

# **Iranian Tentacles into Iraq**

**A Monograph**

**by**

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## Abstract

Iranian Tentacles into Iraq: the Basis and Extent of Iranian Influence into Southern Iraq by Christiane Thompson, DOD, 49 pages.

Most of those who comment on Iran's attempt to influence Iraqi Shia, do so without considering the historical and cultural connection between these two peoples. The research presented directs its attention to the Iranian motives and capabilities and then to the first targets of Iranian influence efforts. Finally, the research considered the historical and cultural connections between Iraqi and Iranian Shia to identify the themes and methods that persuade Iraqi Shia to collaborate with Iran.

Iran is presently conducting an aggressive strategic influence campaign into southern Iraq. The Iraqi Shia community is the primary target of Iranian efforts. Tehran's bases its motivations on national self-interest and religious-political ideals. The Iranian Regime advocates a religious-political activism to expand fundamental religious ideals. The Shia community in Iraq holds on to the practice of religious-political self-preservation and seeks to conform to the state in order to exist. Members of both Shia communities hold varied cultural values, based on their historical development.

Tehran uses methods along the spectrum of psychological persuasion to influence and subvert the Iraqi Shia community. Specifically, they target individual communities. The Iranian regime attempts to gain authority in Iraq via the same government institutions designed to control over its own population. The formidable Iranian government apparatus allows the targeting of the Iraqi population through efforts designed to achieve compliance and conformity.

The Iraqi Shia society is fragmented, but nationalism also provides a powerful influence for this group. The majority of the Iraqi Shia community identify themselves as Iraqi citizens despite a common historical narrative and ethnic ties with the Iranian Shia population. Independent national principles foster Iraqi and Iranian nationalist sentiments and the division between the two states are likely to grow with the Iraqi government becoming more capable and effective of controlling its own state affairs. However, Iran will continue to attempt to exploit areas where the new Iraqi government has limited penetration along the southern border region.

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## Introduction

Since late 2007, many newspapers, scholarly reports, and military sources have contended that Iran is taking over Iraq by proxy in an effort to become a regional hegemon.<sup>1</sup> Reporting on Iranian influence in Iraq stresses Tehran's engagement with Iraqi political circles, support for illicit trade, and supply to insurgents. Many, like Middle Eastern Affairs Specialist Kenneth Katzman, focus on Iranian political and military strategies. Mr. Katzman views Iranian tactics in Iraq as multi-faceted. He mentions that Iran lends support to pro-Iranian factions and armed militias, attempts to sway Iraqi internal politics, and builds common economic ties to produce goodwill towards Iran."<sup>2</sup> Others emphasize covert Iranian activities against the newly established Iraqi national government and Multi-National Forces in Iraq (MNF-I). Most reports mention, merely as a byline, the historical and socio-cultural ties between the Shia populations in both countries. Many authors' perspectives tend to emphasize how the government in Tehran uses a variety of means to project authority into Iraq. Scholarly studies generally address specific aspects of Shi'ism as a faction within the Muslim community. Few look at the deep-seated shared and exclusive socio-cultural elements of the Shia populations. Almost none of the reporting on Iranian influence defines the individual Shia communities' shared historical-cultural base or each community's connection or fissures in affiliation with Iran.

Analysis, of the Iranian strategic influence campaign largely ignores the historical and cultural connection. Many of the reports on Iranian influence in Iraq address only one aspect of how Tehran attempts to assert its authority into Iraq. Nevertheless, Tehran uses a variety of

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<sup>1</sup> Pardo Eldad, *Tehran's Global Agenda: A Disaster Waiting to Happen* (comments presented in English during the IDC, International Terrorism Conference, Israel: January 21–24, 2007). Also in "Trends in the Iranian Globalization: Iran and its Aspiration for Hegemony," *Academia* 17 (Israel Universities Central Committee: Winter 2007, Hebrew): 25-33. <http://www.iucc.ac.il/academia> (accessed May 10, 2009), video.

<sup>2</sup> Kenneth Katzman, "Iran's Activities and Influence in Iraq," (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 7 April 2009). Summary at <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS22323.pdf> (accessed on 21 May 2009).

methods along the spectrum of psychological objectives. Outlining the methods and the targeted communities provides a base from which to measure the extent of Iranian influence in southern Iraq and the historical and cultural connection.

National economic interest and Shia beliefs based on the ideals of the Iranian revolution compel the Iranian government to strive to influence Iraqi co-religionists living in the border region. The strength of the influence is difficult to measure, but the structures of influence can be defined along with the historical and cultural ties between the people of the border region. The extent to which Iraqi Shia chart a political path independent of Tehran depends in large parts on whether Iraqi nationalism has a stronger appeal than Khomeini's "path to justice."

A shared Shia historical-cultural heritage affects Iranian-Iraqi relations. In both countries' the majority populations adhere to the Muslim denomination of Twelver Shi'ism. For Muslims, Islam is all-encompassing. In Islam history, religion, culture, and politics are intertwined. It is a way of life. Islam is thereby, also a political force stipulating what constitutes just and unjust political rule and leadership. The Western notion of a separation of religion and state is alien to Muslims including the Shia. Furthermore, the Muslim community's concept of the "umma," (community of believers) represents a shared identity. Hence, common historically rooted, religious-cultural values tie the Iraqi and Iranian Shia.

Despite these common roots, the Shia community in both countries is not homogeneous. The Shia population consists of people with differing ethnic roots and as citizens of the Iraqi and Iranian nation have distinct historical experiences and communal associations. Ethnically, Iraqi's are predominately Arab. Iranians are largely Persian. Other ethnic and religious factions within both countries' citizenry also wield varied degrees of power. Some of these non-Shia citizens, because of their differing roots, challenge the notion of widespread Iranian control. Thus, both countries have diverse populations with differing world-views.

Iraqis and Iranians purport to have their own distinct national ideology. Independent national principles foster Iraqi and Iranian identities and nationalist sentiments. Political

Scientists define nationalism as “an imagined political community.”<sup>3</sup> The Iraqi nation with set boundaries since the early 1920’s has come to understand itself as a political community, separate from Iran. Secular nationalism has traditionally represented an inspiration to Iraqis. Therefore, nationalism and the self-identification of the Iraqi Shia sub-groups is a factor that hampers Iranian influence.

Psychologist Henri Taifel and John Turner have developed a Social Identity Theory (SID), which suggests that; “people tend to classify themselves and others into various social categories.”<sup>4</sup> This classification includes tribes, clans, religious affiliation, educational cohorts, and so forth. Using Taifel and Turner’s approach permits categorization of individual communities based on how members of each population see itself as a society. How and with whom each community associates provides the base for identification. How the individual groups label others and believe they are distinct provides insights as well.<sup>5</sup> Taifel and Turner permit for identifying culturally differing beliefs resulting from divergent historical paths. Iran skillfully and aggressively uses shared and exclusive cultural beliefs and traits in conducting its strategic influence campaign into Iraq.

The assertion that Iran has influence in Iraq, or is gaining more authority, implies that Tehran has both the national will and a strategic plan. The plan must include actions designed to project sway into Iraq. Since mid 2000, the Multi-National Forces in Iraq (MNFI) and more now the Iraqi government fight Shia insurgents likely supplied by Iran in southern Iraq. A variety of reports allege Iranian influence in Iraq fuels the Shia insurgency. The degree and extent of reporting on Iranian activities indicate a strategic effort on Tehran’s part.

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<sup>3</sup> Anderson Benedict, “*Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*,” <http://www.nationalismproject.org/what/anderson.htm> (accessed September 20, 2009).

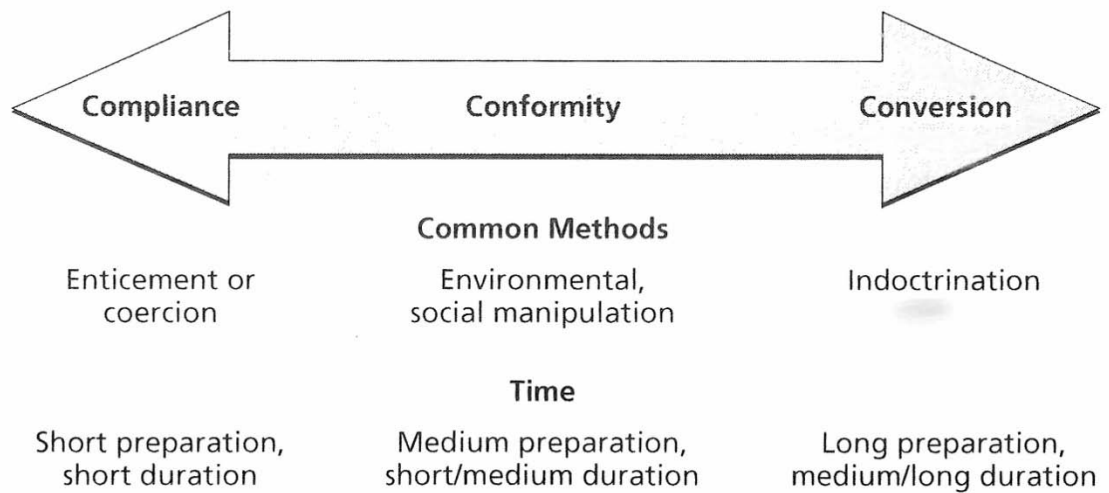
<sup>4</sup> Henri Taifel and John Turner, “*An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict*,” in *Organizational Identity*, by Mary Jo Hatch and Majken Schulz (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 56.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.



The planning and execution of a variety of individual actions for gaining authority represent strategic influence operations. The term strategic influence campaign can be defined as, “planned operations along a spectrum from covert to overt to convey specific information or messages to a given audience.”<sup>6</sup> In 1957, Carl Hovland, Irving Janis, and Harold Kelly created the Yale model of strategic influence campaigns. Figure 1 outlines this spectrum, which ranges from compliance to conformity to full conversion.<sup>7</sup>

### The Spectrum of Psychological Objectives



Source: Cragin Kim and Gerwehr Scott, *Dissuading Terror: Strategic Influence and the Struggle Against Terrorism*, Rand Corporation, 2005, 15.

