

Iraq in Perspective

An Orientation Guide



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A Brief Profile of Iraq

Introduction

Iraq stands at the threshold of momentous change. For the first time in their history, the Iraqi people have a real possibility of materializing a goal that other Middle Easterners only dare to dream about: founding a democratic system of government where the citizens control their own destiny and voice their opinions fearlessly. The American people back the Iraqis in this struggle for freedom and dignity; in order to optimize our support, however, it behooves us to familiarize ourselves with the culture and society of our friends.

In the following pages, we will acquaint ourselves with a few key elements of the Iraqi social structure, including folk ways, family relations, the role (both modern and traditional) of women, the rules of etiquette and hospitality, and naming conventions. In the process, we will discover the richness and depth of our friends' traditions and the uniqueness of their social customs. While there is no doubt that Iraqi mores epitomize the larger Arab culture, we will also find out that the people of this proud country have their own ways of doing things.



US Army photo
Iraqi children in school



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Photo: Bonsirven-Fontana
Sumerian wall painting

Historians refer to early Mesopotamia, the land now known as Iraq, as the cradle of civilization. It was here in the ancient city of Ur, not far from the confluence of the Rivers Tigris and Euphrates that Abraham, patriarch to the first Ishmaelite and Israelite tribes – read Arabs and Jews – smashed the idols and proclaimed the monotheistic creed. Right up to the current moment, history has never stopped unfolding in Mesopotamia/Iraq; the present work will highlight the important eras and events. And because history does not develop in a vacuum, but in a geographical context, this paper will also consider Iraq's borders, rivers, cities and oil fields. Later sections will examine the outlook for business and the economy in Iraq, the role of religion, the delights of Iraqi art, food and music, as well as the status of education and social services.

While even a careful reading of this information will not transform us into experts, we hope it will offer a glimpse into the current Iraqi reality. For those who seek to study this subject more deeply and extensively, a bibliography of hard-copy and on-line sources follows. To truly comprehend the present and future of Iraq, one must visit and see for oneself. Once the dust settles and the country returns to a semblance of law, order and prosperity, tourism will thrive. Ancient and recent history will come alive and will guide scholars, researchers and sightseers alike to a higher level of understanding and appreciation of this proud civilization.

Iraq in Facts and Figures¹

Government type:

None. Note: The Iraqi Interim Government (IG) was appointed on 1 June 2004.

Heads of government:

Iraqi Transitional Government (ITG) Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jafari (since April 2005); Deputy Prime Ministers Rowsch Shaways, Ahmad Chalabi, and Abid al-Mutlaq al-Jabbari (since May 2005).



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Iraqi flag

Chief of State:

Iraqi Transitional Government (ITG) President Jalal Talabani (since 6 April 2005); Deputy Presidents Adil Abd Al-Mahdi and Ghazi al-Ujayl al-Yawr (since 6 April 2005). Note: The President and Deputy Presidents comprise the Presidency Council.

Elections:

The last elections were held 30 January 2005 to elect a 275-member Transitional National Assembly that will draft a permanent constitution and pave the way for new national elections at the end of 2005.

Voting Age: 18

Autonomous Kurdish region: 36,300 km²



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Kurdish woman

Population: 26,074,906 (July 2005 est.)

Autonomous Kurdish population: 3 million. 2.01 million at 1987 census.

Population Growth Rate: 2.7% (2005 est.)

Population density: 46 persons per square km

Life expectancy: 68.7 years (2005 est.)

Languages: Arabic (official), Kurdish, Assyrian, Turkmani and Armenian (English frequently used in business).

Ethnic divisions: Arab: 75-80%; Kurdish: 15-20%; Turkmen, Assyrian and other 5%.

¹ From the website of the CIA World Factbook: <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ir.html>
The materials below are adapted from Library of Congress, CIA fact sheets, the State Department, the *Encyclopedia of the Orient* and EasternCompany.com.

Religions:

Muslim 97% (Shi'a and Sunni); Christian, Yazidism, Mandeans and other 3%.

Border: 3,650 km (Iran 1,460 km, Turkey 352 km, Syria 605 km, Jordan 181 km, Saudi Arabia 814 km and Kuwait 240 km).

Area: 435,052 square kilometers.

Coastline: 58 km

Highest point: Haji Ibrahim 3,600 m

Arable land: 12%

Location: Southwest Asia

Neighboring countries:

- North: Turkey
- East: Iran
- South: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Arabian Gulf
- West: Jordan and Syria

Currency: Iraqi Dinar

Official Holidays

- 1 January: New Year's Day.
- 6 January: Army day.
- 8 February: anniversary of the 1963 revolution
- 14 July: anniversary of the 1958 revolution
- 17 July: anniversary of the 1968 revolution
- Muslim celebrations honored as public holidays in Iraq; their dates depend on the lunar calendar.
 - Eid Al-Fitr, 3 days after finishing the 30-day fast of Ramadan
 - Eid Al-Adha 4 days, Feast of sacrifice
 - Islamic New Year: 1 day, the 1st of Muharram
 - Birthday of the Prophet Muhammad: 1 day, the 12th of Rabe'e al-thaania



Judicial System

The judicial system in Iraq depends, for most of its legislation, upon the laws issued in old times. Thereafter, and through the process of modernization of laws and regulations, many principles and articles of the French law were extracted and included in provisions of the new laws and regulations. The courts in Iraq consist of:

- The preliminary courts:
 - 1- Courts of first instance
 - 2- Courts of personal status
 - 3- Criminal / Investigative Courts
- The higher courts:
 - 1- Courts of Appeal
 - 2- Courts of Cassation (abrogation, annulment)

The higher courts scrutinize and consider the legal challenges submitted against rulings of the preliminary courts.

Transactional Laws

Until the fall of the Iraqi regime, all transactions and business ventures had to be sanctioned and approved by the government. Iraq had a constitution but in most cases it was merely a straw man that carried little weight in society. All laws were prescribed and carried out by the RCC (Revolutionary Command Counsel) under direct supervision of the Iraqi dictatorship.

Civil courts followed the Islamic Law (*Sharia*). Now that the former regime is out of power, a revised constitution is being drafted. A new set of laws and guidelines might promote democracy, equality and prosperity for all Iraqis.

Exports: Crude oil & refined products, fertilizer, sulfur.

Industries: Petroleum products & refining, chemicals, textiles, construction materials, food processing.

Agriculture: Principle products – wheat, barley, rice, vegetables, dates and other fruits, cotton, wool, livestock – cattle, sheep.



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Shepherds in Shinjar

Natural resources: Petroleum, natural gas, phosphates, sulfur, salt, coal, gypsum.

Geography

Major Rivers, Water Resources

Iraq is the old land of Mesopotamia: a fertile land between the two rivers of Tigris (length inside Iraq 1418 km) and the Euphrates (length inside Iraq 1160 km). These two rivers flow through Iraq from the northern and western parts and meet 10 km north of Basra, forming the Shatt al Arab River (length 110 km), which then flows into the Gulf.



© UNESCO.org, Photo: Bonsirven-Fontana
Boats in the marshes

Major Cities and Population

Baghdad (5.6 million)

Mosul (1.7 million)

Basra (1.3 million)

Irbil (840,000)

Kirkuk (730,000)

Sulaymaniyah (640,000)

Najaf (560,000)

Karbala (550,000)

Nasiriyah (530,000)

Al Hillah (520,000)

Ramadi (420,000)

Diwaniyya (420,000)

Kut (380,000)

Al Amarah (340,000)

Ba'qubah (280,000)

Fallujah (260,000)

Samarra (200,000)

Zubayr (170,000)

Kufa (110,000)

Tikrit (100,000)

Dahuk (47,000)

** All figures are 2002 estimates.*

Climate

As part of a large continental land mass, Iraq's climate ranges from temperate in the north to subtropical in the south. The mountainous area in the north has cool summers and cold winters, but in the south and central areas, the summer is long and hot, and the winter is short and cool. The average temperature in Baghdad is 5-9°C; in January. The highest temperature recorded was 51°C average in July & 40-45°C in August. Baghdad has temperate temperatures varying between 10°C and 34°C.



© Aramco Services Company
View of the Tigris

Iraq depends on water from the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, as rainfall is insufficient. The annual rainfall in inhabited areas varies between 150 ml (south) and 700 ml (north). Rainfall in the Northern highlands area is considerable from October to May averaging 1000 ml, but in the south and central alluvial plain, the average is approximately 75-100 ml. The area of the two rivers, where most people live, is swampy. Irrigation is extensively used in agriculture, which once was the foundation of the very first civilizations in human history.

History

Introduction

The borders of the young nation of Iraq encompass the ancient land of Mesopotamia, the cradle of civilization, the birthplace of agriculture, cities, and western religion. “The word ‘Mesopotamia’ comes from Greek (*mesos* ‘middle’ and *potamos* ‘river’, i.e. ‘land between the rivers’²).” From 3800 BCE³ to the present day, empires have risen there, clashed with rivals, and fallen, giving way to new civilizations along with homegrown dictators and invading armies. The early Arab conquerors were the first to name this region ‘Iraq,’ an Assyrian word meaning ‘land of black soil’⁴. To better comprehend the recent cataclysms there, Iraq should be viewed and understood in the context of its ancient, medieval, and modern history.



