

WARID: Iraq (SCIRI)
STARDATE: 1 January 1991
ENDDATE: 31 December 1996
Related cases: Iraq (KDP) 1986-1997
Iraq (PUK) 1985-1997
Last update: 5 October 2015
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Conflict overview

The Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) was the main Shiite opposition party in the south of Iraq. It was formed as an umbrella organization (thus ‘Supreme Council’) comprising three main currents: the Marjaeeya group, the Daawa group and the Islamic Action Organization. The conflict party’s main goal was promoting Shiite power, aiming to Islamize society and establish a Sharia-based government (ICG 2007: 2; Nakash 1994: 277; Stansfield 2013: 132). Shiite oppositional activism was especially incited in Iraq after Saddam Hussein had taken over governmental power in 1979. This activism was fueled by a sense of grievance regarding political marginalization and relative socio-economic deprivation (Rohde 2010: 31-35).² Facing increasing political repression in Ba’athist Iraq, many Iraqi Shiite activists and political leaders escaped across the border during the early days of the Iran-Iraq war in 1980. Having received substantial support from the Iranian government, the SCIRI was founded by Iraqi exiles in Teheran on 17 November 1982 (Katzmann 2000: 3). In 1983, under the leadership of Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim, SCIRI established a government-in-exile, also including a military unit, the Badr Corps (ICG 2002: 31).

In 1991, after the Iraqi armed forces suffered severe military setbacks in the Second Gulf War and had to withdraw their troops from Kuwait, large-scale uprisings in the south and the north of Iraq began to mobilize against the central authorities, taking advantage of the government’s military weakening by that time (Francke 1995: 15; ICG 2002: 7).³ The popular uprisings in

1 Annalinda Auth and Sarah Buch drafted one of the two pre-versions of this case description.

2 Hussein’s repressive approach towards Shiite opposition included declaring membership in Shiite organizations as a capital offence, carrying out the final crackdown on the Daawa party and the Islamic Action Organization, and culminated in the assassination of Grand ‘Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr’ and his sister Bint al-Huda in 1980 (Rohde 2010: 33). Moreover, Shiites suffered disproportionately from the Iran-Iraq war and the regime did little to repair infrastructural damages both then and after the Gulf War (Rohde 2010: 34).

3 However, the Shiite revolts in the south and the Kurdish revolts in the north were geographically discon-

southern Iraq were first initiated by demoralized Iraqi troops but soon took on a Shiite character: they are therefore often characterized as a Shiite revolt (ICG 2007: 5). The Iraqi Government, however, reacted brutally and violence lasted for six years [**WARDUR=72**].

According to the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), the armed conflict ended in December 1996, when the number of fatalities caused by armed conflict and by one-sided violence against civilians fell below the threshold of 25 per calendar year in 1997 [**WARENDUC=5; WARENDOS=5**].⁴ However, as the reviewer explained, case experts stress that the conflict's highest intensity took place in 1991 and, some weeks after the intifada in 1991, the SCIRI quickly ceased to pose a threat to the central government.

In total, the UCDP counts 1,759 fatalities caused by the battles and by one-sided violence [**FATALUC=2000**]. Other sources, however, report much higher death tolls: while Human Rights Watch (1992) does not have an independent estimate of the number of casualties that occurred only during the uprising in 1991 and the Iraqi Government had not released any official statistics or estimates, an independent French organization reported that "the figures given for those killed, most of them in southern Iraq and the overwhelming majority of them civilians, ranged from 25,000 to 100,000 dead".⁵ As Human Rights Watch (1992) quotes this source in its report as the most reliable, we adhere to its most conservative estimates of 25,000 deaths [**FATALOS=25000**]. Since the SCIRI aimed at toppling the central government, the population of the whole country is relevant for measuring the war intensity in this case. The pre-war population size amounted to 17.5 million.⁶ The death toll, hence, amounted to 0.01% of the pre-war population [**PREWARPO=17500000; INTENSUC=0.01; INTENSOS=0.14**].

The military balance at the end of war

According to the International Crisis Group (ICG 2007: 6), SCIRI's uprising failed mainly because its sectarian goals were rejected by most of the population; in particular, the Government of Iraq depicted the insurrections as an Iranian creation. Since the uprisings did not meet any further responses in the central parts of the country around Baghdad; the regime under Saddam Hussein was able to maintain its power and sent forces to the south to regain control

nected and also politically uncoordinated (ICG 2007: 8).

4 Pfetsch (1996: 245) notes that the conflict end in 1996 has not been foreseeable.

5 Violence Increasing in N. Iraq, Washington Post, June 4, 1991, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1991/06/04/violence-increasing-in-n-iraq/9a6423b1-1303-4fcf-aaaa-195ad3fd7850/> (29 Jun 15).