The diagram depicts the concept that a communicator’s influence can be measured by considering a spectrum of phased psychological objectives. The influencer conducts operations along the continuum, which may include overt and covert activities. The communicator may use enticement or coercive measure in gaining compliance. Furthermore, he may engage in social manipulation to elicit conformity from a target. The influencer can employ several measures to

<sup>6</sup> Kim Cragin and Scott Gerwehr, *Dissuading Terror: Strategic Influence and the Struggle Against Terrorism* (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 2005), 14.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

gain conformity including propaganda, indoctrination, and humanitarian aid. If a strategic influence campaign seeks the complete conversion of a targeted society, the influencer may attempt institutionalizing the engagement with its target audience.

U.S. decision makers and operational planners need to understand the volatile Iraqi political situation in a strategic context. Pro Iranian Regime scholar Raf'at Seyyed Ahmad suggests that Hizb-allah's "success in Lebanon was based on tactics, techniques and procedures which considered rules that were based on the Islamic narrative and connected beliefs."<sup>8</sup> The techniques included an appeal to values such as sacrifice, martyrdom and the offering of financial, human, and political aid.<sup>9</sup> Ra'fat's observations indicate how Tehran may use a variety of methods in targeting the Iraqi population.

The current Iranian activities mirror the approaches Ra'fat outlines. Iran's activities such as providing logistical support to insurgent groups de-stabilize the nascent national government and threaten MNFI soldiers. U.S. decision makers and military commanders with soldiers on the ground need to understand and be aware of how Iran operates in Iraq. Only with this type of cultural understanding can MNFI and the Iraqi government determine the measures to take to counter Iranian aspirations.

Three sections follow this introduction. The first section delineates Tehran's motivation and capability to conduct a strategic influence campaign. The second section provides an overview of historical, geographic, and demographic peculiarities of the southern Iran-Iraq border region. This section also addresses how the specific Iraqi communities, the Muntafiq and the Madan tribesmen, see themselves, the other Shia communities and how each community relates

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<sup>8</sup> Raf'at Seyyed Ahmad, "Rvanshenasyi pyruzyi ba Tavadjoh beh do Nmunah Hezbollah dar Lobnan va entefazeh dar Felestine -The Psychology of Victory in Light of Two Instances of Victory: Hezbollah's victory in Lebanon and the Al-Aqsa Intifada Victory in Palestine," *Fasiname-ye Elmi Pashuheshi-ye Amaliyyat-e Ravan-Scientific Professional Quarterly on Psychological Operations* 3, no. 11, (Tehran: Winter 2006): 89-96.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

to the other. The third section examines Iran's efforts along the spectrum of strategic influence. The section considers details concerning the individual Iraqi target populations and addresses compliance, conformity, and conversion methods used by Tehran.

## **Iranian Motivations and Capabilities**

### **Motivations**

National self-interest and a religiously based political ideology provide the impetus for Iran's actions to assert its influence in Iraq. Historical events provide insights regarding the traditional economic importance of the region. The 1980-1988, Iran-Iraq War was not merely a border conflict, but was also a war for resources. Southern Iraq holds a significant percentage of that country's oil resources. Khuzestan province, located on Iraq's southern border, is Iran's major oil-producing region. The majority of Iran's onshore oil fields are located in Khuzestan.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, the southern border region is a highly coveted strategic source of power. Saddam speculated on gaining control over these resources. Middle East regional specialists Graham Fuller and Rahim Francke point out that, "the Shia population of the Arab world lies at the heart of the largest oil producing area of the Middle East, athwart the oil arteries out of the Persian Gulf."<sup>11</sup> A government with control over the region would have access to large oil-reserves.

As a semi-developed country Iran, show signs of a weak economy dependent on oil exports. The Islamic Republic's economy exhibits little diversification and deteriorates further with every decrease in oil prices. In turn, the economic woes have caused social unrest in the past, because the government was not able to meet the demands of the Iranian people.<sup>12</sup> This dynamic

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<sup>10</sup> Mehran Kamrava and Manochehr Dorraj, *Iran Today: An Encyclopedia of Life in the Islamic Republic 2: A-K* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2008): 173

<sup>11</sup> Rend, Rahim Fuller and Graham E. Francke, *The Arab Shi'a: The Forgotten Muslims* (New York: St. Martins Press, 2001), 1.

<sup>12</sup> "Iran's Presidential Choice: It could make a big difference," *The Economist* 390, no. 8623 (March 21, 2009): 46-48.

renders the Iranian state vulnerable and dependent on the international market and further economic development. Nevertheless, Iran's motivations are not merely pragmatic, but also political.

Political beliefs rooted in theology motivate Tehran's actions. Within the Islamic Republic of Iran, former Grand Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini fulfilled his vision of a government led by the Shia religious elite. Prior to leading the 1979 Iranian revolution, Khomeini advocated in his writings a worldwide uprising. In his writings on "Islamic Government", he sketched his doctrine of the political rule through Islamic jurists i.e. Ayatollah's. This doctrine advocates political leadership based on the guidance of theologians. The doctrine is called in Iran the *veleyat-e-faqih*.<sup>13</sup> Thus, Khomeini argued Islamic jurists are representatives ... "in leading army, managing society, defending nation and settling disputes and protecting the borders of the Muslims."<sup>14</sup> The Ayatollah swayed the Shia public by invoking the common early narrative of the Shia struggle during his sermons and speeches.

The government of Islam reassures and secures the Moslems and does not take away their reassures and security like the governments under which the Moslems lives in fear expecting them to attack his home at any moment and to take away his life, his money and all he possesses, as you can see with your own eyes. Such a thing happened in the days of Mu'awiyah who used to kill people on mere suspicion and accusation, used to jail people for long times, banish them from the country and who used to unjustly drive people out of their homes for no reason other than their saying God is our God.<sup>15</sup>

In 1979, Khomeini rallied people based on the notions of just government and, thereby, overthrew the ruling Palavi dynasty. Shah Reza Palavi fled Tehran. Khomeini called the Shah's rule oppressive. He invoked the mental image of Mu'awiya in rallying the Iranian populace. Mu'awiya was a 7<sup>th</sup> century Sunni Muslim caliph who became notorious for his vicious

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<sup>13</sup> Ruhollah Khomeini, *Islamic Government*, translated by Joint Publications Research Service, Arlington, VA (Manor Books, New York: 1979), 55.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 56.

repression of the Shia community. Many of the symbols, concepts, and rituals emotionally appealing to Shia worldwide are rooted in the narrative of the birth of Shia Islam.

The source for the notion of a savior ruler in the common Shia narrative is also found in the history. The narrative describes the Shia split from the Sunni Muslim majority and centers on the concept of just rule. The impetus for the split of the Shia from the Muslim majority was a disagreement over who was to rule after the death of the Prophet Muhammad in 632 C.E. A struggle for the leadership of the Muslim community ensued. This succession struggle is a narrative of tribal warfare to obtain political influence, legitimacy, and economic power and is still today the nucleus for a common identity.<sup>16</sup> Until 680 C.E. Muslim factions quarreled over a fundamental disagreement between hereditary and elected rule. The quarrel led to violence and fragmented the greater Muslim. After the Battle of Karbala in 680, C.E. Shi'ism became a faction within Islam.

The Battle of Karbala took place after the first "Shia" ruler Ali, a descendent of the Prophet's family was murdered, and his youngest son attempted to become ruler of the Muslim community at large. The Shia tribes had promised widespread support to Ali's son al-Husayn (ibn Ali) and pressed him to claim the position of ruler. In his bid for power, Husayn with a small group of family and supporters moved towards the Iraqi town of Karbala. The opposing Sunni force slaughtered Husayn and his following.<sup>17</sup> Subsequently, martyrdom became a central concept for the surviving community of his supporters and Shi'ism was born.

The events at Karbala are the origin of a variety of Shia beliefs such as martyrdom, communal suffering, redemption, and pilgrimage. Husayn and most of his family members, just

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<sup>16</sup> Fred M. Donner, *Muhammad and the Caliphate*, in *The Oxford History of Islam*, ed. John L. Esposito (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 15.

<sup>17</sup> Heinz Halm, *Shi'a Islam: From Religion to Revolution* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1997), 15.

as the Imam Ali before them, became martyrs for the Shia cause. The Shia tribes who had promised support to Husayn at Karbala never materialized. Intimidated by the numerically superior opposing forces they hesitated to fight. These tribes became guilty of abandoning Husayn. Thus, the Shia community internalized the values of martyrdom and suffering. Based on these events the Shia believe they are doomed to continual suffering until absolution day. Today the worldwide Shia community annually commemorates the event of Husayn's slaying. The Ashura rituals commemorate the events at Karbala. In subsequent centuries, many of the Shia leaders (Imams) met a premature death. The deaths of their leaders exacerbated the Shia strong emotional identification with the concept of martyrdom. Furthermore, it led to their burial sites becoming significant pilgrimage sites. The Battle at Karbala finalized the Sunni-Shia split and was the foundation for values held by Shia at large.

After splitting from the mainstream Sunni, the Shia community established a separate line of leadership. The early Sunni community established rule by Caliphs, and the convention of the Caliphate. In contrast, the Shia followed the rule of Imams and created the Imamate. Shi'ism links the institution of the Imamate to the notion of salvation. Just leadership was associated with the Imam. A successive line of twelve Imams ruled the Twelver Shia community. However, in 873 C.E. the disappearance of 12<sup>th</sup> Imam led to the abolishment of the Imamate as institution. The name Twelver Shia, is based on the communal faith, that the 12<sup>th</sup> Imam will return as the Mahdi (Messiah.) This Shia community trusts that a guardian took the 12<sup>th</sup> Imam into hiding to protect him from his enemies, and that he will return as Mahdi one day ushering in an era of just rule.<sup>18</sup> The return of the Mahdi is a central belief. It is the Mahdi's return which will end the suffering of this Shia community and provide absolution. To Shia, the Imamate and the Mahdi are symbols for just rule.

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<sup>18</sup> Kenneth M. Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle: The Conflict between Iran and America* (New York: Random House Publishers, 2004), 12.