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Sassanid ruins

Ancient Cultures

Sumeria



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Photo: Bonsirven-Fontana
Sumerian statuette

Ancient Sumer represents the first civilization with available historical data. Historians believe that Sumer started in 5000 BCE as a humble cluster of agricultural settlements in the vicinity of the lower Euphrates and Tigris Rivers in southern Mesopotamia. Contemplating 7000 years of human habitation may inspire awe, but the Sumerians themselves might claim a more extended lineage according to the records of a scribe from four millennia ago: "After kingship had descended from heaven, Eridu became the seat of kingship. In Eridu Aululim reigned 28,800 years as king. Alalgar reigned 36,000 years. Two kings reigned 64,800 years. Eridu was abandoned and its kingship was carried off to Bad-tabira... The FLOOD then swept over⁵..."

² From the website of Dr. John Heise, author of *Akkadian Language*:
http://saturn.sron.nl/~jheise/akkadian/Welcome_mesopotamia.html

³ Carbon-14 radiological evidence indicates that nomadic cultures wandered Mesopotamia as early as 7500 BCE. The abbreviation “BCE” signifies “Before the Christian Era” replacing BC (Before Christ), whereas “CE” stands for the “Christian Era” in place of “AD” (Anno Domini). According to John A. Halloran, archaeological sites reveal the migration of the Kermanshah (7500-5600 BCE), Samarra (5700-4900 BCE), and Ubaid (5200-4500 BCE) cultures. Source: <http://www.sumerian.org/map.htm>

⁴ From a discussion with Professor Edward Sidhom at the Defense Language Institute, 3 June 2003.

⁵ From a clay tablet written during the reign of King Utukhegal of Erech (Uruk), c 2125 BCE, appearing on the website of Dr. John Paul Adams, Professor of Ancient History at California State University, Northridge: <http://www.csun.edu/~hcfl1004/sumking.html>

Precise dates for the exact origins of the Sumerian civilization remain in question, but the earliest inscriptions in Sumerian—not a member of the Semitic family of languages—date back to 3100 BCE, which may represent the beginning of Sumer culture. In any case, all dates in the present work on ancient history must be considered rough approximations. The well-known *Epic of Gilgamesh*, though not preserved in cuneiform writing on tablets until 750 BCE⁶, records the adventures of the Sumerian King of Uruk in 2600 BCE. The city-state of Uruk lay in close proximity to Ur, where Abraham, patriarch to the first Ishmaelite and Israelite tribes (i.e. Arabs and Jews), smashed the idols and proclaimed the oneness of God in 2000 BCE.



© UNESCO.org, Photo: Bonsirven-Fontana
Engraved clay tablet, ca. 4000 BCE

Akkadia and Babylonia

Akkadian tribes entered the scene from the west in 2300 BCE, bringing with them Emperor Sargon and the Akkadian language, “the oldest known member of the family of Semitic languages, [which] succeeded Sumerian as the vernacular tongue of Mesopotamia and was spoken by the Babylonians and Assyrians over a period of nearly two thousand years⁷.” The Empire of Babylonia gained ascendancy in 2100 BCE after a relatively short Akkadian hegemony. “Historically and ethically, Babylonia was the product of the union of the Akkadians and the Sumerians⁸.” The Babylonians ruled Mesopotamia, led by ancient history’s first great lawgiver, King Hammurabi (1792-1750 BCE⁹). “The Code of Hammurabi is of a composite and heterogeneous character. It mingles the most enlightened of laws with the most barbarous punishments, and sets trial by ordeal right next to elaborate judicial procedures. Yet, taken as a whole, the 285 laws, arranged in a somewhat haphazard order, form a law code more advanced than that of the Assyrians a thousand years later¹⁰.” Hammurabi did more than legislate. He led his city-state in conquest, construction and irrigation projects, thus generating much wealth for his city’s people.



© UNESCO.org,
Photo: E. Barrios
Ruins of Babylon

⁶ From the webpage of Dr. William Jones, Professor of History at Mt. San Antonio College, found on the website of the American Historical Association: <http://www.theaha.org/tl/LessonPlans/ca/Jones/gil.htm>

⁷ From the following webpage: <http://www.crystalinks.com/akkadia.html>

⁸ From the website of the Quartz Hill School of Theology: <http://www.theology.edu/lec22.htm>

⁹ Date furnished by pages from the website of the British Museum: http://www.mesopotamia.co.uk/time/explore/frame_mes.html

¹⁰ Quartz Hill School of Theology website.

Hittites, Kassites, Assyrians, and Aramaeans

Shortly after Hammurabi's death, Babylon fell into chaos, leaving this advanced culture vulnerable to attack. The Hittites, a non-Semitic people invading from the present-day areas of Turkey and Syria, occupied parts of Babylonia between 1650 and 1200 BCE¹¹. The Kassites, another non-Semitic people, "may have come from the mountains to the east of Mesopotamia, and ruled Babylonia from about 1500



© Aramco Services Company
Detail of Assyrian relief

BCE until 1150 B.C. They were the longest ruling dynasty in Babylonian history¹²." Meanwhile in northern Mesopotamia, the Assyrians began their era of conquest in 1360 BCE until checked by the Aramaeans in 1000 BCE and the Chaldeans in 626 BCE. Aramaic became the lingua franca of the Near East, spoken throughout the lands now covered by Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and beyond. Jesus of Nazareth spoke Aramaic, and the *Talmud*, the compendium of ancient and classical Jewish law, was written in Aramaic.



© UNESCO.org,
Photo: E. Barrios
Parthian sculpture

Persians

The Persian Empire conquered Mesopotamia in 530 BCE and held it within its sphere of influence for two centuries until defeated by Alexander the Great, who died in Babylon in 323 BCE. Hellenic rule held sway in Mesopotamia until 238 BCE, when the Persians returned and established the Parthian Empire. Despite its ethnic Persian origins, Parthian society carried on the Hellenic traditions. The Sassanid Empire, also based in Persia and extending to Mesopotamia and beyond, arrived in 224 CE, restored Persian culture, and remained in control until the Arab-Islamic conquest in 651 CE.

Arab-Islamic Era

In the year 680 CE, a decisive battle was fought at Karbala, where the Shiite leader Hussein was killed when claiming the leading position in the Caliphate. The battle was not militarily important, but had far-reaching political and religious ramifications, as this became the final schism between Sunnis and Shiites. Although in later centuries Iraq would eventually become a Shiite majority state, the Shiites lost the battle of Karbala and the first great Arab-Islamic dynasty to rule Iraq was a Sunni one, that of the Abbasids, who began their 500-year reign in 750. Among the great Caliphs who ruled from Baghdad was Haroun al-Rasheed, during whose reign the Islamic World stretched from the borders of China in the East to Spain in the West.

¹¹ Date furnished by British Museum website.

¹² *ibid*.



© 2003 clipart.com
Mongols taking Baghdad

In Muslim history, the Abbasid period is said to have inspired the most elevated scientific works and is often regarded as the golden age of Muslim civilization. Especially through the 9th and 10th centuries, the Muslims translated, transmitted, and built upon the scientific and philosophical achievements of the Greeks, Romans, Persians, and Hindus. During this same time period, Europe was unable to contribute much to the cultural and scientific fields. In 1258 the Mongols came and destroyed Baghdad. Citizens were massacred, and the Caliph was executed. The caliphate ended, and development in Baghdad and its provinces went dormant for centuries.

The Ottomans

The Ottoman Empire

By the early fifteenth century, after two hundred years of mass murder, pillaging, and wholesale destruction by the Mongols, the land of Iraq lay in ruins. Little remained of the Abbasid glories of Baghdad. There followed a century of internecine conflicts among the Turkmen rulers and three decades of Iranian Shiite rule under the Safavids. The Ottoman Turks regarded the Shiites as a threat to Sunni hegemony and sought to bar them from Anatolia. In 1533, the Ottoman Turkish sultan Suleyman I (Suleyman the Magnificent), began a campaign to conquer the land of Iraq, culminating in victory in 1534. Ottoman conquest over the Safavids also meant Sunni triumph over the Shiites. From that point until 1920, Iraq became part of the Ottoman Empire, and with a few brief exceptional periods, Sunni Islam would dominate over its Shiite counterpart. “During the Ottoman period, the Sunnis gained the administrative experience that would allow them to monopolize political power in the twentieth century. The Sunnis were able to take advantage of new economic and educational opportunities while the [Shiites], frozen out of the political process, remained politically impotent and economically depressed¹³.”



© 2003 clipart.com
Sultan Suleyman

Although later generations of Arabs would eventually regard the Turks as hostile aliens, the Ottoman Empire revived Iraq by providing peace and security, thus helping to restore its culture and economy. After Suleyman the Magnificent, however, corruption increasingly infested and weakened the Ottoman administration. At the turn of the seventeenth century, tribal rule came to fill the vacuum of power. It was not until 1869 that the Ottomans effectively asserted their authority in the person of Midhat Pasha, the governor of Baghdad. Midhat undertook a number of key projects to reform and modernize the military, legal, and administrative systems. Secular education was introduced, emulating the western model. At the same time, western political and commercial influence began to increase in Iraq.

¹³ From the Library of Congress country study website on Iraq:
[http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstty:@field\(DOCID+iq0018\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstty:@field(DOCID+iq0018))

In the early twentieth century, the ‘Young Turks’ seized the reigns of power in Istanbul. “They stressed secular politics and patriotism over the pan-Islamic ideology preached by Sultan Abd al Hamid¹⁴.” Sensing the mood of the times, Iraqi Arab nationalism took root and its proponents began to press for independence.



