I read the first piece. Very interesting, and quite encouraging. 12/22 031222-16

Schneider, Caroline M. (CIV)

From: Putnam, Candace E. (FS-O2)
Sent: Monday, December 22, 2003 11:24 AM
To: Executive Secretary; LeCroy, Jessica (FS01); Jones, Richard H. (AMB); Greenstock, Jeremy (GBR)
Cc: Conrad, Elizabeth (USAID/Iraq); Heatly, Charles (GBR CIV); Governance_GC Docs; Foss, Claudia M. (O-4); Hamilton, Don; Pittman, Howard D. (FS-01)
Subject: FW: Preliminary Reports on Focus Groups

Amb/Jessica: Attached are the initial reports from the first focus groups conducted on the Nov 15 Agreement. They provide a fascinating and very useful first glimpse of reactions. **I would recommend sending the first attachment to Amb Bremer.**

Dean -- We might want to send this to our GTs to get their reaction.

Elizabeth--great job and kudos to RTI and IRI. But please tell IRI to stop using the old Iraqi flag in their powerpoint presentation!

-----Original Message-----
From: Foss, Claudia M. (O-4)
Sent: Monday, December 22, 2003 10:03 AM
To: VanRest, Judy (vanrestj@orha.centcom.mil); Fran Abouzeid (fabouz01@lgp-iraq.org); Heilig, Kay; Iliff,Theodore (GS-15) (Ilifft@orha.centcom.mil); srcornell@yahoo.com; Zobedi Ibrahim K. (CIV); Alexander, Christopher E. (E-5); AlexisMartin; Ballard, David L. (SES); Brewer, Richard C. (GS-12E); Chappell Julie (CIV); Crowley, Allen C. (O-4); Day, Catherine (GBR Civ); Dhia, Emad CONTR SAIC IRCD (DIR); Elsadr, Alaa-Eldin A. (GS-14 WWLR); Eyre, Dana P. (Civ); Flossman, Loren (CIV); Jano; LGPsibel; Putnam, Candace E. (FS-O2); SallyJohnson; Singh; Thatcher, Gary (SES-2); Conrad, Elizabeth (USAID/Iraq); Whalen, Michael P. (O-4); Carolin, Raymond (GBR); Chun, Russell J. (O-4); Gilroy, Michael P. (MAJ); Haberman, Jeffrey L. (O-5); Heatly, Charles (GBR CIV); Kennedy, Jonathan P. (O-5); McVeigh, Andrew J. (O-4); Morris, Anne R. (O-5); Schierling, Mark B. (E-4); Tunnicliffe, Ian P.; Watts, Rolf H. (O-4)
Subject: *Preliminary Reports on Focus Groups*

Everyone,

Attached are the preliminary reports on the focus groups conducted in Basrah, Najaf, Hillah, and Baghdad. The presentation will be on Monday, December 22, 2003 at 4 p.m. in the Convention Center, in the Iraqi Hall on the 1st floor.

Claudia

-----Original Message-----
From: Conrad, Elizabeth (USAID/Iraq)
Sent: Saturday, December 20, 2003 8:24 PM
To: Foss, Claudia M. (O-4); Hamilton, Don R.
Cc: Gast, Earl; Steven Moore; Pbened01@lgp-iraq.org; gsingh01@lgp-iraq.org; Walsh, Karen
Subject: *Preliminary Reports on Focus Groups*

Claudia Foss, CPA/Strategic Communications
Don Hamilton, CPA

Attached please find the preliminary reports received today from both RTI and IRI on the recent focus groups conducted throughout Iraq in preparation for the upcoming town hall meetings. Due to the timeliness of the material, these reports are being forwarded to CPA separately as drafts and will be combined in the upcoming final report.
Thanks to all parties for expediting the reporting process and submitting your reports today. Please let us know how we can further assist

Regards,

Elizabeth Conrad
Acting Activity Manager
Local Governance Program
USAID Baghdad
914-822-7562

12/22/2003

Date: 20 December 2003

To: USAID

From: Dr. James Mayfield, RTI

Subj: Preliminary Report: Comments and additions to focus group report

Dr. James B. Mayfield, staff member of RTI, is the project manager for this initiative. Mr Steve Moore of IRI, is playing a significant role in ensuring that moderators were recruited and trained, that the necessary equipment was available, and that Iraqis from different parts of Iraq (North, Central and South) were available to help in the translating of the tapes generated by the focus groups.