6 <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL> (12 Mar 15).

in these areas (ICG 2007: 6). However, by the end of August 1992, the governments of the USA, the United Kingdom and France imposed a no-fly zone south of the 32nd parallel to protect the civilian population in the marshes under attack in southern Iraq. ‘Operation Southern Watch’ at first mainly covered the marshlands and included Basra, Iraq’s second largest city. But as Hussein’s regime continued to use planes for surveillance and the bombardment of areas in southern Iraq outside of the no-fly zone, it was extended “northward to the 33rd parallel in 1996, closer to the Iraqi capital, and thereby covering the southern third of Iraq” (Al-Bayati 2014: 37). The no-fly zone therefore ushered in an artificial military stalemate and helped the SCIRI defend its areas in the south. The SCIRI’s ultimate goal of seizing political power and imposing an Islamic order nationally, however, could not be achieved. Neither side can therefore be regarded as the military victor [**VICTORY=0**].

Cunningham et al. (2009) indicate that there was no territorial control by the rebel side. Case-specific literature indicates that many SCIRI fighters had taken sanctuary in the territories of the marshes in southern Iraq (Jabar 1992; Luizard 1995: 20). These marshes were considered especially safe because tanks and artillery from the government forces would prove useless in the wetlands. However, there are no further indications of military and civilian control of these marshlands by the rebel side in terms of installing state-like structures or any arrangements that would fulfill executive, administrative, legislative or judicial tasks in these areas. Case-specific literature reports that government forces were able to destroy and regain the Shiite strongholds quickly after the uprising, including religiously important cities such as Najaf and Karbala. We therefore concur with Cunningham et al. (2009) in assuming that the rebel side did not control any territories at the end of war in 1996 [**REBTERR= -1**]. Consequently, the side governing at the beginning of war controlled more of the disputed territory [**MORETERR= -1**].

The relative fighting capacity of the SCIRI is indicated as ‘low’ by Cunningham et al. (2009) [**REBFIGHT= -1**]. According to the ICG (2007: 7), the SCIRI’s military role until the US-led invasion in 2003 was limited to “cross-border raids and pinprick attacks on regime posts and transport lines far removed from populated areas”. Moreover, the fact that the SCIRI’s military strength was mainly located in Iranian exile must also be taken into account (ICG 2007: 7; Noorbaksh 2008: 55). We therefore assume that SCIRI fighters could not have continued fighting in more than in a few areas in the disputed Iraqi territory [**CONFIGHT= -1**].

SCIRI leader Mohammad Baqir al-Hakim was assassinated in a separate bomb attack in 2003. Hence, neither side captured or killed its opponent’s political leader at the end of war in or

shortly before 1996 [**LEADER=0**].

In sum, at the end of war in 1996, there was a military imbalance to the benefit of the government under Saddam Hussein [**WARBAL= -0.67**].

The military balance in the post-war period

The Badr Brigade – later expanded to become the Badr Corps – officially constituted the SCIRI’s military wing. Its ties to Iran were close and the Badr Corps was mostly a force trained, equipped and commanded by Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).⁷ Many Iraqis therefore considered the SCIRI and its military wing to be an Iranian proxy and to serve Iranian war efforts against the Iraqi government (ICG 2007: 3f.). The Iraqi military and security agencies have been historically dominated by Arab Sunnis, though there were also distinguished members of the Iraqi military with other backgrounds (Al-Marashi/Salama 2008: 203f.). No agreements were made to open the state forces to SCIRI fighters after the end of war. They therefore remained under exclusive governmental control [**STATEFOR 1997-2003= -1**].

According to the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS 1998-2004), the estimated strength of the SCIRI’s Badr Corps ranged from 4,000 to 8,000 fighters [**SEPFORCE 1997-2003=0**]. While in the years 1997 to 1999, the troop ratio remained stable, the IISS reports a possibly higher number of troops on the SCIRI side for 2000 and 2001. If we assume the Badr Corps to consist of around 8,000 troops in 2000 and 2002, this shift has a significant effect on the military balance between the state’s and the SCIRI’s separate armed forces. For 2002, no data relating to non-state actors in Iraq is provided by the IISS and, in 2003, the state forces were disbanded [**TROOPS 1997-1999=0, TROOPS 2000-2001=1, TROOPS 2002-2003=n.d.; ARMS 1997-2003=n.d.**].⁸

Since SCIRI fighters lost control of their territories in southern Iraq at the end of war in 1996 and did not recapture any of these areas in the following years, the government side controlled more territories throughout the post-war period [**TERRCON 1997-2003= -1; TERRWIN 1997-2003= -1**].