© 2003 clipart.com
Turkish troops train in Baghdad, 1908

British Occupation

The British

Full independence for Iraq would be delayed by a period of British rule. The outbreak of the First World War in 1914 brought the British military to southern Iraq. Three years later, they occupied Baghdad. In 1919, at the Paris Peace Conference, Iraq was placed under the British mandate and would prove difficult to govern, due in large part to a myriad of conflicting interests: Shiite vs. Sunni, Arab vs. Kurd, city dweller vs. marsh dweller vs. Bedouin, north vs. south, and tribe vs. tribe. In 1920, the ‘Great Iraqi Revolution’ took place, which brought together Shiites and Sunnis, city folk and tribes, north and south. Although the British would eventually smash the rebellion, the seeds of independence were sewn: resentment against British control grew in all quarters of Iraqi society, and nationalists agitated ever more intensely to expel the British.

It was the Hashemite family of Hussein, the then Sherif of Mecca, who had led the Arab revolt against the Turks. And it was Hussein’s son Faisal whom the British appointed in 1921 as king of Iraq. Faisal faced pressure from both sides: from the British to protect



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Aerial view of Baghdad, 1927

their commercial and political interests, especially the development and exploitation of petroleum, and from the nationalists to expel the British. Treaties were signed, abrogated, and renegotiated between the British and the Iraqi nationalists. Although Iraq finally became an independent republic in 1932, factional fighting, military coups d’etat, and foreign meddling have combined to deprive the Iraqi people of tranquility for any extended period of time, up to the present.

¹⁴ ibid.

The Kurdish Question

The Kurds are a large ethnic minority group that has never actually controlled Mesopotamia, but lays claim to a long history in this part of the world. The Kurdish language, though written in the Arabic script, is not structurally or genetically related to that Semitic tongue. Rather, Kurdish is a member of the Indo-European family, and is much closer to Persian, Pashto, and Beluchi. Over the centuries, the Kurdish language has trifurcated into the Kurmanci, Sorani, and Zazaki dialects. Although the Kurds are a people who have never had a state of their own, they struggled very hard to rectify their statelessness in the twentieth century. Since the end of the First World War, the Kurds in Iraq have risen up four times for independence: 1919-1923, 1933, 1961-1970, and 1975-1991 “with several pauses¹⁵.”

One Iraqi government after another has quashed these rebellions, but none has done so as viciously as the Baathist regime of Saddam Hussein. From 1987 to 1989, Saddam’s forces committed genocide against the Kurdish people, utilizing poison gas as well as conventional means to murder the Kurds. “Since 1975, over 4,000 Kurdish villages had been destroyed; by a conservative estimate more than 100,000 rural Kurds had died in Anfal alone¹⁶.” Anfal is “the name given by the Iraqis to a series of military actions which lasted from February 23 until September 6, 1988. While it is impossible to understand the Anfal campaign without reference to the final phase of the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq War, Anfal was not merely a function of that war. Rather, the winding-up of the conflict on Iraq's terms was the immediate historical circumstance that gave Baghdad the opportunity to bring to a climax its longstanding efforts to bring the Kurds to heel¹⁷.”



US Dept. of State photo
Kurdish refugees

¹⁵ Burkay, Kemal, “The Kurdish Question: Its History and Present Situation,” published on the web: <http://members.aol.com/KHilfsvere/Kurds.html>

¹⁶ Salih, Khaled, “Anfal: The Kurdish Genocide in Iraq” Goteborgs Universitet website: <http://www.xs4all.nl/~tank/kurdish/htdocs/his/Khaledtext.html>

¹⁷ From *Genocide in Iraq: The Anfal Campaign Against the Kurds*, 1993, Human Rights Watch, Website: <http://www.rightsmaps.com/html/anfalbeg.html>

Economy

International Organizations

No country lives in isolation. Even hyper-xenophobic North Korea belongs to the United Nations and trades with its neighbors. Baathist Iraq was a closed society, but never as closed as North Korea. On the other hand, it also did not offer the kind of openness found in Western democracies. Nonetheless, under Saddam and to this day, Iraq does maintain diplomatic relations with most other countries in the world and participates actively in certain international organizations.

OPEC and the Arab League

With the world's second largest oil reserve, Iraq has figured prominently in OPEC since its inception. In fact, Iraq was one of the five founding members (in addition to Iran, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela) when OPEC was established in Baghdad in 1960.¹⁸ Fifteen years prior to the launching of OPEC, Iraq, along with Egypt, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Transjordan and Yemen, helped to establish the League of Arab States. Article II of the Arab League Charter states, "The League has as its purpose the strengthening of the relations between the member-states, the coordination of their policies in order to achieve co-operation between them and to safeguard their independence and sovereignty."¹⁹

Article V goes on to say, "Any resort to force in order to resolve disputes between two or more member-states of the League is prohibited."²⁰ Saddam ran afoul of this article in 1990 when the Iraqi army invaded Kuwait.

Thus, three of Iraq's Arab League co-founders – Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Syria – participated actively in Desert Storm to expel the Iraqi occupation. Kuwait might have forgiven Saddam eventually, were it not for the 600

Kuwaitis who were at the time believed to be languishing in Iraqi prisons since the invasion.²¹ Most other Arab League members have come to Iraq's defense, at least verbally, since the mid-1990s, when the economic sanctions started to take a toll on the health and well-being of the Iraqi population. With a few exceptions, most notably Kuwait and Qatar, the League sided with Iraq and verbally opposed the US-led "Operation Iraqi Freedom." They provided no support, however, in the way of men or materiel.



¹⁸ Information from OPEC's official website, www.opec.org.

¹⁹ From <http://www.middleeastnews.com/arabLeagueCharter.html>

²⁰ *ibid.*

²¹ Ayyoub, Tareq, "Kuwaiti official urges Jordan to mediate for release of 'prisoners' in Iraq" from *The Jordan Times*, 8 July 1999.

The United Nations

More than any other international organization, the United Nations has involved itself intimately with the recent history of Iraq. It was the UN Security Council, after all, which condemned Iraq's occupation of Kuwait²² and later took the lead in

- ordering Iraq to destroy its weapons of mass destruction
- monitoring the disarmament process, and
- imposing sanctions on the Iraqi government for failure to comply²³.

The United Nations Special Committee (UNSCOM), which came into being in 1991, supervised the monitoring. Its mission was “to carry out immediate on-site inspections of Iraq's biological, chemical and missile capabilities; to take possession for destruction, removal or rendering harmless of all chemical and biological weapons and all stocks of agents and all related sub-systems and components and all research, development, support and manufacturing facilities; to supervise the destruction by Iraq of all its ballistic missiles with a range greater than 150 km and related major parts, and repair and production facilities; and to monitor and verify Iraq's compliance with its undertaking not to use, develop, construct or acquire any of the items specified above²⁴.” It was later (in 1999) replaced by the UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC).

Oil for Food plan



US Army photo
Distribution of food rations

In 1995, The UN Security Council organized the “Oil for Food” program, under the auspices of which the government of Iraq could sell its oil and use it to buy food, medicine, and other human necessities, as well as petroleum industry spare parts. Some of the remaining funds earned went towards war reparations to Kuwait and to pay for the activities of UNSCOM and UNMOVIC.

Oil for Food did not reduce the widespread suffering, nor did it provide supplies in a full and timely manner. Iraq's children continued to suffer from malnutrition-related diseases and death. Those children spared from death remained deprived of essential rights addressed in the Convention of Rights of the Child.

Not all of the UN activities in Iraq dealt with war or oil. The following UN agencies were on the ground in Baghdad and beyond, working for the welfare of all Iraqi citizens, but especially the children:

- OCHA - UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
- OHCHR - Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights
- UNDP - UN Development Program

²² Security Council Resolutions regarding Iraq and Kuwait, 1990-1991: 660, 661, 662, 664, 665, 666, 667, 669, 670, 674, 677, 678, 685 from the UN website: <http://www.un.org/documents/scres.htm>

²³ Security Council Resolutions regarding Iraq, 1991 to the present: 687, 699, 707, 715, 1060, 1115, 1134, 1137, 1154, 1194, 1205, and 1441, *ibid*.

²⁴ From the UNSCOM page of the UN's website: <http://www.un.org/Depts/unscom/General/basicfacts.html>

- UNEP - UN Environment Program
- UNESCO - UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
- UNFPA - UN Population Fund
- UNHCR - UN High Commissioner for Refugees
- UNICEF - UN Children's Fund
- WFP - World Food Program
- WHO - World Health Organization

Kofi Annan, head of the General Assembly, called for the EU and the UN to help repair the rifts that came about in the months preceding the US-led coalition's military operations in Iraq. "No issue has so divided the world since the end of the cold war," Mr. Annan told the EU Conference in Athens. "It is vital that we heal that division now. The world cannot afford a long period of recrimination²⁵." On the 9th of May 2003, US representative to the UN, Mr. John Negroponte, introduced a "draft resolution to the United Nations Security Council tomorrow calling for the lifting of sanctions on Iraq and dealing with the UN role there²⁶." The resolution was eventually adopted.

2003 proved to be a pivotal year for the people of Iraq. Establishing a democracy and democratic institutions will be an arduous struggle and set-backs are to be expected in an area of the world which has known nothing but dictatorship. It is hoped that the many agencies of the United Nations working in Iraq will continue their worthwhile endeavors to contribute to the hope and progress of the Iraqi people.