In each city, LGP staff used local Iraqi recruiters to recruit 24 men and 24 women, with the following characteristics:

a. Age: 3 men and 3 women in their twenties, 3 men and 3 women in their thirties, the same in their forties, fifties, and 60 and above.
b. Education: 3 men and 3 women with no education, 3 men and 3 women with only a grade school education, same in high school, college and post graduate (lawyer, doctors, etc.)
c. If possible, 4-5 of the men should be unemployed, seeking work and 4-5 of the women should be unemployed seeking work, or their husbands are unemployed, seeking work.

The recruiters were instructed to look for people who have opinions and are willing to share their opinions. Obviously a cross section of people, with difference kinds of opinions, both pro and con attitudes towards Americans being in Iraq was required. We do not want to give them too much information about the nature of the research, so they were simply told that this research is being done by a research group in Baghdad, and that the purpose was to determine Iraqi attitudes and opinions concerning the Americans being in Iraq. As an incentive, all selected participants were told that they would receive 20,000 Dinars if they showed up on the day of the focus group. If the person agreed to come, then we obtained their telephone number or some way to contact them. Women are expected to arrive at 8:30am and men are expected to arrive at noon. None of the people recruited were to be from the same family and if possible none of them should know each other personally.

It was important that this recruitment process not be conducted by any Expats (RTI/CPA), only Iraqis were to be used in recruiting and screening the participants. Every effort was made to ensure that Non Iraqis were not present or visible. Every effort possible was made to ensure that this research effort was not seen as a RTI/CPA sponsored research project. Some of course may guess or suspect

that it is RTI/CPA sponsored, but every effort was made to ensure that it would not be obvious to the participants.

During our first effort in Basrah, while all the above guidelines were followed, we failed to anticipate that RTI security people would want to be checking for potential dangers, thus becoming visible to some of the participants in Basrah. Once this was observed, changes were negotiated and in all later focus groups, no expat staff were visible.

During the course of the focus groups, tea and coffee and some sweets were offered to the participants. Pencils and pads were made available for each of the participants.

Assumptions

First, the key purpose of a focus group is not to determine what percentage of the group has one opinion or another, (which would be the purpose of a typical survey), but rather to determine the various dimensions of an opinion that different types of people might have, that hopefully will provide a richer more profound assessment of the opinions that Iraqis might have about the CPA Announcement of 15 November 2003.

Second, a focus group also allows people to reflect with the focus group moderator why they have the opinion that they have and to outline the "logic" being used as participants reflect on their own individual opinions.

Third, standard focus group procedures were used. Moderators were Iraqi citizens and were instructed on the processes of introduction, warm ups, getting acquainted, and trust building techniques. Special skills needed include the ability to listen, to stimulate discussion from all participants, ability bring out opinions from the quite members, seeking further clarification on comments made, probing into deeper opinions and concerns, etc.

Fourth, a detailed set of instructions were developed for the moderators, ensuring their understanding of the purpose, the methods, the areas of research, and sub questions to be used. During the course of the actual focus group, moderators were instructed to stop the focus group every 20-30 minutes, to speak directly with the focus group team in the other room, concerning additional questions to be asked, points of clarification needed, or other things that needed to covered.

Fifth, each evening, the focus group team sought to review the tapes, developing a preliminary summary of the focus groups, with the understanding that at some future date, a much more detailed assessment of the tapes would be made, in order to develop a more comprehensive outline of the opinions communicated and some determination of their background, (age and education differences). At some future time, specific observations concerning some of the sub groups, (uneducated versus highly educated, younger people versus older, employed versus unemployed, etc), may be attempted, including lessons learned that were counter intuitive or unexpected, new questions that might need to be asked in later focus groups, etc. This kind of in-depth analysis will need much more time than was available at the time these early focus groups were completed.

Six, what follows in this preliminary report is merely a summary of the obvious and what appears to be the most important information gleamed for our initial observations of the focus groups process, including a quick review of the tapes conducted at the end of the day. We hope this information will prove to be useful and appropriate to CPA.

