

Iraq's Sunnis:
From Isolation and Conflict to Partnership and Peace with the United States

Ali Ashour
(The Washington Baghdad Policy Council)

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To understand the position of Iraq's Sunnis today, and their attitude toward the United States, it is necessary to examine the conditions they lived under before 2003 and the difficult years that followed Saddam Hussein's fall. Their views cannot be separated from decades of isolation and ideological indoctrination, followed by the collapse of state institutions, a leadership vacuum, and the rise of terrorism, militias, and Iranian influence.

Before 2003, Iraq endured severe economic sanctions while the regime maintained a tight security grip. Iraqis had little freedom to learn about the outside world or communicate with it. The government prohibited satellite receivers, preventing people from watching television channels from other countries, and mobile phones were also banned. Iraqis lived in a closed society where the authorities-controlled access to information and imposed their own account of events, politics, and international relations.

Iraqi state media worked around the clock to indoctrinate the public, portraying the United States as an enemy intent on stealing Iraq's oil and destroying the country. Its propaganda cultivated fears that the United States would drop nuclear bombs on Iraq, as it had on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan. Amid sanctions, poverty, repression, and the absence

of independent information, life was difficult and often tragic. People had little opportunity to develop a different understanding of the world.

After Saddam Hussein's overthrow in 2003, Iraq's civilian administrator, Paul Bremer, ordered the dissolution of the Iraqi military. According to the information we collected, it numbered more than 600,000 personnel across its various branches. These men suddenly found themselves without jobs, informed that their military institutions had been dissolved and that they no longer had work to return to.

This was more than an administrative decision. It cut off the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of men whose families depended on their salaries, leaving them without the means to feed their households. In our assessment of events on the ground, this drove those military personnel to become armed fighters, in the absence of economic alternatives or institutions capable of absorbing them.

At the same time, Iraqi military weapons were left in camps and remote, open areas. They were neither collected nor secured in a way that prevented access. Those men took the weapons, bringing together unemployment, ready access to arms, and the belief that their country had fallen under foreign control.

The central point we want to convey is that these men did not see their fight against the American military as an undertaking intended to kill, destroy, or cause harm. They believed they were fighting to liberate their country. That belief had been shaped by years of propaganda against the United States, then reinforced by the dissolution of the military, the collapse of the state, and the loss of their livelihoods.

Iran subsequently intervened. According to the information and investigations on which we relied, it sent al-Qaeda fighters whom it had brought from Afghanistan. Iran was sheltering these terrorists' families, supporting them, and providing training and medical treatment. These fighters entered the conflict and carried out criminal attacks against American forces and Iraqi civilians, further complicating the situation and widening the violence and destruction.

Over time, Sunnis came to recognize that the decision to rebel against American authority in Iraq had been a mistake, leading them to boycott the political process and weaken their own position within it. They abandoned opportunities to influence decisions while other groups reorganized and established themselves within the institutions of government.

This happened even though Sunnis account for more than 43 percent of Iraq's population, according to our compilation and analysis of government figures for 2025 from each governorate. This percentage reflects the research and investigative work undertaken by our political group. An article explaining the estimate and the information behind it is available on our website.

Iraq's Sunnis have not remained bound to their initial positions. They have passed through many stages, fought a fierce struggle against Iran's militias and Iranian influence, and paid a heavy price in lives, cities, and prospects for the future. Through these experiences, they came to understand that the United States is not an enemy. They developed the political maturity needed to better understand international politics and the balance of interests and power.

Previously, many lacked an understanding of how international politics worked and were not sufficiently equipped to distinguish friend from foe. Their awareness has since changed through direct experience and through what the intervening years have revealed about the objectives of the powers involved in Iraq and the consequences of their policies.

The absence of genuine Sunni leadership was one of the principal causes of this tragedy. There was no central leadership with a clear vision, capable of unifying decisions and choosing the right course at a moment of profound change. Fragmentation prevailed, competing voices multiplied, and no authority emerged that could manage the transition and represent the community's interests independently and effectively.

Even the leaders who appeared on the scene were, in our assessment, either insular and unable to understand international politics, lacking the awareness needed to navigate it, or connected to Iran and working in its interests. Today, based on our study of political parties and movements, the politicians remaining inside Iraq who claim to represent Sunnis are people we regard as agents of Iran, despite presenting themselves as representatives of the community.