Business Outlook

The Outlook for Business and the Economy in Post-Saddam Iraq

Business will flourish in post-Saddam Iraq, but without a crystal ball, no one can say for sure how the Iraqi economy will look ten years from now, five years from now, or even just one year from now. The Iraqi people, nevertheless, can rely on certain premises:

1. Below the Iraqi ground lie vast reserves of oil. Once the petroleum infrastructure returns online in good repair, this fossil wealth will fuel all manner of economic development.
2. Beneath the surface chaos in the streets of Baghdad and Basra lies a profound national aspiration for normalcy. The Iraqi people yearn for the kind of routines which we Americans take for granted: going to work in the morning, earning a decent living, sending the children off to school each day, and exchanging goods and services in the market place.

²⁵ From the UN News Center web page, 8 May 2003:
<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=6782&Cr=Europe&Cr1=Annan>

²⁶ Ibid, 9 May 2003.



US Marine Corps, photo
Workers at a water treatment plant

This paper aimed originally at describing the Iraqi business atmosphere. At the time of this writing, however, the economy stands in paralysis and ruin. The repercussions of the recent military operations by the US-led coalition pale in comparison with the disastrous aftermath of the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988), Desert Storm (1991)²⁷, twelve years of trade sanctions, (1990-2003), and twenty-four years of corruption and mismanagement under Saddam Hussein (1979-2003).

Therefore, rather than offer a snapshot of wreckage, the current work will attempt to sketch out the possibilities for the near and mid-term future. First, however, some recent historical facts will set the context.

How did the Economy Sink so Low?

To understand the current economic conditions in Iraq well enough to hypothesize about the future, it behooves us to grasp the magnitude of the destructive forces which have worked against production and consumption in Iraq since the Baathists seized power in 1968. The Baathist Party ideology rests on two bases: socialism and Arab nationalism. As to the former, “the Iraqi track record is depressing. Iraq has a long history of under-achievement... It is depressing to read the history of Iraqi industry, with the transition from vibrant private enterprise to state-run firms with modern technology surviving only thanks to heavy protection and generous subsidies²⁸.”

Using the Baathist Party apparatus as a criminal gang, Saddam tightened his grip on all aspects of life in Iraq and especially the petroleum industry. He enriched himself and his family with Iraq’s oil profits. The rest of the petro-dinars he spent on arming Iraq to the teeth and attacking Iran (1980-1988) and Kuwait (1990). “Unsustainable non-productive services sectors, particularly the military, expanded at the expense of productive sectors such as manufacturing industry and agriculture. Skilled labor was absorbed by the military effort and directly-productive investment was hampered as effort centered on strategic investments to aid the war effort²⁹.” “This massive military expenditure came at the expense of the Iraqi people, whose suffering was prolonged by economic duress – a professor at the University of Baghdad making \$120 per month at that time is presently reduced to \$12 a month³⁰.”

²⁷ “It is estimated that about 80% of Iraq's economic infrastructure was destroyed during the bombings” (by the coalition forces during Desert Storm), web-based “Educational Module on Chemical and Biological Weapons (CBW) Non-proliferation” by SIPRI, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, the Free University Brussels, and the International Relations and Security Network
<http://cbw.sipri.se/cbw/002020400.html>

²⁸ Clawson, Patrick, “Oil and the Iraqi Economy,” a speech given at the AEI Conference on Post-Saddam Iraq (Washington), 3 October 2002.

²⁹ Mahdi, Kamil, “Rehabilitation Prospects for the Iraqi Economy,” published in *The International Spectator*, Page 2, Volume XXXIII, July-September 1998.

³⁰ Al-Tae, Aziz, “An Iraqi-American’s Perspective on the State of the Iraqi Economy,” page 1, opinion column on www.iraqiamericans.com, 28 April 2003.

Therein lies the danger of a state-owned industry, especially with a ruthless dictator at its helm: instead of answering to the demands of stock-holders, he steers the enterprise to his own ends. Clawson, however, reminds us that even in a democratically run country with private enterprise, “oil wealth can distort an economy, leading people to concentrate their efforts on how to grab part of that wealth instead of on productive economic activities³¹.” Thus the following questions arise: in a market-driven economy dominated by oil, how best can Iraq utilize its prodigious underground reservoirs of black gold to (a) generate wealth directly and immediately, and (b) diversify its industrial base?



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The end of an era

Reconstruction

“Iraq needs an economic strategy which is based on restoration of essential utilities, rebuilding the public education and health services, selectively rehabilitating industrial plant, encouraging investment in raising agricultural productivity, and developing the potential of the oil sector. It is also necessary to restore confidence in the country's economic future³².”

US-led coalition forces continue their endeavor to turn the lights back on and restore water, telephone service and other essential utilities. To rebuild the Iraqi economy however, will entail an enormous investment of both human and financial resources. In terms of the former, the Iraqi people have the know-how and the ambition to transform their country into an economic powerhouse: “Perhaps as important to the country's economic future is its wealth of human capital: its well-educated and hard-working people have a deserved reputation in the Middle East³³.” Moreover, the US is home to 300,000 Iraqi expatriates, many of whom represent the professional elite: scholars, physicians, engineers, scientists, and entrepreneurs. These Iraqi-Americans will do their utmost to participate in the reconstruction of their homeland: “Iraqi-Americans are already playing a vital role in the current national debate on Iraq and an even more important role in a post-Saddam Iraq. Because they understand both the American way of life and Iraqi culture, they can serve as a vital link between the United States’ national interests and the Iraqi people’s legitimate objectives. Many Iraqi-Americans have achieved personal success in their own right in American society and are willing to share their time, talent and financial resources to help rebuild Iraq³⁴.”



© El Mundo
Hope for the future?

³¹ Ibid.

³² Mahdi, page 23.

³³ Clawson, page 3.

³⁴ Al-Tae, page 3.



© Aramco Services Company
Factory worker in Baghdad

Which tasks must take priority on the Iraqi reconstruction “to-do” list? “The top priorities are humanitarian aid, restoring order to ransacked urban areas, and getting Iraq's oil revenues flowing again³⁵.” Because of the sanctions and other factors discussed above, the Iraqi petroleum industry infrastructure has fallen into disrepair: “Oil experts believe it may take up to \$10 billion to bring the Iraqi oil production back to its 1990 level before the war³⁶.” The output plummeted from 3.12 million barrels per day (mbd) before the 1990 occupation of Kuwait, to about 0.5 mbd after the sanctions took effect³⁷. “Iraq could increase output to 4.5 mbd within less than three years, on the way up to 6.0 mbd within five to six years and 8.0 mbd within eight to ten years. Iraq's present reserves are large enough to sustain output at the eight mbd mark and there is excellent reason to expect that additional exploration will turn up extra reserves³⁸.”

Agriculture

Future of Agriculture

Iraq is blessed not only with reservoirs of oil beneath the surface, but rivers of water above, indeed, “more water per capita than any other Middle Eastern Country³⁹.” Iraq is nonetheless an arid country whose agricultural sector was mismanaged under Saddam’s regime. The principal agricultural products are wheat, barley, rice, vegetables, dates and other fruits, cotton, wool, and livestock – cattle and sheep. On 22 April 2003, Mr. Trevor Flugge, an Australian agricultural expert, agreed “to lead an experienced team of Australian agricultural and food security advisers to work with senior Iraqi agriculture officials on reconstruction plans for Iraq’s agriculture sector⁴⁰.” The significance of an Australian to lead this endeavor should not be discounted: Australia deals with at least two of the same major problems facing Iraqi farmers: aridity and salinity.



U.S. Air Force Photo
Walking through the fields

³⁵ Francis, David R., “Recipe for Iraq’s Economy: Oil, Entrepreneurship,” from the website of the *Christian Science Monitor*, April 23, 2003 edition - <http://www.csmonitor.com/2003/0423/p02s01-woiq.html>

³⁶ Rahn, Richard, “Coming Battle to Restore Iraq’s Economy,” in the 9 April 2003 website edition of the *Washington Times*, <http://www.washtimes.com/commentary/20030409-50770409.htm>

³⁷ Mahdi, page 6.

³⁸ Clawson, page 1.

³⁹ Clawson, page 3.

⁴⁰ Press release, 22 April 2003, by Alexander Downer, Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, http://www.foreignminister.gov.au/releases/2003/joint_iraq.html



© El Mundo
Backbreaking labor

Meanwhile, the US Department of Agriculture has named Dan Astutz to head up the US government's agricultural rebuilding projects in Iraq. Astutz is the president of an agribusiness consulting company and will seek to facilitate communications between the Iraqi Ministry of Agriculture and the USDA. Iraq, like any other country, will strive for food self-sufficiency in the coming years. Decades of mismanagement, wars, and sanctions, however, have transformed Iraq from a net food exporter into an importer. "Grain production during the upcoming May/June harvest will be about 1.7 million metric tons -- less than one-half the grain production in 1990⁴¹." The UN's oil-for-food program was designed to feed the Iraqi population but it actually hurt Iraq's farmers by reducing demand for locally produced farm products. Food is basic and Iraqi reconstruction must place agricultural revitalization at the top of the priority list.

Investment

Where's the Money?