Ayatollah Khomeini advocated political action to bring about just rule prior in order to hasten the return of the Mahdi. He believed that Shia community had an obligation in setting the religious-political conditions for the return of the Mahdi. In order to bring about the conditions for the return of the Mahdi, Iran exploits Shia historical beliefs for political purposes.

The strategic nature of Iran's efforts is anchored in Khomeini's doctrine and manifest in the Iranian Constitution. The former Grand Ayatollah called upon the worldwide Shia community to take action against unjust, harsh, secular, nationalist rulers. In his writing's Khomeini explicitly outlined his vision of a global Islamic (Shia) revolution. Once firmly established as ruler of Iran, Khomeini pursued his vision of spreading his doctrine of Islam. His early doctrine became the impetus for provisions in the Iranian Constitution. Provisions of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic specifically address the export of the regime's revolutionary ideals. Article 154 outlines Tehran's foreign policy goals. The Constitution embodies Khomeini's ideals and commits the government to exporting the revolution.

...the attainment of independence, freedom, and rule of justice and truth to be the right of all people of the world. Accordingly, while scrupulously refraining from all forms of interference in the internal affairs of other nations, it supports the just struggles of the mustad'fun (downtrodden) against the mustakbirun (arrogant, i.e. oppressors) in every corner of the globe.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, this part of the Iranian Constitution stipulates that the export of the revolution is part of Iranian national policy. The Iranian Regime is committed to conducting strategic outreach operations as a step toward ushering in a just world under the leadership of the Mahdi.

To a Western reader, the Iranian Constitution appears contradictory. The text states Iran will not interfere in the affairs of other nations while at the same time advocating the support of opposition groups. However, the commonly accepted narrative of the birth of Shi'ism centers on

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<sup>19</sup> Islamic Republic of Iran Constitution, English text, Foreign Policy. <http://www.iranonline.com/iran/iran-info/government/constitution-12.html> (accessed July 10, 2009).

the struggle for “just” leadership by a “legitimate” ruler. In Shi’ism, this rule provides a religious basis for political rule.

Tehran based on the Constitution of the Islamic Republic claims the right to determine and define a “legitimate” political ruling government. Ultimately, it is the Iranian regime which decides who are the downtrodden needing a savior and who is the arrogant oppressor. The contemporary hard-line regime supporter believes Khomeini’s inspired governmental structure characterizes legitimate rule. The larger Shia community judges a ruler legitimate if he benefits the people. He is not required to set the conditions for the return of the Mahdi. The Iranian Regime, based on Khomeini’s doctrine seeks to export its form of government based on religious beliefs and a quest for additional resources.

Political Scientist David Easton asserts a political system is maintained by its political inputs roughly labeled demands and support.<sup>20</sup> In 1979, the Iranian population demanded just rule and a government that provided economic support to the general population. Ayatollah Khomeini’s writings and doctrine were seen as fulfilling these demands. Therefore, after the revolution, the Iranian government established its political system based on *veleyat-e-faqih*. This political system established the policy of exporting its ideology and anchored it in the Islamic Republic’s Constitution.

Today, the infrastructure of Iran’s government is equipped for extensive and effective influence efforts at home and abroad specifically to attempt to make significant economic gains. The Iranian people demand economic development as they did prior to the 1979 revolution. Acceptance by the Iraqi Shia population of the Khomeini doctrine would also represent a re-affirmation of the Iranian political system to its own discontented population. Corresponding economic gain, specifically access to southern Iraq’s large oil fields would achieve this same

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<sup>20</sup> David Easton, “An Approach to the Analysis of Political Systems,” *World Politics* 9, no .3 (1957): 383-400.



effect. The Iraqi government is currently not capable of fulfilling the demands of its population. Iran is motivated to fill the governmental vacuum in Iraq. Iran would gain economically from suasion over the Iraqi population and their proximity to the rich southern oil fields.

## Capabilities

The Iranian Regime has established a well functioning government apparatus to support influence operations and strategic outreach. Iran may gain influence by using persuasion through methods such as propaganda and coercion by threats or force. Coercive actions are used to gain compliance. Propaganda is a vital aspect of conformity and conversion methods. Internally, propaganda and indoctrination enables the Iranian ruling elite to hold on to power. Since 1979, the Iranian Regime has a well-established institutional structure for conducting internal and external influence campaigns. This institutional structure exerts pressure via dominance or informal soft power. Iran establishes compliance relationships based on coercion or habitual deference.<sup>21</sup> Formal authority comes via the power of the office; informal authority comes from promising to meet expectations that are often left implicit (expectations of trustworthiness, ability, civility) such as found in propaganda themes.”<sup>22</sup> Informal authority depends upon what political scientist Joseph S. Nye describes as soft power, “the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments.”<sup>23</sup> Nye in accordance with Hoveland and Janis, points out the importance of credibility. Reputation is a primary source of credibility. Iraqi’s can easily reject information that appears as propaganda and render Iran’s efforts as

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<sup>21</sup> Ronald A. Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 58.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, 101.

<sup>23</sup> Joseph S. Nye, “Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics,” *Public Affairs* (Cambridge, MA: 2004): x.

counterproductive.<sup>24</sup> Tehran may entice loyalty in various ways such as material support and ideological attraction.

Creating loyalties is a function of the Iranian government. The Iranian Constitution formally provides the legal foundation for Tehran's actions. Article 175 addresses the control of the internal media and subordinate to the Supreme Leader.

The dissemination of thoughts in the Radio and Television of the Islamic Republic of Iran must be guaranteed in keeping with the Islamic' criteria and the best interests of the country. The appointment and dismissal of the head of the Radio and Television of the Islamic Republic of Iran rests with the Leader<sup>25</sup>

The wording of the translated passage in the constitution provides insights in itself. The Supreme Leader is to disseminate "thoughts" not "information." This wording implies the regime intends to employ propaganda.

The Iranian government fulfills its commitment to use the media via a multitude of institutions and offices. Islamic scholar Wilfried Buchta, outlines the structure of the Iranian government in his study *Who rules Iran? The Structure of Power in the Islamic Republic*. Iran's propaganda machine mirrors the dual leadership structure between the President and the Supreme Leader. The President of Iran acts as the chief executive of the country. He appoints the majority of the country's ministers. These ministers include the Ministers of the Interior and Islamic Culture and Intelligence. In turn, these ministries are central institution provide direction to the individual offices tasked with the dissemination of indoctrination materials and themes.

The Iranian clerical ruling elite led by the supreme leader, currently Ayatollah Khamenei, also has independent institutions designed for conducting influence operations. Overall, the religious elite, decides on matters of internal and foreign policy and commands the armed and

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid. 107.

<sup>25</sup> Islamic Republic of Iran Constitution, English Text, Radio and Television. <http://www.iranonline.com/iran/iran-info/government/constitution-12.html> (accessed July 10, 2009).

security forces.<sup>26</sup> The Supreme leader appoints the head of the radio and television media apparatus that works closely with his Islamic Propaganda Office, the Qom Office of Islamic Propaganda, the Islamic Culture and Communications Organization, various foundations and individual Cultural Offices located in Iranian embassies abroad. These offices also have a close information sharing relationship with the Ministries of Interior, Culture, and Intelligence (MOIS.) The Ministries of Culture and Intelligence also have internal and external monitoring missions.

The office of the Supreme Leader appoints representatives serving abroad. In addition, the Supreme leader heads the Iranian Revolutionary Guard (IRGC), which has special divisions for public relations, intelligence, and religious-ideological education. Therefore, the Supreme Leader has offices and institutions independent from the President for propagating the ruling clergy's world-view. The Supreme Leader has significant control over propaganda efforts.

The regular Army and its military intelligence branch also have departments and branches able to support Tehran's overall efforts. The Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) has the ability to direct and dispatch paramilitary forces such as the Hizb-allah (Party of Allah) and Hamas (Islamic Resistance Movement). Iran uses Hizb-allah, in particular as a primary tool for exporting the Islamic Revolution into Iraq.

With this structure in place, Tehran's has the ability to utilize a variety of influence methods. The dual nature of the governmental structure allows both the Supreme Leader and the President to direct internal and external strategic influence operations. Overall, the President is subordinate to the supreme leader, but both need to maintain a solid working relationship for the state to function.<sup>27</sup> Ultimately, this structure strengthens the Iranian religious leadership's hold on

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<sup>26</sup> Wilfried Buchta, "Who Rules Iran? The Structure of Power in the Islamic Republic" (Joint publication of *The Washington Institute For Near East Policy and the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung*, Washington, D.C.: 2000), 3.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, xi.

the ability to sway the Iranian and Iraqi people. In order to influence its neighbors, Tehran uses a variety of strategies, which may be outlined along a spectrum.

## **Tehran's Strategic Influence Campaign**

Along the spectrum of psychological objectives, Tehran may in its strategic efforts foster compliance, conformity, and ultimately conversion. Thus, to achieve the goal of full conversion in southern Iraq, Tehran uses differing methods in order to sway specific elements of the Iraqi population. Compliance measures may include activities such as enticements for political support, bribes, coercive violence, or veiled threats. In a compliance campaign the underlying message is, "Believe what you want, but do what we say". The conformity message is, "Do what your context suggests is appropriate or correct."<sup>28</sup> Conformity and conversion measures include social manipulation like media reporting. The basic message is, "Believe what we say, then behave accordingly."<sup>29</sup> In effective conversion campaigns, the communicator has near complete control over the environment. The overall campaign intends that the audience accept the messages come from a trusted, credible, knowledgeable, and legitimate communicator. Iran's communication challenge is to deliver inspirational messages or threats to induce the Iraqi target population to act in accordance to Iranian interests. Along the spectrum Tehran, specifically targets Iraq's southern border population. This population is comprised of former Iraqi dissidents from the Muntafiq tribal confederation and the Madan tribesmen living directly along the border's marshes.