As mentioned, SCIRI fighters found sanctuary in the southern marshlands, which are considered especially safe due to the uselessness of tanks and artillery there. Furthermore, the area provided a rich source of food and, as such, represented a safe haven for the rebel side to train

7 ICG 2007: 3f.

8 The corridor of insignificant changes of the troop ratio is determined by the lowest limit of 72.66 and the highest limit of 121.10.

combatants in and use as a base for launching attacks against government forces in nearby cities and towns (Jabar 1992; Luizard 1995: 20). However, these territories were small and politically and militarily insignificant compared to the territory controlled by the Iraqi Government. We therefore do not assess this situation as an advantage for the rebel side. Hence, the government is regarded to be strategically less vulnerable during the post-war period **[VULNERAB 1997-2003= -1]**.

There were three peacekeeping missions deployed in Iraq after the end of war in 1996: the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission (UNIKOM), Operation Northern Watch (ONW) and Operation Southern Watch (OSW). The UNIKOM, however, did not relate to the dyad under consideration since it was established to monitor the demilitarized zone along the Iraq-Kuwait border.⁹ Operation Northern Watch was a military operation charged with enforcing the no-fly zone above the 36th parallel mandated by the United Nations, with the ultimate goal of delivering humanitarian aid and defending the Kurdish population fleeing their homes in northern Iraq.¹⁰ The OSW that established and enforced the no-fly zone beneath the 33rd parallel in southern Iraq is relevant for the dyad here. Since the OSW was a central factor in the protection of SCIRI territories, we count the OSW as relevant, armed peacekeeping troops present after the war. The OSW was deployed from August 1992 until March 2003 **[PEACKEEP 1997-2003=0]**.¹¹

While all of mentioned coalition partners committed themselves to guaranteeing the security of the Shiite population in southern Iraq, none of them explicitly announced a military alliance with one conflict parties in the case of a new war. Although the US government threatened to and eventually did invade Iraq in order to topple the government, we do not consider this as a direct alignment with the SCIRI opposition movement **[P5ALLY 1997-2003=n.r.]**.

In sum, there was a military imbalance to the benefit of the governing side throughout the post-war period, though it slightly decreased between 2000 and 2001 **[POSTBAL 1997-1999= -0.57, POSTBAL 2000-2001= -0.43, POSTBAL 2002-2003= -0.67]**.

This is also reflected by the average military balance at the end of war and the military balance in the post-war period, which indicate an overall military imbalance to the advantage of the government in the whole post-war period until 2003 **[BALANCE 1997-1999= -0.62, BALANCE 2000-2001= -0.55, BALANCE 2002-2003= -0.67]**.

9 <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unikom> (13 Mar 2015).

10 http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/southern_watch.htm (13 Mar 2015).

11 http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/southern_watch.htm (13 Mar 2015).

Economy

The population and the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita increased after the end of the war.

Table 1: GDP per capita in post-war Iraq in current USD¹²

| Year | Population (total) | GDP per capita |
|------|--------------------|----------------|
| 1997 | 21,693,597 | 307 |
| 1998 | 22,387,179 | 380 |
| 1999 | 23,091,408 | 642 |
| 2000 | 23,801,156 | 710 |
| 2001 | 24,516,842 | 721 |
| 2002 | 25,238,267 | 691 |
| 2003 | 25,959,531 | 637 |

The scale of compromise after the war

The government of Iraq did not change after the end of war in 1996. On the contrary, on 16 October 2002, Hussein was officially re-elected as president for another seven-year term.¹³ Only after the US-led invasion in March 2003 did the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) set up the Interim Governing Council by July 2003. This Council consisted of 25 members and the SCIRI took one seat for Abd-al-Aziz al-Hakim, the leader's brother, who was the commander of the Badr Corps in Iran (ICG 2007: 10). The SCIRI also agreed to participate in local elections and to assume seats in areas where the USA and its allies established councils without elections (ICG 2007: 10). Later, in 2005, SCIRI's commanders and fighters even took charge of Iraq's interior ministry and infiltrated the country's security forces, which meant that, from then on, Badr fighters converted to state agents (ICG 2007: 10). During the period under investigation until 2003, however, the side governing at the beginning of war remained in power [**GOVERN 1997-2003= -1**].

There were no political decisions within the disputed territory which all former warring parties in government, parliament or the constituent assembly had to agree to. Hence, only the side governing at the beginning of war had decision-marking powers [**VETO 1997-2003= -1; VETOSAT 1997-2003=n.r.**]. Freedom House indicates that the elections in Ba'athist Iraq were not free in the post-war period from 1997 to 2002.¹⁴ Hence, the SCIRI was not able to effectively enter the political institutions via elections. This was to the advantage of the government of Hussein [**ELECT 1996-2003= -1**].

12 <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/snaama/dnltransfer.asp?fID=9> (12 Apr 15).