When the famous outlaw John Dillinger was asked why he robbed banks, his reply was "because that's where the money is." Dillinger and his ilk would go away disappointed from Baghdad today, in view of the fact that Iraq is bankrupt. Once, however, Iraq was flush with petrodollars. The Iraqi banking system, nationalized in 1964 (four years before the Baathist take-over), consists of five main banks: the Central, Rafidayn, Agricultural, Industrial, and Real Estate Banks. "With deposits of more than US\$17 billion in 1983, the Rafidayn was reportedly the largest commercial bank in the Arab world⁴²." The money is gone now. Whatever was not spent on weapons, debt service, and the pockets of the former President and his family was looted by mobs in the aftermath of the fall of Saddam. To finance reconstruction, Iraq is going to need massive injections of cash. For starters, "Every effort must be made to trace the estimated \$ 12 bn to \$ 15 bn stashed away by Saddam Hussein and his family members in overseas bank accounts and investments⁴³." Beyond this elusive goal, however, Iraq's creditors should seriously consider a certain modicum of forgiveness on the external debt which is estimated at \$100 billion⁴⁴, especially those Arab and other Muslim countries that have expressed genuine concern about the plight of the Iraqi people.

⁴¹ Thompson, Larry, "Iraq: Revitalizing agriculture should be a priority" from the 23 April 2003 edition of *ReliefWeb*, the website of Refugees International, <http://www.reliefweb.int>.

⁴² Library of Congress Country Studies: Iraq: Banking and Finance (<http://lcweb2.loc.gov>).

⁴³ "Ten-Point Plan for Post-War Iraqi Reconstruction," *Alexander's Gas and Oil Connections, News and Trends: Middle East*, volume 8, issue #8, 17 April 2003

⁴⁴ Al-Tae, page 3.

Companies

Socialist economies have a reputation for discouraging private enterprise, and thirty-five years of Baathist rule has left a legacy of economic stagnation. The state took over the major industries (oil, banking, chemicals). Many other economic activities fell into the



private hands of Baathist loyalists, especially Saddam's family and the Tikriti clan. By 1984, "State operated industry comprised 80% of the industrial work force, whereas 13% worked in small-scale private industry⁴⁵." Under the UN-imposed sanctions from 1990 to 2003, private enterprise suffered more than ever. Some foreign companies continued to operate in Baghdad despite the sanctions⁴⁶.

In the coming months and years, experts (including many from the Iraqi diaspora) will be flooding the country to assist in the reconstruction of the major economic assets: the petroleum industry, the financial sector, etc. Once law and order is restored, tourism and lodging may become an enormous opportunity in Iraq, the cradle of civilization. The international hotel companies are watching and waiting, ready to enter the market: "Iraq is now becoming a very interesting market for hotel projects. We do not have yet any Marriott hotels in Iraq but are actively looking to operate either renovated hotels or new-builds. We received many leads and are now in the screening process. It is at a very early stage and I believe that the investors are waiting for the new government body to be in place⁴⁷."



Where does this leave the ambitious entrepreneur? Who will capitalize the small, independent companies in all parts of Iraq? Part of the answer may come from the Grameen Bank, an experiment which began in Bangladesh in 1976. Grameen extends micro-loans to poor people, who then purchase the tools and equipment to start small businesses. The bank is 93% owned by the borrowers themselves and the recovery rate is an unprecedented 98%. The concept of microcredit which started out in Bangladesh has now spread around the world, reaching Africa, Latin America and even the US.⁴⁸ If properly managed, microcredit could brighten Iraq's economic prospects at the grass roots, by re-enlivening the entrepreneurial spirit and catalyzing growth from the bottom up.

⁴⁵ Op cit, SIPRI.

⁴⁶ Visit <http://www.theeasterncompany.com/index.html>, the website of the Eastern Company, an Iraqi agency which represents foreign businesses.

⁴⁷ Private correspondence with the Marriott development director responsible for the Middle East region.

⁴⁸ Visit <http://www.gdrc.org/icm/index.html>, the website of the Global Development Research Center, a major clearinghouse of information on world-wide microcredit.

Society

Family Life

The traditional Iraqi home would seem quite private by Western standards. If the family lives in a private house, it probably sits sheltered behind a high wall. Even if the family lives in an apartment, the family jealously guards its privacy. For example, even in modest homes, a room is set aside for the men of the family to receive male guests.

Family Honor

The Iraqi family values its reputation; honor is considered most important. Honor is maintained through various avenues, two of which are hospitality and protection of the women.

In Iraq, as in the rest of the Arab World and the wider Islamic World, hospitality is second to none. Even during the embargo situation, when Iraqi families could hardly feed themselves, they would go to any lengths to make a visitor feel welcome and valued by offering him the best foods in large quantities and doing so with much fellowship, laughter and affection.

Westerners often ridicule the Arab way of treating women. We criticize the Arabs for putting roadblocks in the way of women's progress. If, however, we scrutinize the recent history of the West, we will find that it was not long ago that Westerners treated their women similarly, all in the interest of "protecting" them. Therefore, when we observe the Iraqi husbands, fathers and brothers safeguarding the purity and untouchability of their female relatives, we must keep in mind that in the Iraqi mentality, this is not seen as "bondage" or "restriction," but rather as a shield for the family's honor.



Taboos

The Western visitor to Iraq will want to keep the following in mind:

1. In Iraqi society, one never asks a man, "how is your wife?" Instead, one should generalize the question to "how is your family?"
2. The public is *not* the place for any show of affection between the two sexes, not even holding hands. However, it is completely acceptable for two men to greet each other by kissing on the cheek and walking hand-in-hand. This is by no means a reflection of a person's sexuality.

Western attire is well known and widely used in Iraq, but some limitations exist. For example, short pants are unthinkable except for young children or athletes on the sports field. Men keep their shirts on regardless of the heat. Women are not required to cover themselves from head to toe, as is the case in Yemen or Saudi Arabia, but conservative dress prevails: mini-skirts, sleeveless blouses and low-cut sweaters are simply out of the question.

Family Ties

If individualism rules in Western society, then the family rules in the Arab World and Iraq is no exception. A person is known in this society not necessarily for his professional achievements, but definitely by the family to which he belongs. The term “nepotism” brings up negative connotations in the West of an executive who hires his son, nephew, or other relative, only to discover the new employee’s incompetence. In the Iraqi society, however, there is no need to coin an Arabic term for nepotism, because nepotism is simply the way things are always done. Any Iraqi business owner will prefer to hire members of his own family, or choose a close relative as his partner.



U.S. Army photo

Within the family, the senior male commands. He takes care of the family’s estate, however large or small that might be, and his word is law. This absolute authority has moderated slightly in Baghdad and other big cities, with the growing influence of the public schools and other state institutions.

All the oppression, aggression and injustice of Saddam’s Iraq notwithstanding, the Baathist Party did implement two important social reforms which placed Iraq at the vanguard of modernization in the Middle East: education and women’s rights. While such opportunities cannot take the place of a life lived in freedom, still they must be taken into account in a fair analysis of Iraqi social issues.

Education

The Baathists provided free public education to all Iraqi children, through secondary school and beyond. During the last year of secondary school, young Iraqis prepare for their baccalaureate exam, a comprehensive instrument which measures what they have learned in all the various subjects they have studied. A student’s score in this test will determine the direction of his post-secondary education. High scores will open doors to schools of medicine and engineering, lower scores to other programs. While the regime required all Iraqi young men to serve in the military, those who quit high school would be inducted early, a circumstance which encouraged youth to stay in school!



U.S. Army photo

Women



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It is worth pointing out that young women are entitled to the same educational opportunities as their male counterparts. Even traditional, religious families send their daughters to school and university, taking pride in their professional accomplishments. Legal obstacles to women's rights fell, by and large, during the Baathist regime. As a result, contemporary Iraqi women are permitted and encouraged to exercise a wide spectrum of rights not enjoyed by their counterparts in certain neighboring countries, including but not restricted to the following:

- Driving a car
- Practicing law, medicine, engineering and other professions
- Participating in politics
- Starting up and operating private businesses

“Women played an exceptionally active role in the Iraqi economy throughout the Baathist era. But during the course of the eight-year war with Iran, the rate of female participation skyrocketed in virtually all sectors of the local economy... ..the General Federation of Iraqi Women became the strongest of the party-affiliated popular organizations: more than 56 per cent of all adult women belonged to the federation by mid-1988.”⁴⁹

Male-Female Interaction Outside of Marriage

Iraq, a traditional Arab Muslim society, frowns upon dating in the Western sense. Male and female university students do socialize together in groups, but less so in pairs, though non-married couples may be found drinking tea or coffee together at the student canteen. Children do not leave their parental home until they marry, and pre-marital sex is virtually unheard of.



© Aramco Services Company
Iraqi men

Marriage

As in most of the Arab countries, it is preferable to marry a first cousin. If no first cousins are available, a second cousin will do. If not, a third. If no cousins are available, one may take recourse to marrying outside of the family, but the family of the would-be fiancé must be known. Certain prohibitions narrow the pool of potential spouses even further:

⁴⁹ Lawson, Fred H., Center for International Studies, University of Southern California, “Rethinking the Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait,” Paper published on the internet at the following site: <http://www.meehawl.com>

- Muslim women do not marry non-Muslim men.
- Iraqi women, both Muslims and Christians, seldom marry foreign men.

For this reason, foreign male visitors to Iraq and to the Arab World in general would be well advised to pursue their romantic interests elsewhere. In fact, in this conservative society, men should not even approach or address women in the street unless they are first introduced.