## **The Iraqi Target Population**

### **The Southern Border Region**

The Shia Iran-Iraq southern border communities developed within the context of distinct tribes, empires, and nation states. Shia groups in both countries remain fragmented by ethnic

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<sup>28</sup> Kim Cragin and Scott Gerwehr, *Dissuading Terror: Strategic Influence and the Struggle Against Terrorism* (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 2005):15-17.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid , 19.

origin, beliefs and values, and often language. In addition, disparities in education levels separate the communities and affect their socio-economic status. The individual Shia community's historical development provides a complicated categorization for the foundation for either shared or exclusive cultural beliefs. The groups of Iraqi Shia populations along the southern border region align into two primary populations, the Muntafiq and the Madan tribes. Members of Iraq's largest Shia tribal confederation the Muntafiq reside in southern and central Iraq. The Madan's traditionally live in and around Iraq's Marshes.



Source: From the Destruction of the Iraq's Southern Marshes, CIA Publication IA 94-10020-1994, <http://lib.utexas.edu/maps.iraq.html>. (accessed October 30, 2009)

Throughout their history, the majority of Iraqi Shia tribes resided in the central and southern regions of the country. Until 2003, Iraq was largely dominated by Sunni Muslims and the Shia were an oppressed majority. As a consequence of their subject status, Shia religious practices in Iraq became more private, more reserved and largely withdrawn from politics. In contrast, Iran became a Shia state in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and remains so today. Thus, in Iran their rulers supported the Shia population. Their religious favor became more revolutionary. The Iran-Iraq border region remained unique in that it largely remained separated from urban centers and governmental institutions with the tribes largely managing themselves.

Geographical features, most importantly the marshlands that extend into Iran, affected the historical development of the border region. The region's inhospitable terrain shaped the life-style and economic development of the local tribes. Modernization passed the tribesmen by, so they continued to live as they had for centuries. The region's geographical features have historically hampered efforts by ruling powers to extend political authority.<sup>30</sup> The Iraqi southeastern marshland once covered 20,000 square kilometers between Amara in the north and Basra in the south, Nasiriyah in the west and the Iranian town of Hawizah in the east.<sup>31</sup> The local terrain evinces lakes, mudflats, and wetlands with exceedingly tall reeds, shrubs, grasses, and seasonal lagoons. The waters of the Tigris, Euphrates, and Iranian Karkhe rivers feed the marshes.<sup>32</sup> The Hawizah Marsh located in the province of Maysan spans the border area despite Saddam's efforts to drain the region in the mid 1990's. While southern Iraq is a major oil-producing region, the

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<sup>30</sup> Jeffrey Herbst, *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 21.

<sup>31</sup> Hussain Ghadiri, "Restoration of the Mesopotamian Marshlands" (Brisbane, Australia: Center for Riverine Landscapes, Griffith University, 2004), 1.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

stretch of land along the border is largely without basic governmental services.<sup>33</sup> During the initial period of Saddam's reign and again in 1991 following the Shia uprisings regime opponents hid out in the Marshes. They engaged in hit and run guerilla attacks against the regular government forces, and retreated into the wetlands for cover. Thus, the area along the southern marshes became the main region of anti-government activity and served as a safe-haven for dissidents. After the 1991 Shia uprising the Iraqi military conducted large-scale military operations in an attempt to subdue the resistance. The regime uprooted or resettled some 200,000 to 400,000 Marsh tribesmen within Iraq or Iran. Only some 20,000 tribal members remained living in the region.<sup>34</sup> Many fled to Iran.

The Iraqi Shia resistance who had moved to Iran is composed of three identifiable groups. One group actively aligns itself with the Iranian Regime and its theological outlook. Another group has remained reserved, but found it safer to live in Iran and assimilated into Iranian society. A third, the Madan tribesmen, possess strong tribal ties and many during Saddam's reign felt safer living in Iran. The Madan survived through a form of social banditry. The political opponents of the former Iraqi regime were largely members from the Muntafiq tribal confederation. Members of the Muntafiq tribes adapted to exile in Iran and some have adopted the Iranian religious-political ideology.

## **The Muntafiq**

Members of the Muntafiq tribal confederation are Iran's primary target population. The Muntafiq tribal confederation is the largest and most influential Iraqi Shia community. The confederation's tribes predominantly settled in Iraq's southern provinces. Although, the majority

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<sup>33</sup> Joshua Hammer, "Return to the Marsh," *Smithsonian Magazine* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian, October 2006), <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/people-places/marsh.html> (accessed April 10, 2009).

<sup>34</sup> Ghadiri, 2.

of the Shia tribes' today associate with the Muntafiq confederation, the confederation is not uniformly Shia as a consequence of centuries of intermarriage and intermingling. Therefore, a minority of individual tribes within the confederation is Sunni. Thus, it is almost impossible to delineate who is and who is not part of the Muntafiq. Nevertheless, the majority of Iraqi Shia are Muntafiq members.

The Muntafiq majority identify themselves as distinctly Iraqi. Nevertheless, tribal, educational, socio-economic status and regional divisions fragment the society. The Muntafiq see themselves as Arab, Shia, and Iraqi. The majority of the Shia elite are members of the Muntafiq tribal confederation. Therefore, the Muntafiq believe they are the legitimate leaders of the whole Iraqi Shia community. Regional lines exacerbated communal divisions. The urban, educated centrally located Muntafiq see themselves as civilized and morally superior to southern tribal members who continue living a traditional rural life-style. The educated Muntafiq are proud of developing the Iraqi society towards modernity, but at the same time remain proud of their Arab heritage and their tribal honor code. The Muntafiq label the more traditional and rural southerners as "Shurki" a term which implies uneducated and uncivilized.<sup>35</sup> Thus, while fragmented from within the Muntafiq believe themselves at the top of the Iraqi Shia tribal hierarchy.

Because the Madan –Marsh people are semi-illiterate and considered backward the Muntafiq place them at the bottom of the hierarchy. Overall, the Muntafiq community sees the Madan as something other than Arab and labels them thieves, bandits, dirty, dumb, not trustworthy, and uncontrolled. The negative view of the Madan permeates the Muntafiq community as a whole.

Among individual tribal members, views about Iranians vary. To some Muntafiq the Iranians are fellow Shia, aligned with the Iraqi Shia. Alternatively, the Iraqi's see them as a

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<sup>35</sup> This information is based on the author's personal observations while serving in Iraq and individual discussions with Iraqi émigrés to the United States.



bitterly former foe. These opinions are greatly influenced by the degree of association between elements of the Muntafiq community and Iranians. The Iraqi clergy within the Muntafiq confederation are divided over the acceptance or rejection of Khomeini's doctrine. Furthermore, the Muntafiq community is aware that in 2009 Iran is the center of the Shia ulama. The Iranian ulama, therefore largely has the power over interpreting the sacred texts and over the distribution and control of religious taxes. Some Iraqis aware that Mesopotamia was the birthplace of Shi'ism resent the Iranian claim of being the center of Shi'ism. For some, in particular Westerners, Shi'ism, and Iran are synonymous. Thus, the Iranians are either friend or foe to individual Muntafiq. The degree of historical association between the Iraqi tribal members and the Iranians influences these differing perceptions.

Prior to 2003, many of the Iraqi Muntafiq had lived in Iran for decades. This primarily educated class was the first target of Saddam's terror and initially fled to Iran. Many prominent Iraqi Shia dissidents sought safe-haven in Iran. These individuals had extended or built networks and family relations.<sup>36</sup> While in exile, Iraqis associated with elements of the Iranian government in their quest to undermine Saddam's rule. Two ideological dissident groups have provided the backbone of Iranian sponsored Iraqi resistance. Beginning in the 1960's two ideological groups developed among Shia regime dissidents the Dawah and the Supreme Assembly of the Iraqi Revolution (SCIRI). Both groups led a large scale Shia uprising following the Iran-Iraq and Gulf Wars. While both fought against Saddam's rule, their dogma differed.

The members of the Ad Dawah al Islamiyah (the Islamic Call-commonly known as Dawah) sought to combine Islam with concepts of the modern nation state.<sup>37</sup> Thus, they did not fully accept Khomeini's activist approach. The group's leader Baqir Al-Sadr advocated a

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<sup>36</sup> This information is based on the author's individual discussions with Iraqi émigrés to the United States.

<sup>37</sup> Phebe Marr, *Iraq*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Cambridge, MA: West View Press, 2004), 104.

reserved position and never sought refuge in Iran.<sup>38</sup> His descendent Muqtada al-Sadr became an insurgent, fighting MNFI and the new Iraqi government. Nevertheless, although the younger Sadr accepts support from Iran, he has remained an Iraqi nationalist wary of Iranian control. In contrast, some members of the Dawah party accepted fully the Iranian ideology influenced by Grand Ayatollah Khomeini. Members of the Dawah party today remain split regarding the acceptance of Iranian political ideals.

The second dissident group is the Supreme Assembly for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq known as SAIRI or SCIRI. Since 2007, the organization has called itself the Iraqi Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI.) Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim was the first leader of SAIRI and his family remains influential within the organization today. Hakim in contrast to Baqir al-Sadr adopted Iranian ideals and became the founder of its military wing, the Badr Brigades. The Badr Brigades fought alongside the Iranians during the Iran-Iraq war. Members of the ISCI have a strong historical association with Iran.

The membership of these resistance groups is largely Muntafiq tribesmen. The historical association with Iran provides Tehran today a direct avenue for political sway in Iraq. The historical association between the Iranian government and the Iraqi Shia opposition evinces two phases with differing degrees of fraternity. During the first phase, while Saddam was still in power, Iran provided support to actively undermining his regime. This support consisted of funds, logistics, military training, weapons, and other aid. The refugee populations constituted the active opposition, and were fully dependent on their Iranian masters. During the second phase after the fall of Saddam's regime, Iran used its established association with the Iraqi opposition in two primary avenues to conduct its strategic outreach. It used former Iraqi refugees now firmly in line with Tehran to establish paramilitary groups that directed violence against MNFI and the newly

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<sup>38</sup> Islamic scholars term the reserved non-political interpretation of Shi'ism as quietist.

established government.<sup>39</sup> Politically Tehran used its long-standing influence with the educated opposition elite and their remaining economic dependence to manipulate Iraq's newly established government. A government now infused with former regime opponents. After 2003, former regime opponents became members of the Iraqi government. That change is likely to change alter Iranian influence. Iran's weight may grow or diminish. Some of the oppositionists turned political leaders have gradually gained the autonomy from Tehran in making choices.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, the Muntafiq tribe as a whole remains divided over their perceptions of the Iranians, and whether to accept the Iranian Regimes doctrine based on Khomeini's teachings.

