communities. (Rwanda model)
- Media divided along ethno-sectarian lines have the potential to further the gap between Iraq's communities and weaken any kind of national belonging. (Bosnia model)
- Whether the state of Iraq will survive division is debatable, but the nation is already on a course of partition in terms of identity, helped by media which encourage this trend.

Shi'a Islamist Parties/UIA

The myth of monolithic sectarianism

The Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq Hakim

“Resistance”

“Supreme Iraqi Islamic Council”

The Da'wa Party Maliki/Adib Divide

The Sadr Trend Sadr/Ma'dan

Allies of the UIA include Faili and Turkmen Islamist parties

Al-Iraqiyya 25 April 2006

"Special Encounter"

- Maliki was asked if he calls for the establishment of an Islamic state in Iraq since he comes from an Islamic party, Al-Da'wa.
- Maliki: "I believe that what will be in line with my ideology as a Muslim is to have a Muslim society, a society whose social values respect Islam and abide by it. This is what I aspire for. But if the Iraqi people, through the mechanisms of democracy and with their free will, opt for a regime they want, be it an Islamist regime or otherwise, I will respect the Iraqi people's willpower."

"Special Encounter"

- Maliki uses the Iraqiyya channel, which is a public funded broadcaster dependent on state revenues to address the Iraqi public
- Through this medium he seeks to disavow himself of his party's Islamist roots, yet at the same time suggest that an Islamic state is possible if willed by the majority.
- "Islamist opacity"

Al-Istiqama 22 Aug 2006

- "The Identity of the Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq [SCIRI]"
- "It (SCIRI) would also continue to shoulder its responsibility until the Saddam dictatorship was toppled, and then would leave matters after that to the Iraqi people to choose the political regime that suits them through free and direct elections."
- used elements of its media empire to declare that SCIRI does not have an agenda to establish an Islamist state in Iraq
- assuaging notions that the party seeks to emulate Iran in establishing an Islamic Republic.

Al-Furat – “The Euphrates”

- 4 Nov 2004 started broadcasting
- SCIRI channel
- Supplements the paper al-Adalah/Al-Istiqima



Furat – SCIRI Agenda

- highlights the statements of SCIRI head Abdul Aziz al-Hakim
- songs promote unity among the various Iraqi sects
- glorifies the late M. Baqir al-Hakim and al-Sistani.
- ads promote UIA in the December elections, not other coalitions

Furat - Inferring Sectarianism

- "With the National Assembly"
- "Al-Furat and the People," phone-in program
- Friday Sermons – Shi'a Imams
- "The Most Virtuous People on Earth" Islamic cartoon show
- "Al-Furat Reports," an investigative show which deals with domestic issues affecting the lives of everyday Iraqis.
- "Deported in The Homeland" profiles internally displaced families

أشرف
أشرف لو اقدر أو كفكم
لو جئت أكبر وأقوى
ما جات خيلكم تمسروا بلدي
رام اسلمكم للشرطة
لان اعد اشراار والمراق
يحتاج الي كل شي
تكتبه منه .



