

Fact Sheet on Iraq's Major Shi'a Political Parties and Militia Groups April 2008

Major Shi'a Political Parties

Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI; Badr Corps is ISCI's militia)

Adel abd al-Mehdi (Vice President, political leader of the party), Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim (no political position; spiritual and de facto leader of the party)

- Originally known as the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), this Shi'a political group was founded by Iraqi exiles in Iran in the early 1980s. It was led by Ayatollah Baqir al-Hakim, until his assassination by al-Qaeda terrorists in August 2003. The Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq is now led by the Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim, the brother of Baqir. Today, ISCI is one of the most powerful parties in Iraq, and it has the largest political bloc in Iraq's Council of Representatives. ISCI's primary power base is in southern Iraq, and its members control a majority of the provincial governments in southern Iraq. ISCI leaders have pushed for the creation of an autonomous Shi'ite federal region in southern Iraq, which would exercise wide powers. ISCI is also thought to wield great influence in the Iraqi government bureaucracy. The main rival of ISCI is the Sadrist Trend.

Sadrist Trend (Jaysh al Mahdi [JAM] is the Sadrist militia)

Muqtada al-Sadr (Spiritual and de facto leader of the party, but holds no office)

- The Sadrist Trend is a nationalist political movement led by Muqtada al-Sadr, the son of Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr, a popular Shi'ite religious leader assassinated in 1999. Muqtada al-Sadr, who professes to carry on his father's legacy, rose to prominence in Iraq following the 2003 invasion. The group has two powerful institutions: The Office of the Martyr Sadr, with branches in most of Iraq's major cities, and Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM,

"the Mahdi Army"), a large but unruly militia. While ISCI draws more support from the upper and middle classes in Iraq, the Sadrist party is especially popular among poor Iraqi Shiites. The Sadrist party has vehemently opposed the presence of U.S. forces in Iraq. The Sadrists have also opposed the creation of a federal Iraq and instead advocate a strong central government. The organization of the Sadrist Trend is poorly understood, but seems to be very loose. Internal disputes are often solved through acrimonious public recriminations and the use of violence.

Dawa Party (No militia)

Nuri Kamal al-Maliki (Prime Minister); Ibrahim al-Jafari leads a portion of the party

- The Dawa Party is another Shi'a political faction in Iraq. The leading Shi'ite opposition party of the 1970s and 1980s, Dawa was fiercely persecuted by Saddam's Ba'ath regime. Nonetheless, the movement was able to remain active both inside and outside Iraq into the 1990s. However, the movement became fractured during its years in exile, and there are now several different factions which use the Dawa name. Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki is a Dawa party member, as was his predecessor Ibrahim al-Jafari. The Dawa Party does not have its own militia, nor does it have the larger power bases of ISCI or the Sadrists. Therefore, since coming to power in May 2006, Prime Minister Maliki has relied heavily on these two factions for support. In 2006, Maliki was closely allied with the Sadrists; since 2007, however, Maliki has been more closely linked with ISCI.

Fadhila Party (Militia is also called Fadhila)

Muhammad al-Yaqubi (Spiritual leader of the party); Muhammed al-Waeli (Governor of Basra)

- Also known as the Islamic Virtue Party, the Fadila party's primary base is in Basra and the neighboring provinces. The spiritual leader of Fadila is Muhammad al-Yaqubi, who was a student of Muqtada al-Sadr's father. Yaqubi rejected Muqtada's authority and created his own political party. The governor of Basra, Muhammed al-Waeli, is a Fadila party member. Although he has many political opponents inside the provincial government and on the Provincial Council, Waeli has tight control over the Oil Facilities Protection Force, a group of several hundred armed men tasked with protecting Basra's highly productive oil wells and pipelines.

Major Shi'a Militias

Badr Corps (ISCI is Badr's political party)

- The Badr Corps is the militia wing of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq. During the 1980s and 1990s, the Badr Corps had tens of thousands of trained men under arms in Iran. But after coming under severe pressure to disband its militia in 2003, SCIRI

announced that the Badr Corps would be turned into a civilian entity. After the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime, many Badr members went on to hold prominent positions in the Iraqi government. When the Iraqi Security Forces were established in 2004, much of the Badr Corps was incorporated into the official security establishment. For this reason, many Sadrist supporters inaccurately accuse the Iraqi Security Forces of supporting Badr. While some Badr loyalists remain within the Iraqi Security Forces, the group has often been accused of maintaining a secret paramilitary apparatus. Hadi al-Ameri is the current head of the Badr organization.