Unlike the former regime dissidents who became the new Iraq's leading elite, the common Iraqi Shia does not necessarily feel kinship with Iranians, but rather perceives an air of arrogance. Iraqi militia trainees disliked their Iranian instructors and felt ethnic affinity with Arab Hizb-allah trainers. A declassified intelligence debriefing quotes a trainee. "Iraqi SG (Special Group-Iranian paramilitary) trainees do not like Iranian trainers. The Iranians do not show...respect and feel they are better. Trainees like and respect the Lebanese Hizb-allah trainers because the Lebanese trainers speak Arabic and treat the trainees with respect."<sup>41</sup> The wide-ranging perspectives of Muntafiq tribal members towards Iranians continue until today. Furthermore, Iraqi nationalism represents a primary dividing factor between both populations.

Just as Saddam before them, the Iranians underestimated the effect of nationalism on the Shia community. During the Iran-Iraq, war the Shia community "fought shoulder to shoulder with their Arab compatriots...hence, the Shi'ite community sealed its social contract with the Iraqi

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<sup>39</sup> Joseph Felter and Brian Fishman, "Iranian Strategy in Iraq: Politics and "Other Means," Occasional Paper Series (West Point, New York: Combating Terrorism Center, U.S. Military Academy, October 2008), 30-47.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 69.

state with the blood of their sons.”<sup>42</sup> The cultural divide between the Muntafiq and the Madan is great, but it is greater between the Iranians and the Madan tribesmen who still live astride the national borders.

## **The Madan**

The Madan are an ancient people who differ significantly from the Muntafiq and Iranian Shia. These tribes live within the marsh region directly along the southern Iraq-Iran border. The origin of the Madan is unclear. The Madan may be the descendants of the Sumerians or Acadians and some other scholars assert the Madan are tribes who migrated into the region from southwest Asia during pre-Islamic times. Sedentary Arabs and the nomadic Madan tribal structures intertwined over time. Today’s Madan community is highly fragmented. During the 1990’s Saddam conducted a forced resettlement campaign that affected the Madan community as a whole.

Iraqi government oppression and forced or voluntary exile left its imprint on the Madan population. The community’s tribal structures eroded and its members fell into abject poverty. In particular, Madan tribal members who left Iraq and took refuge in Iran found little support. After 2003 upon their return little was done for their re-integration. Political scientist B.C. Smith points out modernization’s undesirable consequences include “political repression, economic and political corruption, loss of cultural identity and community dislocation.”<sup>43</sup> These effects of dislocation are evident within the Madan community. Often illiterate, with few means by which to make a living the Madan are an easy target for Iran. Iran uses coercive methods and inducements to gain recruits for subversive operations. Tehran cannot influence the Madan population through propaganda and intellectual discourse, because of their generally low

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<sup>42</sup> Efraim Karsh, *The Iran-Iraq War* (Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing, 2002), 70.

<sup>43</sup> B. C. Smith, *Understanding Third World Politics: Theories of Political Change and Development* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003), 61.

educational level and differing belief system. The Madan nevertheless, are vulnerable because the cohesiveness of their community was undermined. Saddam's forced resettlement from the marshes into urban centers and later urban immigration by the younger population due to economic hardship had consequences. Many within the group struggle to find their identity as Arabs, Iraqis, and Madan. Thus, the Madan identity varies based on age, educational level, urbanization, and social standing within Iraqi society. The older generation is more likely to follow the Madan's distinct traditional life-style and sees itself as Madan first, Iraqi second, but still independent. The younger generation attempts to assimilate into the greater Iraqi society. Thus, they categorize themselves as Arab and Iraqi. The young Madan tribesmen's second-class stature and a solid reputation as social misfits hamper their assimilation.

The Madan see their tribes as sharing some common historical experiences with the Muntafiq. Both had a shared experience of discrimination and persecution. Both also share the same language, albeit the traditional communities hold on to their distinctive dialects. The traditional Madan view the Muntafiq as arrogant, insincere, corrupted by modernization. Overall, the Madan continue to pride themselves as self-regulating tribes with a "Bedouin ethos" and "great warrior spirit." These attitudes support their belief that tribal laws supersede religious and governmental laws.<sup>44</sup> Distinctly Madan cultural elements provide the foundation for an independent streak and different views, which diverge, from other Shia beliefs.

The Madan differ culturally from the other Shia communities. Ethnologists Sigrid Westphal Hellbusch and her husband Heinz Westphal wrote a comprehensive study on the Madan based on research and observation obtained while living with Madan tribes. These observations outline how the Madan diverge from other Shia communities.<sup>45</sup> The simple, traditional

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<sup>44</sup> Yitzhak Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 49.

<sup>45</sup> Sigrid Hellbusch-Westphal and Heinz Westphal, *Die Ma'dan. Kultur und Geschichte der Marschenbewohner im Sued Iraq*, Translation from the original German text was facilitated by the author (Berlin: Dunker & Humbold, 1962).

tribesmen, defines history within the time span of some 150 years. The individual Madan base chronicles on the allegorical memories of their parents and grandparents.

The longer historical development of Shi'ism is of little relevance to these tribesmen, because they remained geographically isolated and separated from the more sedentary Arab tribes. The primary religious Shia holidays are celebrated. In contrast, to other Shia, the tribes conduct religious rituals in a subdued manner. Many of the Madan see religion as a restrictive force on their unique life-style. Thus, Iranian religious ideals do not necessarily find a futile ground among the Madan.

Living in the marshes where material goods are destroyed by nature in a matter of minutes the Madan have also developed a traditional value system which affects contemporary behavior. Tribesmen treat material goods carelessly. This has the effect that the line between stealing and borrowing is blurred. Veracity does not have a positive connotation. Hence, the Madan view lying and "getting one over one another" positively. Throughout history, the Madan were the pawn of many rulers and became expert dissimulators. The tribal chiefs are outwardly submissive and work with the coalition and Iraqi officials. Behind the scenes, the tribes engage in smuggling and other activities.<sup>46</sup> Thus, their actions based on habitual-life style support their social standing as rebels.

Since the sixteenth-century, the Madan community has customarily facilitated cross-border trade, particularly along the Hawizah Marsh.<sup>47</sup> Over the past centuries depending on the various rulers labeled the Madan's way of earning their livelihood either as legitimate trade or as illegal piracy. Therefore, their business is conducted either openly or covertly depending on the ruling government. As in the past, the Marsh Arabs are a people living in abject poverty

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<sup>46</sup> Rory Stewart, *The Prince of the Marshes: And Other Occupational Hazards of a Year in Iraq* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt Books, 2006), 43-45.

<sup>47</sup> Perry R. John, *Karim Khan Zand: A History of Iran, 1747-1779* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 162.

compared to other Iraqi population elements. Largely illiterate, without substantial governmental support and means for economic development they engage in a form of social banditry out of sheer necessity.<sup>48</sup> Cross-border trade legal or illegal represents the Madan's way of life.

The Madan engage in illegal activities. These activities are the basis for association with the other Shia communities. The Madan traditionally facilitate insurgents. During times of Shia persecution, the tribes' hid Iraqi dissidents and enabled Iranian and Iraqi militias to transit to and from Iraq. Today this activity continues among the Madan. Madan facilitate subversive Iranian efforts. For example, they aid the Special Groups, which are Shia Arab militants that draw upon Iranian, support.<sup>49</sup> The Madan's primary motivator for aiding Iranian is based on financial need and not ideological by. Primarily survival motivates the Madan in associating with the Muntafiq militias and the Iranians. Hence, Iranian enticement measure specifically target the Madan as well as the poor among Muntafiq tribesmen.

## **Iranian Efforts along the Spectrum of Psychological Objectives**

### **Compliance**

Iran establishes compliance via enticement or coercion. Coercive actions within a strategic influence campaign attempts to instill as sense of terror through low levels of violence vice massive actions. Counter-terrorism experts Joseph Felter and Brian Fishman describe in detail, Iran's coercive measures which include support to Iraqi insurgents in their study "*Iranian Strategy in Iraq: Politics and "Other" Means.*"<sup>50</sup> The Iranian government exports the Quds

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<sup>48</sup> Juan Cole, *Marsh Arab Rebellion: Grievance, Mafia and Militias in Iraq*, [http://www.indiana.edu/~nelc/lectures/Wadie%20Jwaideh%20-%202004%20-%20Juan%20Cole%20\(2005\).pdf](http://www.indiana.edu/~nelc/lectures/Wadie%20Jwaideh%20-%202004%20-%20Juan%20Cole%20(2005).pdf) (accessed January 20, 2009).

<sup>49</sup> Michael Knights, "Taming Iranian -backed Special Groups in Maysan," *Sentinel 2*, issue 6 (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, June 2006), <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/sentinel/> (accessed August 31, 2009).

<sup>50</sup> Joseph Felter and Brian Fishman, "Iranian Strategy in Iraq: Politics and "Other Means," Occasional Paper Series (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, U.S. Military Academy, October 2008), 7.

(Jerusalem) Force (QF) of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) to support armed militias in Iraq. Many members of the IRGC, the ideological branch of the Iranian military, are fervent regime supporters and operate abroad as both soldier-trainers and subversives. Iran provides funds and weapons training, logistics, engineering and explosives. Supporting armed militias represent the primary coercive method used by Iran.

Though armed militias Iran has a degree of influence in southern Iraq. SCIRI's, Badr Corps formerly Iran's primary agent in Iraq, was an official part of the IRGC-QF.<sup>51</sup> Today, a similar relationship continues with Iran supporting the insurgency in Iraq. The IRGC-QF provides training for largely Muntafiq recruits from southern Iran. The aspiring fighters transit the border into Iran either through legal border checkpoints, or illegally by boat, foot, or vehicle. Often recruits take advantage of the cross-border Hawizah marshes and the generally isolated and inhospitable terrain. MNFI continues to combat Iraqi insurgents supplied via the Marsh region.