Most Iraqi parents still arrange their children's marriages according to traditional procedures, to wit:

- 1) The parents of the marriage candidate contact their respective siblings or cousins to inquire about the availability of an eligible cousin of the opposite sex. Once a match is proposed, both young people have the right to turn down their counterpart. If a man turns down the lady, it is considered impolite for him to reveal the fact that he turned her down; instead, the rules of decency dictate that he should claim that it was he who was refused.
-
- © UNESCO.org, Photo: K. Boggs
Kurdish wedding
- 2) If the match comes from outside the family, the parents of the couple must have a chance to get to know one another. They sound each other out and determine whether or not a marriage between the two families might succeed. Note the use of the expression *marriage between the two families*. This is an important concept, for in the Arab World as in much of the Eastern World, marriage is seen as a bond not just between two individuals, but between two families.
 - 3) While both parents on each side decide whether or not the marriage can go ahead, the last word belongs to the bride's father. If this was an arranged marriage, the father then asks his daughter for the last word: Do you want to marry this man or not?
 - 4) The suitor and his father or other close male relative will discuss the proposal with the young lady's father and ask him for his daughter's hand in marriage. They negotiate the dowry, i.e., a certain amount of money or property to be delivered to the bride.
 - 5) During the engagement period, the dowry is delivered. Also, during this period, the couple has more freedom to spend time with each other, unchaperoned. There is no fixed length of time between engagement and marriage.

Islam permits polygamy for men, but the practice has become less and less common in contemporary Iraq. Statistics do not exist for the rate of polygamy vs. monogamy.

Social Customs

Religion plays a very important role in all the countries of the Middle East. The predominant religion for the Arab and Middle Eastern countries is Islam. It is customary to greet people with the words “Al Salaamo Alaykom,” which translates to “Peace be upon you.” A handshake between men is appropriate for both formal and informal greeting. Kissing on both cheeks between like sexes is more of an informal tradition usually reserved for friends or acquaintances. Interaction between opposite sexes is restricted to a head nod accompanied by the phrase “Al Salaamo Alaykom.” Since a handshake between opposite genders is acceptable in some situations depending on the circumstances, it is a good policy to adhere to the head nod technique mentioned earlier in order to avoid any unnecessary discomforts.



© Aramco Services Company
A street lined with stores

Addressing other people in Iraq should be done in a formal way if no prior introduction had taken place. This is usually done by adding the word “Ostaath” to a male’s first name or the word “Ostaatha” to the female’s first name. In rural areas and in the Iraqi countryside, it would be advisable to address the males with the word “Akhee” standing for “my brother” and females with the word “Ukhtee,” denoting the phrase “my sister.” The use of last names solely is discouraged and could be confusing to some.

Muslims follow the doctrine of the Koran (Islam’s Holy Book) which forbids the consumption of alcohol and the flesh of scavenger animals (e.g. pork products). It is therefore a good idea to avoid inquiring about pork products in local markets since this could be taken as an insult. Alcohol until a few years back was consumed openly in taverns, bars and cabarets in Baghdad and other larger cities, but has since been banned in public by the former regime. A number of Iraqis, however, still consume alcohol in the privacy of their own homes, but it would be safer not to discuss alcohol in public to avoid any complications. Smoking and drinking tea are favorite pastimes for Iraqis, although smoking is more prevalent among males. American coffee is less dominant in Iraqi society even though widely available in cafés and restaurants—mostly in the form of instant coffee (referred to as *Nescafé* in Iraq). Arabic coffee is considered the norm in the



US Army photo
Boys pose in front of the camera

Iraqi countryside and is usually served in small cups. Custom dictates shaking the cup slightly once you had enough, otherwise your cup will continuously be replenished. Arabic coffee in the rural areas denotes generosity and is a matter of tribal pride. Refusing to drink the coffee when it is offered could in some cases be mistaken for unfriendliness on the part of the guest. Again, this is more the case in the rural and tribal settings of Iraq.

Interaction between sexes is usually acceptable only in universities and in the workplace. Dating, for the most part, is considered a taboo in Iraq. Normally a couple could not be

seen alone in public unless legally engaged or married. Marriage between first cousins is prevalent in Iraq and is usually encouraged by tribes and some families. Making a pass or staring at a female in Iraq could carry some unnecessary consequences for all parties involved since a female in Iraq is considered the honor of all male family members. Over the years, a number of individuals of both genders were killed for allegedly violating “family honor.” Sexual interaction between unmarried people is forbidden in Islam, therefore, it is punishable by law. As for the females involved, they additionally have to contend with the family wrath, which could mean death in some instances.



© UNESCO.org,
Photographer: D. Roger
Mosque in Kufa

During Ramadan (Islam’s holy month), it is considered rude and disrespectful to eat and drink in public during fasting hours of the day. Such activities should be performed privately or in one of the few restaurants that would possibly be open for business (usually in the major hotels). Once the fast is broken (normally following sunset), life goes back to normal and a person is free to eat and drink publicly (never alcohol though). Even moderate Muslims who normally consume alcoholic beverages would refrain from doing so during the holy month of Ramadan.

While sitting in public, it would be advisable not to show the soles of your shoes since this could be extremely offensive to most people in Iraq. Therefore, crossing your foot over the knee of the other leg or propping your feet up onto a desk would be showing disrespect toward others.

While in rural areas, it would be advisable to always eat and greet with your right hand. A left hand in the less developed areas is still reserved for the “untidy” duties of life; hence, stick to using your right.

Photography is considered offensive unless prior permission is obtained from the parties involved. Generally, it would be advisable to refrain from photographing female subjects since this could lead to unnecessary problems.



© UNESCO.org, Photographer: D. Roger

Health

Iraq’s health care system, once considered among the best in the Middle East, has deteriorated over the last 20 years. The recent worsening security situation has hampered efforts to address some of its most critical problems, which have arisen as a result of poor health care funding during Saddam Hussein’s regime, economic sanctions, and conflict.

The primary health care system in Iraq consists of 110 health districts serving on average 200,000 to 300,000 people. In each district there are 5 to 10 health care centers. The Iraqi Ministry of Health, with the support of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), runs the network of facilities. Almost all services provided by these clinics and hospitals are

free except for consultations at semi-public health clinics, which operate in the afternoon at low cost. There are out-of-pocket expenses for Iraqis who are well-off. The state-owned pharmaceutical and medical appliance company, Kimadia, also provides products which are heavily subsidized by the government at a fixed, low rate. This is critical, as there is no public or private health insurance, and there are only a few small health insurance programs provided for employees of specific companies.

The focus of U.S. and international aid agencies, in conjunction with Iraqi Ministry of Health, has been on improving and rebuilding health care facilities, and addressing shortages of medical supplies, drugs, equipment, and fresh drinking water. While today 240 hospitals and more than 1,200 primary health centers are operating,⁵⁰ the majority of hospitals in Iraq still require rehabilitation.⁵¹

To address these issues, nearly USD \$1 billion of the Iraqi budget was allocated to health care in 2005. Additionally, according to the CPA, 30,000 tons of pharmaceuticals and healthcare supplies have been delivered to facilities across Iraq, and 30 million doses of children's vaccinations have been distributed since 2003.⁵²

Now, with the help of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Gulf Region South District (GRS) and the Project and Contracting Office (PCO), 150 new primary health care facilities are being built, with 60 scheduled to be constructed in the marsh region of southern Iraq.⁵³ Here, there are more than 37 districts and 150,000 Iraqis with little if no access to primary health care.

In the meantime, many Iraqis continue to seek out the services of unlicensed traditional healers. For a fee, these healers will treat any number of ailments, from fractures to simple aches and pains. They have no formal training, learning their trade through apprenticeships. There are also many shops that sell traditional medicines and herbal remedies.

⁵⁰ White House: "Iraq's Health Care System", 23 February 2004,

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/02/20040223-12.html>

⁵¹ ABC News Original Report, "Health Care Progress Tough to Diagnose". 24 January 2005,

<http://abcnews.go.com/Health/IraqWhereThingsStand/story?id=437738>

⁵² Coalition Provisional Authority Press Release, "Iraqi Ministry of Health Becomes First Ministry to Enter the Final Stage to Sovereignty", 23 March 2004, http://www.cpa-iraq.org/pressreleases/20040328_health.html

⁵³ Defend America, "150 New Health Care Clinics Planned for Iraq", 6 July 2005,

<http://www.defendamerica.mil/articles/jul2005/a070605dg4.html>

Current Issues

Field Notes from Iraq

Our friend Heather has kindly shared experiences of her deployment in Iraq by sending emails throughout the summer and into the fall months of 2003. Following is a condensed report on Iraq based on her notes.

US Military Working and Living Conditions

It is not an easy feat to work and train in full military attire, carrying 40 pounds of gear in extreme temperatures of 100-120° F, while battling mosquitoes and sandstorms. Living quarters vary from sleeping outside on the ground in makeshift “hooches” (make-shift huts) to cots in abandoned buildings without electricity or hot showers. Water shortages further harden life for US soldiers; in April soldiers were subjected to a 2-liter per person per day rationing system. Due to the heat and low water-quota, soldiers face varying degrees of dehydration. Occasional trips to ORHA (Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance) to obtain water alleviate some of these hardships. Furthermore, a few soldiers use water purification kits. Soft drinks are available in limited quantities, but what helps a great deal is heading to air-conditioned buildings as soon as missions are over. The best solution though to elude dehydration is to avoid being outside beyond four hours a day. Sadly, at least five American soldiers have died in Iraq due to the extreme temperatures since the U.S. Iraqi Freedom Mission began.



US Army photo
Soldiers try to relax

Getting Connected

Since arriving in Iraq, the US Army has experienced various challenges in communications, such as dealing with poor radio connections. The Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) has provided an alternative mode of communication by issuing cell phones to US military personnel. Mail connections have been slow and sometimes it takes over a month for a letter to reach the US, but fortunately soldiers can also send emails from an Internet café in Baghdad.