The United States therefore needs to understand that Sunnis have endured bitter and difficult stages, and that their current positions are the product of a long and painful experience. According to the information we have gathered, they have lost more than one million lives, while millions have been displaced outside Iraq. These losses have left deep wounds, but they have also prompted a reassessment of political choices and international relationships.

Today, Sunnis want American forces to remain in Iraq because they recognize their presence as a source of security and political balance. As a people and a community rooted in Iraqi soil, they want to be an ally and friend of the United States across economic, security, political, industrial, and other fields.

Our aim is to build genuine strategic partnerships with the United States that help transform Iraq into a civil state, free from religious extremism, intolerance, and terrorism. We seek a state in which religion is separated from government and religious parties no longer dominate political power.

In this context, we call for the dissolution of the religious parties that currently lead the government, most of which are Shiite, as well as the Muslim Brotherhood, which, according to our research, also works in Iran's interests. Building a civil state requires an end to the use of religion as a means of controlling government, with political decisions guided instead by the interests of the state and its citizens.

Sunnis were thrust into the period after 2003 without meaningful political or organizational preparation. Their position differed from that of Shiite political forces, which had leaders outside Iraq and whose ranks Iran had worked to reorganize and prepare for the next phase. They also had militias, such as Badr, based in Iran, which then entered Iraq and came to dominate the scene.

The Kurds, meanwhile, had their own region and a political and organizational leadership capable of making decisions and protecting their interests. Sunnis had no genuine central leadership able to interpret developments, identify their options, and make the right decisions. This imbalance was among the factors that brought them to their present circumstances.

The United States should therefore review its policy toward Iraq's Sunnis and begin a new relationship that treats them as a partner capable of helping restore balance in Iraq and the region. Without a meaningful Sunni role, Iraq will neither stabilize nor find peace.

A community that, in our assessment, represents roughly half of the Iraqi people in population and geographic reach cannot be excluded while security, political, and economic stability are expected to follow. Iraq will remain a theater for terrorism and Iranian militias unless Sunnis receive a role in governing the country and shaping its future that reflects their true weight.

As members of this community, we are working hard to correct this picture for the American side. The information we present is based on our political group's work on the ground, our examination of government figures, our collection of data from the governorates, and our study of political parties and movements.

We represent a broad segment of this community and have a large popular base. The American side should therefore take our contributions seriously and listen to our perspective as one grounded in direct knowledge of society and its circumstances, as well as political and research work connected to the people and the land.

We hope the American administration will reconsider its policy toward Iraq's Sunnis. We are ready to participate in the peace process championed by President Trump and to become a force for peace, moving beyond cycles of war, infighting, and terrorism toward partnerships that build a future.

Iraq's Sunnis can play a major role in reshaping the Middle East into a secure and stable region, fertile ground for major investment. The location and extent of their areas, together with their human and economic potential, make them an important participant in any serious undertaking for stability and development.

According to our geographic study, approximately half of Iraq's territory consists of lands inhabited by Sunni Arabs alongside their Christian brothers and sisters. We believe Sunnis and Christians share Semitic roots that run deep in this land, and that Sunni history is connected to the Aramaic, Chaldean, and Assyrian roots they share with Iraqi Christians.

From our historical perspective, they are indigenous inhabitants of this land, rather than migrant communities of the kind we identify in the history of certain groups in southern Iraq and other areas. The depth of their connection to the country should therefore be taken into account, along with their ability to help restore balance, protect diversity, and build a stable future for Iraq.

Continued sectarian pressure against them by terrorist militias affiliated with Iran, and by the Iraqi government operating behind those militias, threatens to trigger another eruption. In our assessment, certain forces present themselves as a government by day and act as militias by night, leaving citizens facing a political and security authority in which state institutions and armed groups overlap.

The purpose of this warning is to prevent another catastrophe. We do not want the events of 2014 to be repeated, nor do we want our cities and people to return to cycles of terrorism, displacement, and destruction. Addressing marginalization and sectarian pressure, giving Sunnis their rightful role, and building a new partnership with them are necessary steps toward protecting Iraq and the region.

Our message to the United States is clear: understand the stages Iraq's Sunnis have lived through, what they have learned, and what they are now prepared to contribute. Open the door to a new relationship with the forces that represent them and work for peace. Rely on them as a partner in restoring balance and confronting terrorism and Iranian influence.

We have endured bitter experiences and paid a heavy price. We have learned that the future requires political awareness, strategic partnerships, and independent decision-making. Today, we are ready to play an active part in a project of peace, stability, and development that restores Iraq's standing and gives the Middle East a real opportunity for a safer and more prosperous future.