The Marsh region of the Iraqi Maysan province is the primary entry point for Iranian aid. Experienced Madan tribal smugglers facilitate the cross-border supply of Iran's surrogate groupings. Iran uses coercive methods to gain compliance by the border population, these include the use bribes, kidnapping, killings, and threats as methods in sending messages. These coercive actions send a message of fear.

Tehran's coercive actions are both strategic and tactical.<sup>52</sup> Iran may target a person to send a particular message to a community - a tactic. For example killing a person to avoid an information leak is tactical. Iran conducting actions with the goal to deter the Iraqi Shia from engaging in actions seen as undesired is strategic. In order for these types of threats to be

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 26-27.



effective, they must be publicized, persuasive, and personalized.<sup>53</sup> MNFI and the local populace may perceive Iraqi collaboration with Iran as evidence of their loyalty. However, this is a gross simplification of the processes at work. As political scientist Stathis N. Kalyvas in *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, points out: “predilections are affected by preferences over outcomes, beliefs about outcomes, the behavior of others and the networks into which people are embedded, and security considerations in an environment where chance and contingency cannot be underestimated.”<sup>54</sup> Thus, the Muntafiq and Madan tribe’s compliance does not necessarily indicate ideological commitment.

Some coercive measures are extreme. Iran is capable and willing to use targeted assassinations. In 1998, secret intelligence committees of the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS) openly confessed eliminating Iranian regime oppositionist.<sup>55</sup> These committees mission includes the assassinating oppositionist in Iran and abroad. Directed assassinations also, are also an extreme measure to achieve compliance. The U.S. government has accused IRGC-QF force Brigadier General Foruzandeh of directing assassinations of Iraqi citizens. Non-compliant Muntafiq and Madan tribal members may be the target.<sup>56</sup> Thus, Iranian sponsored assassinations are likely to take place in Iraq representing an extreme hard-line measure along the spectrum of conversion. Iran also recruits willing Iraqi’s to support their hard-line tactics.

Iran recruits members from all of the Iraqi population groups. Tehran initially recruited former oppositionists of the Saddam Regime, and then recruitment expanded to members of the southern Iraqi Muntafiq. IRGC recruiters specifically target, Iraqi Muntafiq disillusioned with

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Wilfried Buchta, *Who Rules Iran? The Structure of Power in the Islamic Republic* (Joint publication of *The Washington Institute For Near East Policy and the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung*, Washington, D.C.: 2000), 167-169.

<sup>56</sup> Treasury Designates Entities, *Individuals Fueling Iraqi Insurgency* (Department of Treasury, Press Release, Washington D.C.: Jan 2008), <http://www.treasury.gov/press/releases/hp759.htm> (accessed August 30, 2009).

MNFI and the new Iraqi government. Financial enticements and bribes aid the IRGC in their efforts. Bribed informants ascertain and funnel information back to their respective handlers and serve as Tehran's voice within individual communities.<sup>57</sup> Iran continues to recruit Iraqis with financial incentives and appeals to ideology, especially the virtue of martyrs.

Over time, reverence for the martyrs who died an honorable death for the Shia community evolved into a powerful social and political motivator. Martyrs are central to the Shia faith and respected by the Shia at large. Iran and religious authorities use the Shi'i concept of martyrdom, despite Islam forbidding suicide, for political purposes.<sup>58</sup> Based on a call to martyrdom, the IRGC created volunteer units from among young Shia worldwide. Tehran appeals to "martyrdom seekers" for suicide mission outside of Iran, based on the belief dying for one's religious cause is a "noble expressions of Islam."<sup>59</sup> Therefore, Iran has exploited traditionally religious concept specifically for its political purposes. Tehran also targets the emerging political elite' who is comprised of former exiles, now becoming influential as part of the Iraqi ruling class.

Iran uses a variety of media efforts directed at the Iraqi's and the new ruling elite. In the past, posters of martyrs littered the street of Shia neighborhoods in Iraq promoting pro-Iranian paramilitary groups engaged in fighting the MNFI and Iraqi security force. Furthermore, Iranian official propaganda outlets such as the Islamic Republic's News Agency (IRNA) address Iraqis with a variety of themes. These propaganda themes are also a method for transmitting sublime threats. The subject of some of Iran's talking points include "Unity as key to development, Iranian interest in Iraqi independence, safeguarding brotherly ties and the inter-linkage between

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<sup>57</sup> Felter and Fishman, 7.

<sup>58</sup> Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 91.

<sup>59</sup> Ali Alfoneh, *Iran's Suicide Brigades* (Middle East Quarterly, January 2007), <http://www.irantracker.org/analysis/irans-suicide-brigades> (accessed April 17, 2009).

Iraqi and Iranian security.”<sup>60</sup> The undertone of these messages may have a specific meaning to the Iraqis.

Considering the association between the Iranian Regime and current Iraqi politicians in connection with the Iranian concept of “tarooof,” it appears that Tehran is warning Iraqi government officials. In a Sunni dominated Muslim world, because Shia were considered heretics, they developed “tarooof” as a protective measure to ensure survival. One of these protective measures is the Shi’i practice of dissimulation -Taqiyya. Taqiyya embodies using caution in speech, behavior and practicing “dissimulation for survival in a hostile world.”<sup>61</sup> This concept ties directly into the traditional Bedouin custom of hospitality to strangers. These traditions developed into the Iranian concept of “tarooof.” Tarooof (Arabic root arafa-to know) is a complex system of ritual politeness, which governs social relations including political negotiations.<sup>62</sup> Tarooof, as artful pretention, is like the Arab notion of hospitality, tied to honor and survival in an unfriendly environment. Therefore, the content of the Iranian propaganda methods may represent a warning for Iraqi decisions makers. The message warns against becoming too independent from Iran. Varieties of other propaganda messages represent softer efforts at social manipulation.

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<sup>60</sup> Islamic Republic News Agency, “Jalili underlines need to expand Iran-Iraq cooperation,” <http://www.irna.ir/EN/View/FullStory/?NewsId=437802&idLanguage=3> (accessed April 15, 2009). Islamic Republic News Agency, “Unity, key to Iraqi development: EC chairman,” <http://www.irna.ir/EN/View/Fullstory/Tools/PrintVersion/?NewsId=372403&idLanguage=3> (accessed February 28, 2009). “Jalili: Iran and Iraq’s security interlinked,” <http://www.irna.ir/EN/View/Fullstory/Tools/PrintVersion/?NewsID=312485&idLanguage=3> (accessed April 20, 2009).

<sup>61</sup> John L. Esposito, *Islam the Straight Path* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 48.

<sup>62</sup> Marguerite del Giudice, “Persia Ancient Soul of Iran,” *National Geographic* 214, no. 2 (August 2008): 43.

## Conformity

Tehran attempts to persuade the Iraqi Shia population at large with social manipulation methods. The Iranian government uses methods such as media reporting, public outreach programs, provides social services, and employs mullahs trained in Iranian seminaries for religious indoctrination. The majority of Tehran's social manipulation aims to gain the Iraqi "hearts and mind" by fulfilling the basic "wants and need," of the Iraqi Shia population. Psychologist Abraham Maslow outlined physiological needs and safety as basic human needs.<sup>63</sup> The majority Iraqi Shia population formerly persecuted and largely neglected often seeks fulfillment of meeting the most basic human needs of food, shelter, and safety. Iran broadcasts focused propaganda into Iraq, which exploit Iraqi needs, and makes use of themes that imply promises of a better future. Iran also uses its largely state controlled media apparatus to broadcast propaganda into Iraq. The government or Iranian leaders close to the regime fund Iranian media.<sup>64</sup> In general, the governmental media adeptly uses loaded terms and subliminal themes, which foster unstated assumptions, symbols.<sup>65</sup> IRNA reports frequently quote out individual statements of context and/or to support a position, an idea, or an argument.<sup>66</sup> Tehran draws on citing prominent religious and political figures to impart a sense of authority and credibility.<sup>67</sup> IRNA reports indicate themes related to Iranian-Iraqi relations. These themes address cultural, economic, and military topics. The Iraqi supreme leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, Secretary of Iran's

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<sup>63</sup> Maslow's need are often depicted as a hierarchy outline physiological needs and safety at the bottom with belonging, the need for self-esteem and self actualization as subsequent higher categories. Janet A. Simons, Donald B. Irwin and Beverly A. Drinnien, *Psychology-The Search for Understanding* (New York: West Publishing Company, 1987), <http://honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/maslow.htm> (accessed August 10, 2009).

<sup>64</sup> Mehran Kamrava and Manochehr Dorraj, *Iran Today: An Encyclopedia of Life in the Islamic Republic 2: L-Z* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2008): 402.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 401.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

Supreme National Security Council Saeed Jalili, and former President Hashemi Rafsanjani all refer to deep-rooted historical ties between Iran and Iraq and religious to cultural commonalities.<sup>68</sup> References to specific events or beliefs are unstated. Unnamed religious scholars and Iraqi Shia politicians are portrayed as working towards the independence Iraq “who does not require guardians.”<sup>69</sup> Thus, Tehran’s attempts to convince the Iraqi population that in-country MNFI forces hinder true independence and only politicians working for a withdrawal of MNFI forces can ensure independence.

IRNA reporting frequently stresses actual and envisioned bi-lateral agreements on economic development, trade, cultural programs and education and border-security. Tehran also urges actions against Iranian dissident groups in Iraq and demining commissions. Iran’s economic interests are highlighted by reports concerning the joint development of the energy sources and the region’s oil fields. Overall, Iraq did take actions against Iranian opponents, and both governments signed various agreements reported by the Iranian. Thus, Iran’s messages are based at least partly on facts. After Iranian reports, urging joint development of energy sources Iraq and Iran agreed on the construction of a crude pipeline from Basra, Iraq to Abadan.<sup>70</sup> In addition, Iraq has become Iran’s second largest non-oil export market.<sup>71</sup> Thus, Iran reports on actual

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<sup>68</sup> Islamic Republic News Agency, “Jalili: Iran, Iraq’s security interlinked,” <http://www.irna.ir/EN/View/Fullstory/Tools/PrintVersion/?NewsId=312485&idLanguages=3> (accessed April 20, 2009). “Rafsanjani Calls for withdrawal of occupation forces from Iraq,” <http://www.irna.ir/EN/View/FullStory/?NewsId=378059&idLanguage=3> (accessed April 20, 2009). “Supreme Leader: Occupiers to remain in Iraq long,” <http://www.irna.ir/EN/View/Fullstory/Tools/PrintVersion/?NewsId=374565&idLanguage=3> (accessed April 20, 2009).