Key Findings

1. What are people's feelings about the Announcement of November 15, 2003.

In all three areas (Basrah, Najaf, and Hillah), the overwhelming majority of the participants had heard about the Announcement. Both men and women had heard about the Announcement mostly through radio and television. Two women in Najaf said they had heard about it through communications with Hawza.

In Basrah, both men and women said it was a good thing. Interestingly, several women and one man indicated that they believed it would happen, because the Coalition Provisional Authority had promised there would be higher salaries, and they had kept their word. One of them even said, "We trust the Americans, when they promise something, we know it will happen."

In Najaf, nearly all the participants agreed that the announcement would be good for security. One women said, "We must get rid of the Baathists first before there will be stability." Another woman stated if this announcement brings an end to the occupation, it will be a good thing. After they were invited to read the announcement, one male said, "I feel really happy when I read it, because it will end the occupation." Another man said, "It will be good for security, security will be better after June 2004." One woman said, somewhat skeptically, "Of course I will be happy, if it really happens!" One older man was very skeptical, saying: I do not believe it is true."

The moderator then asked the whole group whether they think it will happen as the announcement says. Most of the male participants were observed to indicate either verbally or with a nod that they believed it would be fulfilled as stated. Again while most of female participants, at least 7 of the 11, vocally acknowledged they thought it would happen. One woman stated that we will need the Americans for at least two years for security, and then added, "even if we have our own government, I think the CF should still stay 2-3 to ensure peace and stability in Iraq."

There was a vocal minority who were skeptical. One younger woman said, "I don't believe it, they have promised things before that did not happen." One very vocal woman stated, "CPA has to leave now, they cannot even control our borders, and terrorist are crossing in from Iran and Saudi Arabia, and the CPA does not seem to care." Note how this sentiment of not trusting the CPA in Najaf, is quite different from the more trusting sentiments articulated in Basrah. One man made this comment, "It is about time CPA did something for the people, and this looks like something that will help us." One woman rather poetically, stated that "CPA has come a land far away, they have saved us from Saddam, have worked hard for us, and

they will do what they say they will do!" Another woman expressed her positive feelings about the announcement, stating, "Everything has to come to an end, so I believe that they will leave, if not today, then probably tomorrow."

In Hillah, again the positive sentiments were especially evident among both men and women. One man stated he knew that "most Iraqis are very pleased with this announcement." Another man argued that the "Americans should stay until stability is truly established." Others expressed the concern that the Americans might leave too soon. This sentiment was very noticeable in Hillah, much less in Najaf and Basrah. One woman was a bit skeptical that the CPA would leave that easily, wondering out loud "what do they want?" When the moderator asked for clarification, she was hesitant to respond. While the vast majority of both men and women expressed the feeling that the Americans in Hillah were not occupiers, but were liberators, it was clear from one man that "they are liberators if they don't stay too long." Another woman admitted "Yes, we do like them, but some of the soldiers sometimes act like occupiers." When asked why they like the Americans being in Iraq, one older woman, very emotionally stated, "Now my sons do not have to go to war for Saddam." Another women, added, "None of my children are now at the front."

2. Which Group should play the dominant role in setting up and controlling the Caucus process that will select the new Transitional National Assembly?

In Basrah, there was a strong sentiment that the new government must be independent of any one religious or tribal group. One man indicated that, "Neither the Sunni nor the Shia leaders should be allowed to control this process." Interestingly, one man (who claimed he had been imprisoned by Saddam) suggested that while no high ranking Baathist should be allowed to participate, he still argued "some of the Baathists were honest people, were not guilty of any crime." Another man argued, "The Caucus must be totally honest and completely independent of any political parties."

When asked if the process outlined in the announcement for elections was too long or too short, the majority of both male and females felt it was not too long. One women argued that "No the process is not too long, we must have two years to improve security first before we have elections." One man wondered about the many people who claim to be Iraqis and have IDs saying they are Iraqis when in fact they are not, they are Iranian who are coming in illegally." His point was to suggest that Iraq needs time to prepare themselves for elections; all these problems need to be resolved before elections can be held.