Jaysh al-Mahdi (Sadrist Trend is JAM's political party)

- The Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM) is the militia wing of the Sadrist Trend, the Shi'a political faction that is led by Muqtada al-Sadr. JAM first became prominent in April 2004 when it fought against US forces in East Baghdad and in Najaf. From 2006 to mid-2007, JAM militias engaged in a territorial struggle with al-Qaeda in Iraq and other Sunni groups for control of the Baghdad. During this time, JAM expanded its territorial control of Baghdad, moving into mixed or predominantly Shi'a neighborhoods and forcefully displacing or killing the local Sunni population. JAM was able to gain initial control in many of these neighborhoods of Baghdad by offering the Shi'a population protection and social services. At the height of JAM's expansion, in late 2006 and early 2007, militiamen were increasingly reliant upon corruption, intimidation and extortion of the Shi'a population to enhance their power and wealth. It was also evident at this time that Sadr's control over his militia was diminishing and the movement was beginning to splinter.

In 2007, Muqtada al-Sadr twice instructed his militia to stand down, first at the beginning of the Baghdad Security Plan began in February 2007, and later in August 2007 when he declared a six-month ceasefire in the wake of the Karbala violence. Many JAM loyalists heeded Sadr's calls; however, JAM splinter groups, criminal elements, and Special Groups have continued their violent activities.

JAM Splinter Groups (Sadrist Trend is JAM's political party)

- JAM splinter groups are those groups that have broken off from the mainstream JAM, particularly in the wake of Muqtada al-Sadr's August 2007 ceasefire. They are not responsive to the directives of Muqtada al-Sadr and they have continued to carry out attacks against Coalition and Iraqi forces, extra-judicial killings and kidnappings of Iraqi civilians, and other criminal activities. Some of these JAM splinter groups receive support from Iran and are known as Special Groups.

Special Groups (No Iraqi political party)

- Special Groups are Shi'a militia groups that receive funding, training, and weapons from the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps-Qods Force (IRGC-QF). Iranian-backed

Special Groups have become increasingly active in Baghdad and central Iraq since mid-2007. While Special Groups are not responsive to the directives of Muqtada al-Sadr or mainstream JAM leaders, there is some overlap in the constituencies of these groups. Special Groups principally target US forces operating in the area, in the hopes of prompting their eventual withdrawal. They also actively seek to undermine the Maliki government with attacks on the Iraqi Security Forces. The hallmark weapon of Special Groups is the explosively-formed penetrator (EFP), an especially lethal IED capable of penetrating heavily-armored vehicles. Special Groups also use advanced weapons provided by Iran, including light and heavy mortars, 107-mm rockets, and 240-mm rockets, to launch indirect fire attacks on Coalition and Iraqi bases.

Special Groups operate throughout central and southern Iraq. Within Baghdad, Special Groups extremists have been found to operate in many of the JAM-dominated areas, primarily in the districts of Sadr City, 9 Nissan, Kadhimiyah and West Rasheed. South of Baghdad, Special Groups have been active in Karbala, Hillah, Diwaniyah, Kut, Nasiriyah and Basra.

Political Party	Militia
Da'wa (Nuri al Maliki)	None
ISCI (Abd al Aziz al Hakim/Adel abd al Mehdi)	Badr Corps (most fighters integrated into the Iraqi Security Forces starting in 2004)
Sadrism Trend (Office of the Martyr Sadr; Moqtada al Sadr)	Jaysh al Mahdi (including many regional splinters and loosely-affiliated criminal elements)
Fadhila (Basra only; Muhammad al-Yaqubi; Mohammed al Waeli)	Fadhila (Basra only)
none	Special Groups (report via Iraqi leaders to the commander of Iran's IRGC-Qods Force)

Province	Governor
Diyala	ISCI
Baghdad	ISCI
Babil	ISCI
Karbala	Dawa (Jaafari branch)
Wasit	ISCI
Najaf	ISCI
Qadisiya	ISCI
Dhi Qar	ISCI
Maysan	Sadrism
Muthanna	ISCI
Basra	Fadhila