<sup>69</sup> Islamic Republic News Agency, “Iranian ambassador: Iraqi people need no guardians on elections,” <http://www.irna.ir/EN/View/Fullstory/Tools/Print/Version/?NewsId=31881&idLanguage=3> (accessed April 20, 2009).

<sup>70</sup> Kenneth Katzman, “Iran’s Activities and Influence in Iraq,” CRS Report for Congress (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, March 2009), 5.

<sup>71</sup> Kenneth Katzman, “Iran’s Activities and Influence in Iraq,” CRS Report for Congress (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, March 2008), 6.

negotiations and designs messages encouraging future cooperation between the people of both countries.

On the cultural level, Iran also fosters a variety of initiatives. Iran supports the reconstruction of Shia holy sites, including the graveyard at Najaf as well as museums at Karbala and Najaf.<sup>72</sup> Tehran sends the message that it is capable and willing to promote the religious-cultural heritage of the Shia population as one community. The cultural efforts by Tehran specifically target the more religious and educated Muntafiq majority. Thus, on the cultural level too, Iran complements the verbal messages with selected actions to enhance its credibility as of the message. The themes published by the Iranian press in early 2009, are in line with talking points designed by the regime. The published themes correspond to talking points outlined in a March 2008 letter, from the Iran's Supreme National Security Council. The published, reportedly secret letter, instructed Iranian newspapers on their reporting concerning Iraq.<sup>73</sup> Thus, Iran is clearly following a comprehensive approach. How much influence Iran achieves this way is difficult to measure. The Iranian religious clergy (the ulama) living in Iraq provide Tehran with a more personal method for the advancement of indoctrination.

The Iranian clergy are a primary means for Iran to directly influence and target the Iraqi Shia population at large. The Iranian ulama play a significant role in Iraq because Iranian religious men dominate the Shia clergy in Iraq. The majority of the ulama living in Iraq have trained in Iran and many are Iranian citizens. The current Iraqi Shia Grand Ayatollah Sayyed Ali Husayni al-Sistani, was born in Iran. He trained during his youth in the foremost Shia theological

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<sup>72</sup> Islamic Republic News Agency, "Iran to help reconstruct historical sites, museums in Iraq," <http://www.irna.ir/EN/View/Fullstory/Tools/PrintVersion/?NewsId=353381&idLanguage=3> (accessed April 20, 2009).

<sup>73</sup> The Middle East Media Research Institute, "Iranian Regime Instructs Press on How to Report on Nuclear Issues and Iraq," *Special Report*, no.1899, <http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=sd&ID=SP189908>, (accessed April 20, 2009).

centers of Qom and Mashad.<sup>74</sup> Thus, Iranian born or trained religious leaders lead the majority of Iraqi Shia, spiritually.

Ali al-Sistani and his beliefs represent a schism among the Shia ulama. This divide has eschatological and political aspects. Ayatollah Sistani advocates the Shia ulama should be guardians of social control. However, he rejects Khomeini's notion of the ulama as Supreme Leaders, exercising political control. Therefore, with his more reserved views he is a serious competitor for Iranian activist religious leadership. The majority of Shia Muslim's worldwide accept Sistani as the leader of the Shia community instead of the current Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Kameini.<sup>75</sup>

Many Shia consider Al-Sistani as having superior religious credentials as a religious jurist. Ayatollah Khomeini's successor Ayatollah Ali-Kameini of Iran lacks juridical credentials of any scholastic significance.<sup>76</sup> The Iranian clergy chose Kameini for his loyalty to Khomeini and his political outlook. Thus, the Shia community at large remains fragmented between accepting al-Sistani's moderate views or Khomeini's activist religious-political doctrine.

Theological seminaries represent another avenue of direct influence for Tehran. There is an "intimate connection between the Iranian religious personnel and institutions and those of Shiite Iraq."<sup>77</sup> The Iranian religious seminaries effectively train mullahs as Iranian representatives and proselytizers of the revolution. The export of the Iranian revolution is part of the theological mission as advocated by Khomeini doctrine.

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<sup>74</sup> Ali al-Sistani, Aalulbayt Global Information Center, Website of Ayatollah Sistani, <http://holynajaf.org/eng/html/Ayetulah%20Sistani/index.htm> (accessed July 5, 2009).

<sup>75</sup> Wilfried Buchta, *Who Rules Iran? The Structure of Power in the Islamic Republic* (Joint publication of The Washington Institute For Near East Policy and the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Washington, D.C.: 2000), 89.

<sup>76</sup> Hamid Dabashi, *Iran: A People Interrupted* (New York: The New Press, 2007), 172.

<sup>77</sup> Faleh A. Jabar, "The Shi'ite Movement in Iraq," (London: Saqi, 2003), 13.

The Iranian cities of Mashad and Qom constitute the foremost center of Shi'ite religious learning. Since 1979, they also have become political centers. Students, many of whom come from abroad, train to become mullahs in one of thousands of small seminaries located in both cities. The curriculum for aspiring religious leaders includes eschatology, science, Arabic, and communications courses. Islamic studies have a largely oral tradition. Therefore, rhetoric has always been part of the curriculum. Consequently, the Iranian clergy, active in Iraq, has the necessary training to support Tehran's influence efforts. These mullahs' continue the Islamic tradition using sermons to influence politics. The individual mullah's are persuaders, armed with language skills and tales from the common Shia historical narrative. The individual mullah has been training in the precepts of Khomeini's ideology. Ultimately, the Iranian Shi'ite ulama have been "indoctrinated to be indoctrinators."<sup>78</sup>

Personal contact between Iraqi and Iranian Shia take place between prominent figures. On the communal level, personal meetings occur between individual citizens primarily pilgrims. Among others Iranian President Ahmedinejad and Foreign Minister Manuchehr Mottaki visited Iraq. Moreover, visits between high-ranking politicians have become more frequent. As stated previously, Iranian clerics in Iraq often act as representatives of Tehran and seek to influence the beliefs and behaviors of others. Similarly, contacts between individual citizens' take place through the constant stream of Iranian pilgrim visiting Shia holy sites in Iraq. In order to connect with their most prominent martyrs Iranian Shia go to great lengths to visit shrines of martyrs and burial sites in Iraq.

Khomeini highlighted the political importance of the shrines as an aspect of influence. In his writings Khomeini, referred to the common Shia history, and addressed socio-cultural practices and beliefs. He mentions the importance of group prayers such as the Friday prayer,

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<sup>78</sup> Mehran Kamrava and Manuchehr Dorraj, *Iran Today: An Encyclopedia of Life in the Islamic Republic 2: L-Z* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2008), 398.



pilgrimages, and the Ashura commemorations. He emphasized the link between religious practices, the shared Shia historical narrative, and political goals: “The worship practices of Islam are usually twin to its policies and social measures.”<sup>79</sup> Thus, the annual pilgrimage to the holy sites in Iraq was also seen as a way to spread his particular political ideology:

We must benefit from the pilgrimage season and to reap from it the best fruits by calling for unity and for making Islam ruler among all the people...in the early days the Moslems reaped the best fruits from their gatherings, Friday prayers, holidays, and pilgrimages.<sup>80</sup>

Iranians regularly flood into Iraq to visit their most sacred holy shrines primarily located in the south. Katzman estimates some 20,000 Iranian pilgrims visit the Imam Ali Shrine each month.<sup>81</sup> Iran uses economic investment as a method of indirect influence targeting the Shia population at large and the government, which is currently incapable of developing the tourism infrastructure necessary in providing for the large number of pilgrims. Iran invested millions in projects designed to facilitate pilgrimages such as service-oriented businesses. Thereby Iran profits financially from its investments and the regime also increases its influence in the manner prescribed by Khomeini.<sup>82</sup> Pilgrimages provide natural contacts between individual Iraqi’s and Iranians.

Tehran also extends social services into Iraq. In the past, the Iranian government has successfully used humanitarian efforts to gain influence. Hizb-allah’s rise to power in Lebanon was supported by the party with Iranian help creating a network of social services. In the past, Iranian charities including the Iranian Red Crescent were utilized to support insurgents, serve as

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<sup>79</sup> Ruhollah Khomeini, *Islamic Government*, translated by Joint Publications Research Service, Arlington, VA (New York: Manor Books, 1979), 98.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Kenneth Katzman, *Iran’s Activities and Influence in Iraq*, CRS Report for Congress (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, March 2008), 6.

<sup>82</sup> Joseph Felter and Brian Fishman, “Iranian Strategy in Iraq: Politics and “Other Means,” Occasional Paper Series (West Point, New York: Combating Terrorism Center, U.S. Military Academy, October 2008), 39.

recruiters, and convert Iraqi refugees.<sup>83</sup> Today, Iran specifically targets the impoverished segments of the Muntafiq through humanitarian efforts. Islamic charities steered by Tehran, provide food, cover for operational activities and social services to the refugees. Many prominent members of the Iranian elite and their charitable efforts add to Tehran's ability to use all means of national power. Iranian charities vary based on goals, most pursue a combination of religious and humanitarian objectives, but they are "united by a common desire to promote the revolutionary Islamic system and its values by any and all means possible, including repression."<sup>84</sup> The primary purpose of charitable activities is to gain the loyalty of the populace by providing for the "basic wants and needs" of the local populace in order to gain their loyalties.

While humanitarian concerns motivate Iranian charitable contributions, they also serve as a method of manipulation for conversion. Iranian sponsored militias provide social services and food aid to impoverished Iraqis in the neighborhoods and towns they control. In 2008, news reports called Muqtada, al-Sadr's movement Iraq's largest aid agency.<sup>85</sup> While the government of Iraq has taken action against Muqtada's insurgent activities, his organizations aid distribution programs that provide an avenue for developing popular support. In addition, Iran uses long-term measures in fully swaying the Iraqi population in an attempt to indirectly gain control.

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid, 22.