13 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/2331951.stm> (29 Mar 15). However, Freedom House indicates elections in Ba'athist Iraq as 'not free' in the post-war period from 1997 to 2002.

14 <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report-types/freedom-world#.U4S-1CiuNd9> (4 May 2015).

The SCIRI's main goal was promoting Shiite power, aiming to Islamize society and establish a Sharia-based government (ICG 2007: 2). The party never questioned the territorial integrity or the economic order of the country [**EXBORDER 1997-2003=n.r.; INBORDER 1997-2003=n.r.; ECONOMY 1997-2003=n.r.**].

In June 2002, a hundred Shiites in exile published a 'Declaration of Iraqi Shiites' in which they demanded a representative parliamentary system that would put the dominance of the Sunni minority elite to an end. The Manifesto accepted the principle of the country's administrative decentralization, although it pledged for decentralization along geographic, demographic and economic lines. Generally, it demanded that a post-Hussein Iraq guarantees their political and religious rights (in particular through a new constitution clearly stating that the Shiites are a majority), ending all religious discrimination and ensuring the independence of the Shiite clergy, especially on educational matters (ICG 2002: 15). However, in the post-war period between 1996 and 2003, a redistribution of competences among different political levels was never achieved and religious discrimination against the Shiite population was still an issue [**COMPETEN 1997-2003= -1**].

ICG (2002: 16) indicates that Shiites have, at least since 1998, been allowed to perform their religious ceremonies in most major Iraqi cities, including Baghdad. On the other hand, repression of the Shiite population did not end. In 1999, for example, the regime assassinated Ayatollah Muhammad Sadiq Al-Sadr, who was the highest-ranking Arab Shiite Ayatollah based in Najaf. His assassination triggered Shiite uprisings, especially in the Najaf and Karbala (ICG 2002: 15). Therefore, the promotion of specific groups – the Shiite population in this case – was not implemented in the post-war period, which favored the governing side [**SPECPRO 1997-2003= -1**].

The warring parties did not fight over any other central issues nor did any new issues emerge in the post-war period [**ISSUE 1997-2003=n.r.; ISSUE2 1997-2003=n.r.; NEWCON 1997-2003=n.r.; NEWCON2 1997-2003=n.r.**]. Since we could not identify any compromises implemented in the post-war period, the question as to which party the compromises generally favored is not relevant here [**BENEFIT 1997-2003=n.r.; BENEFIT2 1997-2003=n.r.**].

All in all, the government's interests prevailed in the post-war order [**COMPROM 1997-2003= -1**].

Stability of peace

When the US government decided to invade Iraq in 2003 in order to overthrow the regime

under Hussein, the SCIRI took advantage of this situation. The group had played an important role in the pre-invasion conferences in Washington (August 2002), London (December 2002) and Iraqi Kurdistan (February 2003), representing Iraq's Shiite community (ICG 2007: 8). Although the SCIRI did not openly present itself as an ally of the USA (as the Kurdish oppositional KDP (Kurdish Democratic Party) and PUK (Patriotic Union of Kurdistan) had) and publicly distanced itself from any US-led intervention to oust the Iraqi regime, case-specific literature indicates that the SCIRI's attitude became increasingly pragmatic after 2003. Hence, while SCIRI denounced the US presence in public and denied any direct association with the occupiers, SCIRI accepted them in practice and worked in the institutions established by the occupiers (ICG 2007: 11). For this reason, we consider the outbreak of the primarily interstate war between the governments of Iraq and the USA (and its allies the United Kingdom and Australia) to also be a relapse into civil war for the conflict dyad under investigation. We identify similarities in both the constellation of former warring parties and the type of incompatibility that motivated the SCIRI to pragmatically accept and eventually even ally with the US: ousting the regime under Saddam Hussein and increasing political representation of the Shiite community in post-war Iraq's political institutions [**SAMEWAR=1; DATESAME=20 March 2003; PEACMON1=75**]. No other renewed civil wars apart from the conflict dyad under investigation were detected in the post-war period [**ANYWAR=1; DATEANY=20 March 2003; PEACMON2=75**].

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Annex I

Table 2: Troops in post-war Iraq (IISS 1997-2003)

| Year | Government | SCIRI | Ratio | |
|------|------------|-----------|--------|------|
| 1996 | 387500 | 4000 | 96.88 | 1 |
| 1997 | 429000 | 4000 | 107.25 | 1 |
| 1998 | 429000 | 4000 | 107.25 | 1 |
| 1999 | 429000 | 4000 | 107.25 | 1 |
| 2000 | 424000 | 4000-8000 | 53 | 1 |
| 2001 | 389000 | 4000-8000 | 48.63 | 1 |
| 2002 | 389000 | n.d. | n.d. | n.d. |
| 2003 | 9754 | n.d. | n.d. | n.d. |