© El Mundo
Looting in Baghdad

Post-Saddam Iraq

Iraqi Forces, also known as Iraqi opposition volunteers, sang and danced after hearing on April 3 that Baghdad International Airport had fallen. At Marine Camp Commando a portrait of Saddam Hussein was smashed out of the brick wall it decorated. Kids in the streets waved and cheered as American soldiers passed through. However, looting has become rampant in Baghdad. There is now evidence that much of the looting was planned and organized in advance by the Saddam regime in an attempt to show that Americans had created chaos in the country and were unable to protect Iraqi assets.

In June there was an attempt to steal generators from a community center in Baghdad. Iraqi civilians alerted U.S. soldiers by saying “The Ali Babas are trying to steal the 70 generators!” “Ali Baba” is a term used by Iraqi people to refer to looters. (Ironically, according to the old story, a woodcutter called Ali Baba finds the treasure of the forty thieves by chance rather than willfully engaging in theft.) It was discovered that the thieves had forged documents which stated that they had Army approval for removing the generators. Fortunately, the matter was successfully resolved in a peaceful manner and the generators were returned.

Iraqi religious leaders achieved some success in their attempts to persuade looters to bring back artifacts stolen from the National Museum of Baghdad. The military has also started an amnesty program to encourage looters to return stolen items. Together with ORHA and the US Ministry of Trade (MOT), the Army has assisted with the mission of restoring order in Iraq. Among other duties, the US Army has been lending support to the United Nations World Food Program (WFP).

Food Assistance and Monetary Aid to Iraqi Citizens

WFP, with the assistance of other UN (United Nations) agencies and the MOT, has been distributing food to the Iraqi people since the 1991 Gulf War. Under the Oil-for-Food program, initiated in 1996, Iraq is permitted to sell oil to buy food and medicine. The WFP buys food from Iraqi farmers and imports food under this program and stores it in warehouses around the country. There are four main food distribution centers in Baghdad. Designated retail agents collect allotments for families and take it back to their shops for redistribution. Each Iraqi citizen is authorized to receive a monthly food basket.



US Army photo
Soldiers unload bags of rice

Unfortunately, no set schedule regarding the distribution of the food exists and Iraqi citizens simply learn about the time and location of food distribution by word of mouth. The US military is currently working on making the distribution process more efficient. Additionally, the United Nations is working on plans to improve the contents of the food baskets to include more nutrients and proteins.

ORHA and Civil Affairs units around Baghdad have distributed payments to Iraqi citizens who were formerly paid by the government and have not received salaries since even before the war. They delegated the task of allocating monetary payments to Iraqi supervisors. Moreover, a database was created to track emergency payments around the country. Soldiers have distributed one-time emergency payments of \$20 as a thank-you to the Iraqi people for continuing to work throughout this difficult period. Currently, the average salary of policemen and teachers is approximately \$60 per month.

Animals

Not only people, but animals, too, have been affected by the war. British and US Armed forces have helped ensure that the animals at the Baghdad Zoo and in private zoos are cared for. Furthermore, some NGOs (non-governmental organizations) have opened up an animal husbandry clinic and a humane society headquartered at the Baghdad Zoo.

Remnants of the Iran-Iraq War

Warehouses full of human remains of Iraqis from the Iran-Iraq war were found, consisting of bones in little plastic bags with occasional dog tags or pieces of clothing. An abandoned military prison with a torture chamber, equipped with electrical wires and hooks on the ceiling used to hang victims, was also discovered.

Saddam Hussein's Cash Reserves

The military found 100 million US dollars in cash hidden in one of Saddam Hussein's palaces.

Iraqi Involvement in Rebuilding Iraq

The Iraqi people gradually take on more and more responsibilities as US military involvement lessens. Neighborhood Advisory Councils manage community issues and have become the building blocks of the new democracy. Councils have already held the



US Army photo
Rebuilding a school

first democratic elections of representatives, a procedure that was overseen by US soldiers and was also covered by media outlets such as CBS and NBC. There has also been a surge in the emergence of NGOs. Representatives from over 80 non-profit organizations attend weekly meetings and help in the society-building process. A new Iraqi NGO organized a peace march on August 2, 2003, to remember Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and to make a formal apology to the Kuwaiti people. This group is also planning to plant palm trees, which carry an important cultural significance in Iraq. Another group, the Iraqi Medical Society, has volunteered to set up medical clinics and to provide food and clean water for emergency housing sites.

World Bank

The World Bank Iraq Trust Fund has financed several major projects in Iraq. One project is completed and the USD 2.5 million have been disbursed. A similar project is under development (Capacity Building II) while seven major projects are being implemented by the related Iraqi ministries with a total cost of USD 355 million:

- Iraq Emergency Textbook Provision Project⁵⁴
- Emergency School Construction and Rehabilitation Project⁵⁵
- Emergency Baghdad Water Supply and Sanitation⁵⁶
- Emergency Health Project⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Closing date: 31-DEC-2005; Total Project Cost: USD 40.0 Million (<http://web.worldbank.org>)

⁵⁵ Closing date: 30-JUN-2007; Total Project Cost: USD 60.0 Millions *ibid*

⁵⁶ Closing date: 31-AUG-2007; Total Project Cost: USD 65.0 Millions *ibid*

- Emergency Private Sector Development⁵⁸
- Emergency Water Supply, Sanitation and Urban Reconstruction⁵⁹
- Emergency Community Infrastructure Rehabilitation Project⁶⁰

While the World Bank is actively involved in the reconstruction of Iraq, the Central Bank of Iraq (CBI) took major steps to revamp the financial services of the country. Although credit cards and electronic fund transfers are still scarcely used, the CBI is helping Iraq's banks to buy computers and to send their employees to Dubai and Jordan, where they receive training on global banking practices. Furthermore, CBI is granting licenses to foreign banks to open branches in Iraq with the option of using different names.

**Donor Pledges, Commitments and Deposits to World Bank Iraqi Trust Fund
(As of End-May 2005)**

Countries	Pledges	Commitments ⁶¹	Pending Deposits / Contributions
<i>(all figures in USD million)</i>			
Australia	10.2	10.2	10.2
Canada	22.3	22.3	22.3
EC	102.5	102.5	102.5
Finland	2.6	2.6	2.6
Iceland	1.0	1.0	1.0
India ³⁶²	5.0	2.5	2.52
Japan	130.0	130.0	130.0
Korea	3.0	3.0	3.0
Kuwait	5.0	5.0	5.0
Netherlands	6.2	6.2	6.2
Norway	2.2	2.2	2.2
Qatar	5.0	5.0	2.52
Spain	20.0	20.0	20.0
Sweden	5.4	5.4	5.8
Turkey	1.0		1.0
United Kingdom	71.4	71.4	71.4
United States	5.0	5.0	5.0
Total	397.8	394.3	392.16

⁵⁷ Closing date: 31-DEC-2006; Total Project Cost: USD 25.0 Million ibid

⁵⁸ Closing date: 31-JUN-2007; Total Project Cost: USD 55.0 Million ibid

⁵⁹ Closing date: 31-AUG-2007; Total Project Cost: USD 90.0 Million ibid

⁶⁰ Closing date: 30-JUN-2006; Total Project Cost: USD 20.0 Million ibid

⁶¹ The "Commitments" column shows commitments in currencies other than US\$ converted at the exchange rate as of the date of the agreement and is for indicative purposes only. The "Deposits" column shows the actual US\$ equivalent amount credited to the ITF account at the time of deposit.

⁶² Agreement letter signed for US\$ 2.5 million. Actual pledge is US\$ 5.0 million.

Relocation of Displaced Persons

The US Army, CPA, and NGOs as well as the International Organization for Migration, Red Cross/Red Crescent, Première Urgence, Hellenic Rescue Society, and UH Habitat are helping displaced Iraqis with the relocation process. They are trying to find temporary housing solutions without resorting to refugee camps. Hundreds of people have moved into the former headquarters of the secret police, among other buildings. The CPA is trying hard to find a solution.

Operation Iraqi Freedom

American soldiers deployed in Iraq have been tasked to help restore freedom and help the Iraqi people build a democratic government. This assignment, however, has not been without cost. Since Iraqi Freedom began on March 19, 2003, many US soldiers have sacrificed their lives.

Progress

As of July 2005, Iraqis are making steady progress toward self-reliance. Only six months after national elections were held in January 2005, Coalition Forces transferred full responsibility for Iraq's security to the Iraqi Army. Reconstruction efforts are well underway, with sewer networks and water projects being completed around the country. Railroads are being rebuilt, and the airports in Baghdad, Basra and Hawler resumed civilian operations in June 2005 in a move that Iraq hopes will encourage foreign investment by improving access to these cities. Baghdad has seen other improvements as well; with the completion of Al-Ameen electrical substation, power is available more readily in the Iraqi capital.

Around Iraq, 628 school reconstruction projects have been completed and another 102 are in progress. Coalition soldiers continue to hand out school supplies and clothing care packages to villagers and rural school children.

Finally, the newly-outfitted Iraqi National Soccer League resumed games on June 12, 2005--to the delight of the over 10,000 Iraqi fans that showed up for the first game alone.