Only 3-4 participants out of the twenty men and women voiced the demand that direct elections be held before June 2003. The vast majority stated that they did not want direct elections in June 2003, "that was much too soon." When asked if the US or some other country or agency should monitor the election in March 2005, roughly 40 percent of the men thought the US should monitor the elections, even a smaller percentage of the women in Basrah wanted the US. Probably six out of ten men and 7 out of 10 women wanted either the UN or a European country. One male teacher said he did not favor the UN because they had certified one of the Saddam Hussein elections as valid. There were two out of the total group of twenty who thought

clerics should select our form of government. They were clearly in a minority in Basrah. Yet one woman stated: "The force of the Howzah should not be underestimated in Basrah."

In Najaf, participants are much more willing to see clerics play a role in the caucus. Several participants mentioned the name of Abdul Azziz al-Hakim and Ali al-Sistani as leaders they trusted and had confidence in. While those in Basrah were more apt to want non-religious leaders to play the dominant role, in Najaf, the mood was very different. Sistani is seen as a great leader. One man said, "He wants only the good of the people." Another expressed his praise for him stating, "He works very hard for the Iraqi people and we trust him." One younger woman stated that she would follow her own mind, not someone else, in deciding if the announcement was good or not. Yet for the vast majority, they clearly were waiting for Sistani to tell them whether this announcement was a good thing. Following this logic, it is not surprising that direct elections as soon as possible is the preferred route to follow by both men and women. One very shy woman who had said very little, was pushed to share her opinion, she suddenly blurted out, "Just go and hang all the Baathists."

In Hillah, most participants do not want clerics involved in the establishment of government. One man stated, "No authority should be given to clerics." Another younger man said: "I want my country to be Islamic, with an Islamic leader, but not like in Iran. Among men, 7 out of 10 stated strongly that clerics should not play any role at all. Most participants were equally opposed to allowing tribal leaders to play a dominant role.

Security

Both male and female focus group participants in Basrah saw the Coalition Forces (CF) as an essential component to restoring security. Joint Iraqi Police Forces (IPF) and CF patrols were much more highly thought of than either force acting alone to increase security. We heard numerous anecdotes of Iraqi police being unable to perform their duties because of threats by gangs and tribal militias. One person relayed the story of being at a checkpoint watching the car in front of him being searched, and seeing the IPF officer finding a weapon. The participant heard the car owner say to the police officer, in a very threatening way, "I know where your family lives." The IPF officer quickly put the gun back where he found it and let him go.

One young man complained that the Iraqi police are only issued ten bullets. He said "What can they do to protect the ordinary citizen, with such little ammunition." A common sentiment expressed by people from different backgrounds is expressed in this older women's comment: "We were promised liberation and reconstruction, but all we got was looting, bad services, and insecurity."

People in Basrah see the IPF as able to deal well with the Iraqis much better than the CF, but the CF is essential to providing them the muscle (both in terms of arms and authority) to do their job. The notion of joint patrols was clearly the favored response.

In Basrah the major source of insecurity is coming from gangs of criminals, extreme religious militias, and tribal militias. One educated male participant lamented the lack of CF effort in challenging and arresting such illegal armed groups, indicating that

Basrah is becoming a dangerous city and the CF does not seem to care. Another younger woman participant also complained that the universities are becoming controlled by Islamic militias and the CF does not seem to care about how women are being treated by these Islamic groups.

According to a recent poll by the Independent Institute for Administration and Civil Society Studies, about a third of people in Basrah see attacks on CF as useful, although to what end is not clear. Not surprisingly, nobody in these focus groups would admit to having that opinion. Most participants, both men and women, blamed this anti CF feeling on Islamic militias, and believe that these extremists will be the major threat to security replacing Saddam in this part of Iraq.

Participants in both Najaf and Hillah, also see the major problem in their areas, in terms of insecurity and violence. One woman in Najaf noted that, "Saddam had put fear into every family in this area, and yet we still suffer from fear." A man in Najaf admitted that, "things were now better than before, but to be honest, we expected more from the Americans, we expected better services. Still we lack services and our streets are not as safe as they should be."

When asked if Saddam's forces are still strong enough to come back to power, one woman stated, "Yes, they do have the power and they are not working alone, they are working with terrorists from other countries." The women of Hillah were especially frustrated with the unemployment, which they stated was the major cause of instability and violence in Hillah.