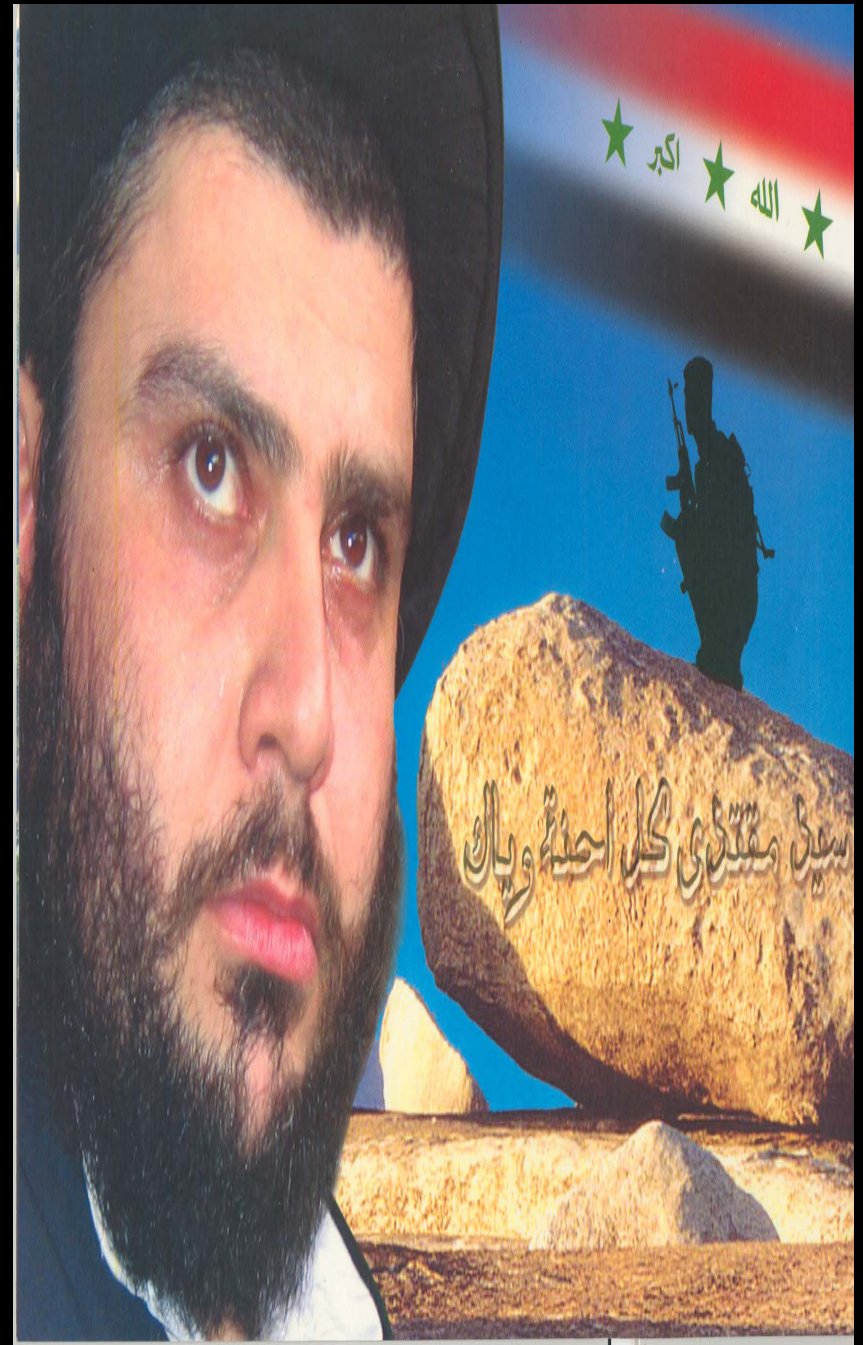
السورية
الربيع
استئناف الرحلات الجوية من وإلى مطار بغداد بعد

Anti-sabotage ad taking a child's perspective.

"I wish I could stop you. If I were bigger and stronger, I wouldn't let you destroy my country. I would hand you over to the police because you are bad, and Iraq needs everything you've stolen from it"
(*Al-Furat*, 22 March).

The Sadr Trend

- media combining populism, Iraqi nationalism, and demanding a role for Islam in the state
- opposes the velayet-e faqih system of Iran
- refers to “state of the Mahdi”



Sadr's Views on Religion and State

- what role can the *hawza* play in Iraq's political affairs
- Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr argued that the *hawza* was divided into an *al-hawza al-natiqa*, or the “outspoken *hawza*,” which he advocated
- opposed to the *al-hawza al-samita*, or “silent *hawza*” referring to Sistani, who had avoided confrontation with political authorities.
- Muqtada's followers support the *al-hawza al-natiqa*

Sistani

- Sharia should be institutionalized in the Iraqi constitution, but at the same time should guarantee the freedom of religion for Iraq's non-Muslim minorities.
- follows the views of his mentor, Ayatollah al-Khoei, who discouraged clerics from participating in political affairs.
- Opposes *velayat-e faqih*
- called for a state based on the principles of Sharia, but for Shia clerics to avoid direct participation in the institutions of the state.
- Views disseminated via traditional bayyan or internet