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Timeline

From Independence to Operation Iraqi Freedom

- 1932 :** Iraq is declared an independent kingdom with King Faisal in power. Iraq is admitted to the League of Nations.
- 1933:** Faisal dies. His son, Ghazi, succeeds him.
- 1936:** Pan-Arab efforts originate in Iraq to merge Arab states. A treaty of non-aggression is signed with Saudi Arabia.
- 1939:** King Ghazi dies.
- 1941:** A war of four weeks is fought against Britain, after which British control is regained. The British see to it that a pro-British government is formed.
- 1943:** Iraq declares war on the Axis (headed by the Germans).
- 1945:** Unrest among the Kurds, believed to be supported by the Soviet Union.
- 1947:** Treaty with Transjordan on mutual military and diplomatic aid.
- 1948:** After Israel declares independence, Iraq joins the Arab states in their attacks on the new country.
- 1950:** Major increase in oil revenues.
- 1953:** Direct parliamentary elections. King Faisal II assumes throne, as he was only three years old when his father died.
- 1954:** Political instability, as USA tries to enhance its influence in Iraq.
- 1955:** The Baghdad Pact, a military-security agreement, initially embraces Iraq and Turkey, later Britain, Pakistan and Iran.
- 1958:** Military coup, led by General Karim Qassem; the king, crown prince and prime minister are assassinated.
- 1959:** Iraq withdraws from the Baghdad Pact.
- 1960:** Iraq makes claims on Kuwait, which receives its independence this year.
- 1963** Qassem is overthrown by a group of officers, mainly from the Baath Party. Abdul Salam Arif becomes the new president.
- 1966** President Arif dies, and is followed by his brother Abdul Rahman Arif.
- 1967:** Relations worsen between Iraq and the Western powers following the Six-Day War.
- 1968:** Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr becomes president and strengthens Iraq's relations with the Soviet Union.
- 1970:** After years of unrest, the Iraqi government agrees to form an autonomous Kurdish region, and Kurds are let into the cabinet.
- 1971:** Borders to Jordan are closed to protest Jordan's attempt to curb the PLO.
- 1972:** Nationalization of the oil industry starts.
- 1974 :** Kurdish cities like Zakho and Qalaat Diza are razed to the ground and hundreds of thousands of Kurds flee the cities.
- 1975:** Settlement of border disputes with Iran leads Iran to stop aiding the Kurds and the revolt is crushed.
- 1979:** President Bakr is stripped of all positions and placed under house arrest. Saddam Hussein becomes new president.
- 1980:** Iraq invades Iran and quickly gets control over Iranian land.
- 1981:** Israel bombs a nuclear reactor outside Baghdad.
- 1982:** Iranian counter-offensive reclaims much of the land occupied by Iraq.

1988: Brutal actions against Kurds inside Iraq, where poisonous gas is used to kill thousands of civilians.

1990:

— **August 2:** Invasion and occupation of Kuwait. UN demands a withdrawal by January 15, 1991.

— **August 6:** UN imposes economic embargo on Iraq, prohibiting almost all trade with Iraq.

— **September 25:** UN imposes interdiction on air traffic to and from Iraq.

1991:

— **January 16:** Coalition forces invade Kuwait and Iraq, destroying the Iraqi military machine as well as damaging the infrastructure.

— **March 3:** A ceasefire is reached between the allied international forces and Iraq.

— **April:** Iraq suppresses rebellions in the south by Shiites and in the north by Kurds. US, British, and French troops are moved into northern Iraq to set up refugee camps and protect the Kurds from the Iraqi government.

1992: As Iraq is believed not to comply with UN demands to eliminate the remaining weapons of mass destruction, international sanctions are not lifted.

1993: US military actions in Iraq due to Iraq's failure to remove police posts near the Kuwaiti border.

1994: Iraq formally recognizes the sovereignty of Kuwait.

1999: Russia signs a deal with Iraq on upgrading the country's MiG jet fighters.

2002: United Nations resume inspections following the unanimous resolution in the Security Council (no. 1441) and the threat from USA of an attack if Iraq does not comply.

2003:

— **February 5:** Colin Powell presents evidence to the United Nations Security Council indicating that Iraq still produces and holds weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), later rebutted by UNMOVIC (United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission).

— **March 18:** US president George W. Bush issues ultimatum that Saddam Hussein and his sons must leave Iraq by March 20.

— **March 20:** USA and Britain launch 'Operation Iraqi Freedom.' Coalition forces bomb southern Iraq and Baghdad.⁶³

— **March 30:** Suicide bomber volunteers from other Muslim countries arrive in Baghdad.

— **April 10:** US-led forces take effective control over Baghdad, ending the regime of Saddam Hussein. Street violence and lootings start.

— **April 14:** US-led forces take control over central Tikrit, believed to be the last stronghold of Saddam's regime.⁶⁴

— **April 16:** President Bush calls on the UN to lift economic sanctions against Iraq. He also moves to allocate over \$80 billion to pay for the war effort.

— **April 22:** Roughly one million Shiites celebrate the traditional pilgrimage to the Shrine in Karbala. The pilgrimage was forbidden during the Saddam Hussein regime.

— **April 25:** Iraq's former deputy prime minister, Tariq Aziz, surrenders in Baghdad.

— **May 1:** President Bush declares in a statement that major combat operations in Iraq have ceased.

⁶³ From the website of *Encyclopaedia of the Orient*, URL: http://i-cias.com/e.o/iraq_5.htm

⁶⁴ From the website of *Encyclopaedia of the Orient*, URL: http://i-cias.com/e.o/iraq_5.htm

- **May 12:** Paul Bremer, a diplomat, replaces Ret. Lt. Gen. Jay Garner as the new US civilian administrator.
- **May 14:** A mass grave is discovered near Baghdad. The grave seems to hold the remains of up to 3000 people that went missing after the Shiite uprising in 1991 was quashed by the Iraqi regime.
- **May 22:** The UN Security Council votes to end the sanctions against Iraq. Temporary control of the country is granted to the US and Britain.
- **July 4:** A tape recording that purportedly features Saddam Hussein’s voice urges Iraqi resistance fighters to carry on.
- **July 13:** This day marks the inauguration of the Iraqi Governing Council.
- **July 21:** Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary General, approves Iraq’s Governing Council, members of which were selected by the US-led coalition in Iraq.
- **July 22:** Saddam Hussein’s sons, Uday and Qusay, are killed in Mosul during a shootout with U.S. troops.
- **July 25:** Japan approves sending troops to Iraq as part of its biggest deployment effort since 1945.
- **July 31:** In Iraq’s holy city of Najaf, Muqtada al-Sadr—a Shiite cleric and leader of the Shi’a opposition—rallies for young men to join his “Islamic Army.” So far, almost 10,000 have heeded his call.
- **August 19:** A truck bomb destroys part of the UN building in Baghdad. Twenty-three people are killed. Among the dead is the head of the UN mission to Iraq.
- **August 21:** ‘Chemical Ali’ is taken into custody by US Central Command.
- **October 16:** The UN Security Council approves the US- and UK-sponsored resolution that calls for the international forces in Iraq to be under US and British command.
- **December 13:** Following an informant’s tips, U.S. troops find Saddam Hussein hiding in a hole near Tikrit, his hometown.
- **December 16:** After US requests, France, Germany, Italy, Russia, and a host of other countries agree to write off part of Iraq’s debt (\$120 billion) in order to help with reconstruction efforts.

2004

- **March 8:** An interim constitution, called the Transitional Administrative Law, is signed by members of Iraq’s Governing Council. The constitution is opposed by Shiite leaders.
- **March 14:** Spain’s newly-elected government announces it will pull its troops out of Iraq following the horrific bombings in Madrid on March 11.
- **March 22:** The Kurdish *Pesh Merga* fighters and the Shiite Badr Organization, Iraq’s largest militias, agree to disband.
- **April 15:** A UN proposal to replace the Governing Council with a transitional government on June 30 (the date when the US is to return control to Iraqis) gains US consent.
- **April 19:** John Negroponte is nominated by President Bush to be the US ambassador to Iraq and is confirmed by the Senate less than a month later.
- **April 22:** The US reports it will let some Baath party officials regain their positions. This move concerns mainly teachers and former military in the hopes that these individuals will help rebuild the country.

- **April 29:** Photographs surface that depict the mistreatment of Iraqi prisoners in Abu Ghraib by American military personnel. The soldiers in question are later severely reprimanded and, in some cases, court-martialed for their roles in the prisoner abuse.
- **May 10:** Muqtada al-Sadr's Baghdad headquarters are destroyed by US troops during a night-time raid.
- **May 13:** Defense Secretary Rumsfeld visits Abu Ghraib prison. The next day, close to 300 detainees are released.
- **May 17:** Ezzedine Salim, the current president of the Iraqi Governing Council, is killed by a suicide bomber, along with six other people.
- **May 27:** After seven weeks of fighting, a truce is reached between US forces and Sadr supporters in Najaf.
- **June 1:** Iyad Allawi and Ghazi Yawer, members of Iraq's Governing Council, are sworn in as the country's interim prime minister and president.
- **July 22:** Annan appoints Ashraf Jehagir Qazi as a senior envoy to Iraq.

2005

- **January 30:** Iraq holds elections.
- **March 16:** The opening session of Iraq's first freely elected parliament in half a century takes place.
- **April 5:** Secretary Rice reveals the President's nomination of Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad to be the next Ambassador to Iraq. Ambassador Khalilzad served as U.S. Ambassador in Afghanistan.
- **May 3:** Swearing-in ceremony of Iraq's new government.
- **June 24:** Iraqi Prime Minister Ibrahim al Jaafari is received by President Bush at the White House.