<sup>84</sup> Wilfried Buchta, *Who Rules Iran? The Structure of Power in the Islamic Republic* (Joint publication of *The Washington Institute For Near East Policy and the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung*, Washington, D.C.: 2000), 73.

<sup>85</sup> Walter Pincus, "Iraqi Militias Offering Aid to Displaced," *Washington Post* (August 15, 2008), A12, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/04/14/AR2008041402710.html> (accessed August 30, 2009).

## Conversion

Conversion implies control. In Iraq, conversion would entail the complete reformation of the Shia population's relevant beliefs, attitudes, emotions, and opinions.<sup>86</sup> After a successful conversion, the target audience believes the communicator and acts accordingly. An effective conversion campaign requires the communicator to establish greater legitimacy than his challengers. Social penetration theory asserts that after an effective conversion campaign the communicator has a high degree of "control over the environment in which the audience lives and operates."<sup>87</sup> Tehran's ability to project influence into the southern border region depends on its credibility as communicator and its subsequent control over individual Iraqi communities.

Control as a concept warrants a definition. Political scientist Jeffrey Herbst in his book "*States and Power in Africa*," points out "states are only viable if they are able to control the territory defined by their borders." For Herbst, control is "governmental penetration" and it is "assured by developing an infrastructure to broadcast power and gaining loyalty of citizens."<sup>88</sup> Therefore, Iran establishes control in Baghdad through their influence over sympathetic establishing control politicians. Tehran gains influence in the rural southern border hinterlands by providing social services the official government is cannot provide. The Iraqi government in its ability to penetrate the borderlands creates a political vacuum exploited by Iran to further its own objectives. The common roots between the Shia communities provide the overall basis for Tehran to extend its power into Iraq.

Conversion is a long-term endeavor. It builds upon effective and accepted compliance and conformity measure. Today, Iran continues to foster the establishment of Iraqi paramilitary

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<sup>86</sup> Kim Cragin and Scott Gerwehr, *Dissuading Terror: Strategic Influence and the Struggle Against Terrorism* (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 2005), 19.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Jeffrey Herbst, *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 3.

groups. Paramilitary activities may decrease as MNFI and the Iraqi government gains an upper hand. Nevertheless, indoctrinated and trained members and new recruits represent a force, which Tehran can activate, upon desire. Thus, Iran continues in targeting disgruntled, alienated members of the Iraqi Muntafiq and Madan in joining their proxy organizations.

Messages publicized by IRNA are a method for Iran in addressing long-standing goals push for institutionalization regional economic and military alliances. These messages target Iraqi Shia politicians and the educated segments of the Iraqi Shia population. Repeated message themes include the establishment of a regional security system. Iran promises sharing their security expertise. Furthermore, a regional economic alliance with Turkey, Syria, and Iraq is envisioned.<sup>89</sup> Thus, Iran seeks durable influence.

Some political themes are suspiciously missing in the broadcasts from Iran, possibly indicating Tehran is trying to avoid perceptions of outwardly vying for an Iraq modeled after the Islamic Republic. It is likely, the Iranian Regime is avoiding obvious political overtures in order to maintain support from Iraqi politicians or prevent enflaming Iraqi's with nationalist sentiments. Ahmad Raf'at writing from a pro-Hizb-allah perspective outlines what he terms the "psychology of victory."<sup>90</sup> For Raf'at, Hizb-allah was successful in Lebanon, due to the use of martyrdom operations by imparting a spiritual, religious, Islamic dimension on the conflict. By highlighting common Islamic roots, Hizb-allah courted the Lebanese Shia population and encouraged

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<sup>89</sup> Islamic Republic News Agency, "Larijani: Iran's principled policy is to support Iraq's independence," <http://www.irna.ir/EN/View/Fullstory/Tools/PrintVersion/?NewsId=312740&idLanguage=3> (accessed April 20, 2009). "Jalili: Iran, Iraq not to allow borders be used against others," <http://www.irna.ir/EN/View/FullStory/?NewsId=316136&idLanguage=3> (accessed April 20, 2009). "Iran, Iraq call for expansion of mutual relations," <http://www.irna.ir/EN/View/Fullstory/Tools/PrintVersion/?NewsId=374565&idLanguage=3> (accessed April 20, 2009).

<sup>90</sup> Raf'at Seyyed Ahmad, "Rvanshenasyi pyruzyi ba Tavadjoh beh do Nmunah Hezbollah dar Lobnan va entefazeh dar Felestine -The Psychology of Victory in Light of Two Instances of Victory: Hezbollah's victory in Lebanon and the Al-Aqsa Intifada Victory in Palestine," *Fasiname-ye Elmi Pashuheshi-ye Amaliyyat-e Ravan-Scientific Professional Quarterly on Psychological Operations* 3, no. 11 (Tehran: Winter 2006), 89-96.

opposition to Israeli forces. Hizb-allah used this cultural approach as a means to gain acceptance. The goal was for the Lebanese Shia to view Hizb-allah members as legitimate resistance fighters. Iran does not attack the Iraqi government directly. It criticizes only the presence of MNFI as occupying forces. Because Hizb-allah understood how to address individual tribes and clans, it gained acceptance among the general population. Recognition by the population in turn aided recruitment for organized volunteer forces conducting resistance operations.

Iran, in conjunction with Hizb-allah appears to use the same strategy in Iraq. Hence, Tehran does not dishonor the Iraqi government. Nor does Tehran mention one of the most significant divergences in the Iranian-Iraqi political-religious beliefs systems Khomeini's doctrine of *veleyat-e-faqih*. Addressing these issues would detract from gaining approval from elements within the Iraqi population, by highlighting differences. Overall, Iran's conducts its strategic influence campaign along the full spectrum of psychological objectives.

## **CONCLUSION**

Motivated by economic and political-religious ideals Iran conducts a multi-pronged strategic influence campaign directed at Iraq. Tehran's efforts evince a strategic nature because the Iranian regime anchored its will to export its revolutionary ideals into the Iranian Constitution. Tehran's actions in Iraq are aggressive, but based on rational, pragmatic thought and careful planning. Iran's extensive propaganda machine facilitates the regime's penetration into Iraq. The Iranian regime believes the propagation of religion based political-social structure is a responsibility. Former Grand Ayatollah Khomeini's doctrine of "Just Government" provides the foundation for these values. Tehran effectively uses cultural and historical elements to garner support among a like-minded audience in Iraq.

A shared Shia history provides the basis for Iran's approach to obtaining compliance and conformity. Based on shared beliefs, Tehran can evoke powerful themes, narratives, and images with which the Iraqi population can identify. Similarly, Tehran can exploit exclusive traits of a

particular community. Persecution and maltreatment of the Shia majority by Sunni political leadership was a common thread throughout the Iraqi history. In contrast, the Iranian religious experience is that of a historical Shia stronghold and in recent decades a safe-haven for Iraqi Shia. Overall, the Shia community knows the Madan border-tribes as social bandits with a different value system. Tehran exploits these propensities for its purposes.

Current Iranian and Iraqi religious-political ideas vary. Historical developments provided the impetus for the Iraqi Shia to practice religion quietly. After 1979, Iran developed a religious-political doctrine of activism. The common Iranian views the Iraqi Shia as underdogs, because Iraqis having been oppressed throughout history and since 2003, are portrayed Tehran's regime as occupied by U.S. led foreign forces. Thus, ideological hardliners feel justified in conducting an extensive strategic outreach campaign towards Iraq.

Iran has adjusted its influence campaign by employing a variety of persuasive methods specifically targeting individual communities. Compliance measures include coercive measures. Para-military groups engage in insurgent activities to coerce Iraqi citizens. Other tactical methods used include kidnapping, extortion, and assassinations. The disenfranchised and Madan tribesmen are vulnerable to enticements and bribes. The Iranian government also utilizes the historical-cultural propensities among the Madan to facilitate illegal trafficking and insurgent activities. The promise of training and "an income" to disaffected young Iraqi's represent another way of rewarding compliance. Additionally, Tehran uses the Shia concept of martyrdom as a primary means to influence ideologues. Propaganda themes directed towards the influential Iraqi elite with ties to Iran may represent threats. Iranian methods are varied and specifically target all elements of the Iraqi Shia population to gain conformance.

Social manipulation is the main method used to produce conformity. Iranian organizations facilitate social manipulation through media propaganda, personal contacts, aid in form of development projects and social services. Propaganda measure includes themes that focus on cultural affinity stressing existing historical ties and promises of a common future. MNFI is

painted as hampering Iraqi progress. These messages into Iraq target the Shia population as a whole. Outreach by Iranian politicians target the predominately Muntafiq political elite, some of which have ties to Iran. Development projects are advertised and initiated by Iran promising advancements. The targeted Iraqi Shia population is promised growth, expansion, and economic improvement. Iran specifically targets the socio-economically deprived element by providing much-needed social services. The targeted population includes most of the Madan, the urban youth, and others unable to gain Iraqi government support. Unless, the Iraqi government ameliorates social disparities and fosters national sentiments Iranian influence will likely continue to find adherents.

Conversion requires the institutionalization of the relationship between the communicator and the target audience. Tehran targets primarily the Muntafiq political elite through propaganda themes advocating regional security and economic alliances. Iran's view is the long-term goal. The time invested to achieve it is not defined but rests upon incremental progress that seeks to convert the Iraqi Shia. Central to Tehran's strategy is gaining favorable popular acceptance first and then develop mutual governmental institutions. Iran in particular seeks collaboration in the economic and security arenas. Another method is the recruitment and development of a paramilitary force that would respond to Tehran's call. To bolster the ranks of its militias, Iran targets Iraqi ideologues that support Khomeini's doctrine and those who are financially motivated. The later are likely to decrease as Iraq's economy becomes more viable. In the near future, Iraqi's will likely seek a path that fosters growing its own nationalism. With disagreement among Iran's population, the Shia community at large will likely become aware of the weaknesses, if not failure, of the Islamic Republic in establishing a "just" government. Democracy and a more libertarian Iraqi government may become a viable alternative. Despite the improving conditions within Iraq, Iran's long-term and multi-faceted approach to gain religiously, politically, and economically in the region must be countered by Iraqi policy and programs that dissuade local populations from responding to Tehran's call to arms.

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