Transfer of Sovereignty Agreement

People in the groups supported the CPA/IGC agreement almost unanimously. Nearly every participant, men and women, had heard about the agreement. Only one older man had not heard of the agreement. While diverse opinions were not obtained, it was clear that the common sentiment articulated did reflect a view that the agreement was good, was needed, and would be helpful.

Again this is not a sample survey, so one cannot make any judgment about the percentage of people in Basrah who may be aware of the announcement. What is significant is the realization that of people in Basrah who have some knowledge of this announcement, there is some consensus that the agreement is a good thing.

When a specific question was asked: "If religious leaders were opposed to this agreement would that change you positive opinion of the announcement?" a clear majority of the male participants indicated they would still think it was a good idea.

One interesting event occurred during the male focus group in Basrah. When the focus group leader stepped out of the room for a minute to converse with the researchers, we were able to continue monitoring the conversations among the participants. There was one tribal sheikh in the group, who was observed instructing the participants about the importance of remaining true to Islam and that we should follow our religious leaders. When the moderator returned, he was surprised to find that nearly all the participants now wanted to change their opinion, indicating that if their religious leaders did not favor this announcement, they would agree with the religious leaders. This dramatic shift in opinion was a clear indication that they did

not want to be seen as against their religious leaders. Whether this shift in opinion was due to peer pressure, or the fear of being video-taped as being anti religious leader, or the persuasive arguments of the tribal leader is not clear. It does document the volatile nature of opinion in Iraq at the present time.

Clarity

The unclear parts of the CPA/IGC agreement involved the dissolution of the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) and CPA in June 2004. One man questioned the sincerity of the CPA to just give up its power. A young female college student asked whether there would be any CP presence after June 2004. She was obviously concerned for security if the CF left too soon. Several people wondered "Where will they go?" There was a sense that perhaps the change would be in name only, suggesting a fair amount of skepticism that this will really happen. The other point of uncertainty brought up was whether this agreement includes the Kurdish north. For some reason, a number of people wondered why the Kurdish area is not mentioned specifically in the agreement. One man wondered if there is a special agreement between the Americans and the Kurds.

General Opinions Concerning the IGC

In general, the focus groups in Basrah were generous to the governing council, saying they would have been better if they had been given a chance to rule. This underlying positive sentiment was not shared by all the participants some arguing that they might have been more effective if the CPA had given them more power and authority Jaaffri was the most widely supported IGC member in the Basrah groups. Mostly people attributed his popularity to the fact they had seen him on TV frequently. One man was very caustic in his comment that the IGC did not represent the Iraqi people and was merely a tool of the Americans. But his opinion was not verbalized by the others. Interestingly, it was noted that when asked which did they did trust the most, the IGC or the CPA, over two to one, participants were more apt to trust the CPA rather than the IGC.

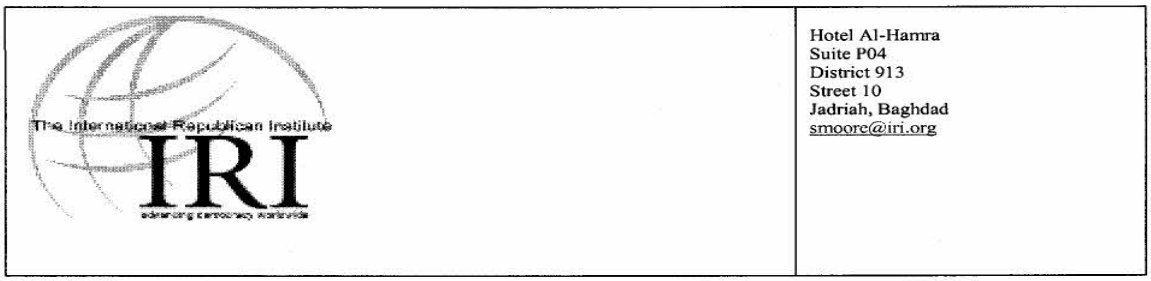
Some of this ambivalence is better explained by the participants in Najaf and Hillah. In Najaf, both men and women were much less apt to have opinions, either positive or negative. One man suggested that too many of them were made up of Iraqis who had recently returned to Iraqi and "had not suffered as the rest of us had". Another man (30s or 40s) calmly denied that the Governing Council cared about the Iraqi people, saying, "They really only care about themselves. They have no concern for our problems." Several of the less educated women indicated they did not know them. One participant who acknowledged that Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, is a good leader, stated, "We should give them a chance. Many people are impatient, but really, they never had any power and were prevented by the Americans from making good decisions."