Sunni Islamist Parties/ Tawafuq Front

- The Myth of monolithic sectarianism
- **Iraqi Islamic Party** Hashimi/Mashhadani
- **Association of Muslim Scholars** Dari/Qubaysi
- **General Dialogue Conference** Dulaymi
 - Formerly the General Conference of Sunni Muslims
 - Dulaymi tribe also represented in the Islamic Army in Iraq

Al-Ra'y 25 Aug 2005

- Adnan al-Dulaymi, the former head of the Sunni Religious Endowments Bureau in Iraq. Al-Dulaymi Elements of Sunni nationalism
- “However, there are general principles which the Constitution should contain, such as Iraq’s sovereignty, Iraq's unity, shunning sectarianism, Iraq's belonging to its true Arab-Islamic identity, that Iraq is part of the Arab homeland, that Islam is the official religion of Iraq, and that any article of the Constitution and the various laws shall not conflict with Islam's constants ”

Iraqi Islamic Party: *Dar al-Islam*

1. To base our deeds on good intentions, which are dedicated to God Almighty, maintaining connection with the Almighty and trying to be closer to Him through good deeds.
2. No decision can be made without going through the shura [consultation] process.
3. To make all preparations and take the appropriate measure and then depend on God, in other words taking the causes and effects into consideration within the context of shari'a.
4. Following the rule, which says every person finds it easy if he is placed where he is created for, in other words putting the right person in the right place.
5. To adapt political action both in words and in deeds according to the regulations of shari'a.

Baghdad – Inferring Sectarianism

- phone-in programs
callers are virtually all
Sunni Arabs who
voice their opinions on
political, religious, or
social issues
- “Sunni” call for prayer
- Friday sermons from
Sunni mosques



Baghdad

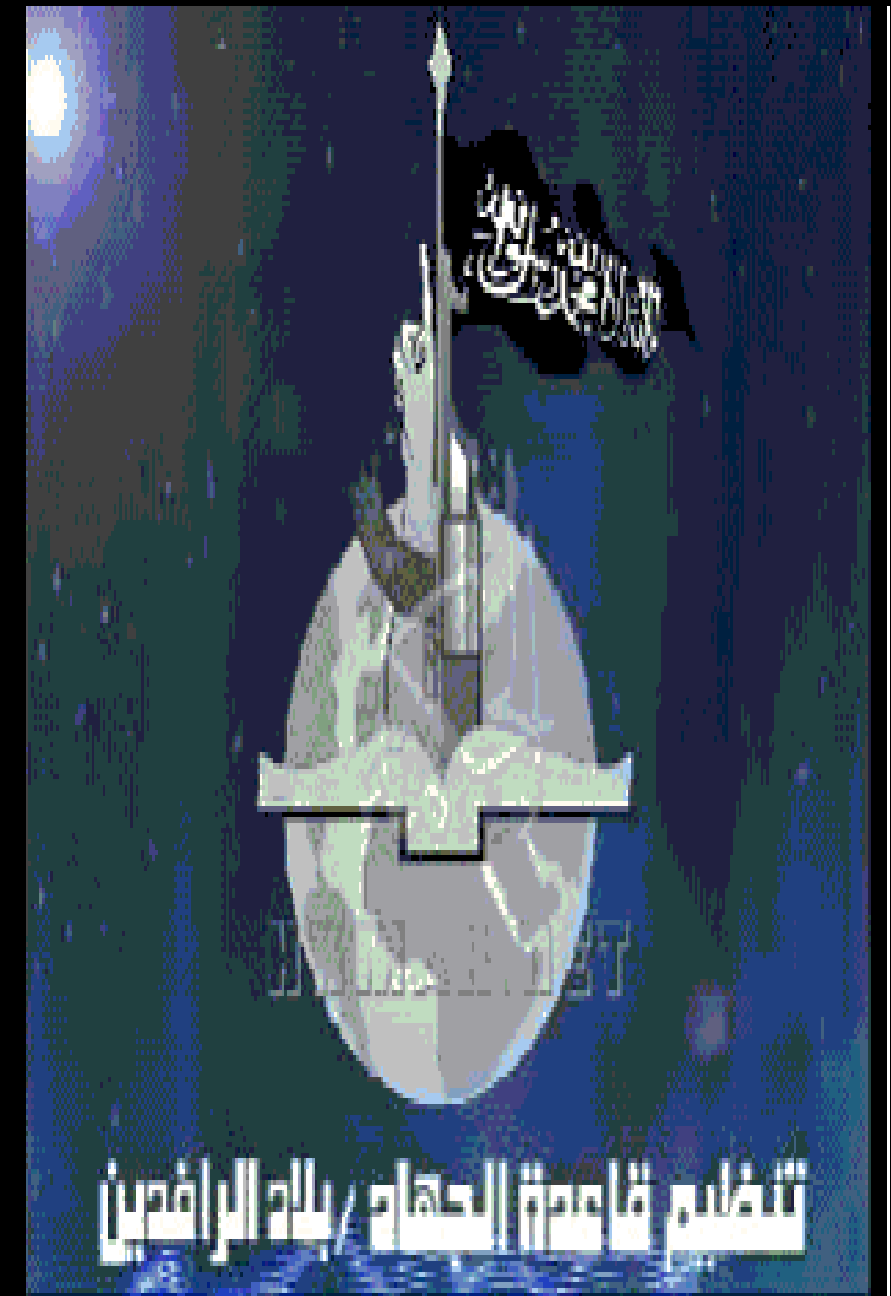
- music videos are religious in nature some secular nationalist songs, but no entertainment songs like Al-Sharqiyya
- begins and ends with Quranic recitations
- news anchorwomen wear the hijab

Programming

- "Explaining the Holy Koran"
- "In the Shadows of the Shari'a"
- "Fatwas on Air"
- "Friday Pulpit"
- "Baghdad Daily" features on-the-street interviews to give the "common man" view of current events in Iraq, particularly related to unemployment, the security situation and the reconstruction efforts
- "Your Place is Empty" focuses on the plight of Iraqi prisoners, a good number of which happen to be Arab Sunni, showing the circumstances of the prisoner's arrest by interviewing the prisoner's families

Neo-Salafist Movements

- Ansar al-Islam
- Jaysh al-Ansar al-Sunna
- Jama'at al-Jihad wal-Tawhid
- Al-Qa'ida fi Bilad al-Rafidayn
- **Constituencies:**
 - Arab and Muslim publics
 - Arab and Muslim governments
 - international governments

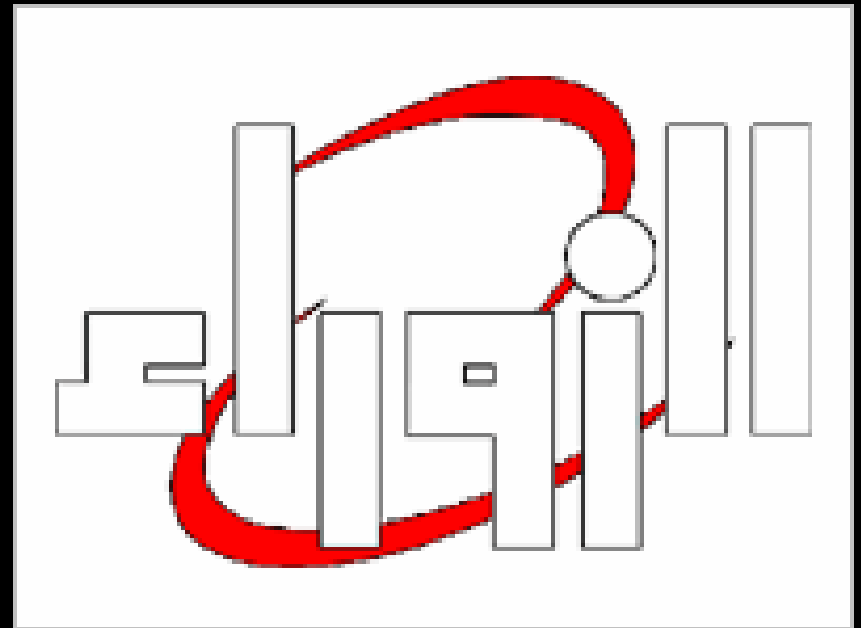


The Islamic State in Iraq

- Shaykh Abu-Hamzah al-Baghdadi August 2005, said in “The Constitution, the Creed of the Infidels”
- "the election is a wicked outgrowth of the many outgrowths of democracy, which is the greatest act of polytheism in this day and age"
- "we are ordered to not believe it [democracy] or its constitution, which is a ritual of democracy and its system."

Al-Zawraa TV

- station of Misha'an al Jabouri
- A secular entertainment channel that transitioned to the Islamist imaginary
- Broadcast on Nilesat
- Features Islamic Army in Iraq videos



النوراء



نَادَ الزُّورَاءَ وَالْمَقَاوِمَةَ تَمَطَّرَهُمْ بِوَابِلٍ مِنَ الرِّصَالِ



الزوراء

المقاومة تتصاعد

الزوراء

بين

Media Regulation

- CMC : "the principles of propriety, non-discrimination, fairness, honesty, accuracy, balanced treatment and the provision of the necessary protection against broadcast material that might include incitement to violence; **ethnic, nationalist or religious fanaticism**; or what might represent or reflect violence or fanaticism".
- al-Maliki renewed the ban on screening images of blood, killings & terror on Iraq-based satellite channels
- monetary fines not enforced

Conclusions

- From their media, Shi'a parties ostensibly have moderated their calls for an Islamic state
 - affected by moderation in Iran itself after 1989
 - Tensions between Persian and Arab, Qom vs. Najaf, Velayet-e faqih of Khamenei vs. Sistani
 - in power, but constrained by Kurdish parties, secular parties, and US
 - The PM office held by Da'wa vs. SCIRI
- From their media, Sunni parties ostensibly emerged as opposition, organized around an Islamist platform
 - Religious alternative to the Ba'ath
 - Reassembling the losing tribal networks
- Even the Islamic Army in Iraq “moderated” towards the Iraqi government
- Islamist vs Islamist in Iraq/Shi'a vs. Sunni

Conclusions

- Parties on both sides of the sectarian divide, are viewed as corrupt
 - Exiles, “traitors”, Iranian or Saudi puppets
- Their constituencies vote for them b/c they offer protection & lobby for the interests of their respective sectarian constituencies
- Votes given to Islamist parties because they can represent constituents sectarian interests
- Shi’a Islamists as democratic opportunists

Conclusions

- Content Analysis Results: Media not a direct party to the sectarian conflict
 - inculcation of sectarian identities
 - sectarian nationalism? Al-Wataniyya al-Shi'iyya
 - Divisive issues: Oil law, federalism, security from militias (Safavis/Takfiris)
 - Lack of direct exhortations to violence against Iraqis, but victimization
- the media still serves a Fourth Estate role of media in democracy by challenging authority
- channels often serve a public advocacy role, by providing a means to present the citizens' demands to the government

Conclusions

- The Iraqi media is pluralistic, but also fragmented
- plurality can be positive: the Iraqi media serve as outlets for all of Iraq's communities, regardless of political persuasion, profession or gender.
- marginalized groups who otherwise would have had no means to communicate their desires in Ba'athist Iraq theoretically now have the means to do so.
- Media controlled by Islamist elites who emerged during the monarchy
- “Lebanonization” of the Iraqi Media
 - ethno-sectarian media empires
 - has the potential of becoming a party to the conflict

Further Information

1. I. Al-Marashi, "Islamist Movements in Iraq," in Barry Rubin ed., *Global Survey of Islam* (New York: ME Sharpe, forthcoming 2007).
2. I. Al-Marashi, "The Dynamics of Iraq's Media: Ethno-Sectarian Violence, Political Islam, Public Advocacy, and Globalization" in Monroe Price, Douglas Griffin and Ibrahim Al-Marashi (eds.) *Toward an Understanding of Media Policy and Media Systems in Iraq*, Center for Global Communication Studies Occasional Paper no. 1, Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania, May 2007
 - http://www.global.asc.upenn.edu/docs/CGCS_OcPa_1.pdf