In Hillah, most participants were not very favorable toward the Governing Council. One very educated man commented that these Governing Council members were, "only working for themselves and the parties they represent." Several were very negative toward these political parties. One woman said that parties do not work for Iraq, only for their own interests. One man also noted that many of these political

parties are infiltrated with former Baathists and would eventually bring the Baathists back to power.

Saddam's Capture

News of Saddam's capture was announced during the women's focus group in Basrah. The women were ecstatic. When asked for some more reflective comments, the comments of the group become more diverse and mixed, and some said they thought this would cause a decrease in attacks on CF. Others thought the humiliation of Saddam on TV is going to have a mixed impact - some found it cathartic, while some say it is humiliating for Iraqis and Arabs at large. The range of emotions displayed by Iraqis in reacting to this news makes for increased uncertainty in the near term.



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MEMORANDUM

December 20, 2003

TO: Elizabeth Conrad, USAID
Gurbux Singh, RTI

FROM: Ron St. John, IRI
Steven E. Moore, IRI
Alin Teodorescu, IMAS
Elena Nica, IMAS

RE: Draft Report on Basrah, Najaf, Hillah & Baghdad Focus Groups

This document is IRI's draft contribution to the interim report for the 8 city focus group study being done in conjunction with RTI. IRI has been working under a National Endowment for Democracy grant to increase public opinion research capacity in Iraq since June of this year. IRI has extensive experience in this area around the world, and has been working with several Iraqi organizations that conduct public opinion research. The two organizations began working together on this project at the beginning of December 2003.

As per IRI's agreement with RTI and USAID, this is a preliminary draft, submitted in rough form in the interests of providing the fastest possible turnaround of the results to CPA. Additionally, this draft is intended to give CPA staff a basis to ask IRI to provide clarification on the findings of previous focus groups, and/or direction on future focus groups. The findings of this document have not been agreed to by RTI.

With the exception of some of the findings from the Basrah focus group, which incorporate the work of Jim Mayfield, these findings are the results of analysis of the focus group data by IRI staff and associates.

KEY FINDINGS

- Many participants see the Iraqi police as too poorly trained and too ill-equipped to deal with Iraq's tremendous problems with law and order.
- Sentiment among the participants is that while the presence of the Coalition Forces (CF) is unpleasant and threatening, CF are the only way to deal with many security issues.
- Tribal conflicts, organized crime, Islamic militias and external threats are a few of the areas where Iraqis see their own forces as inadequate.
- That being said, significant numbers of participants tell us that Iraqi police are best equipped to deal with Iraqis on an interpersonal basis.
- The most frequently mentioned remedy is to have CF and Iraqi police cooperate closely.
- The perception that basic services are not being provided is the secondary driver behind Iraqi public opinion, according to our groups.
- The reaction to the content of the agreement is positive throughout, but Iraqis are reluctant to varying degrees to believe that the agreement will be executed.
- The perception that CPA has not delivered on its promises, plus the continuing lack of security, is fueling the disbelief that the elections will occur.
- The Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) has high negatives among our participants.
- The perception of the IGC is that they are self-interested and do not act on behalf of the Iraqi people.
- Our focus group participants are almost unanimously interested in supporting leaders "who have suffered like the Iraqi people have suffered," and have a disdain for returning Iraqi expatriates as leaders.
- Many participants see the IGC as a tool of the CPA.
- The opinions of religious leaders on political issues are very important in Basrah and Najaf, and to a lesser degree in Hillah, and to a much lesser degree in Baghdad, according to our participants.

METHODOLOGY

Overview
Two sets of focus groups (one for males and one for females) are being conducted in each of the following eight cities on the dates specified.

1. Basra	December 14
2. Najaf	December 16
3. Hillah	December 17
4. Baghdad	December 19
5. Baquba	December 20
6. Mosul	January 4
7. Sulimaniyah	January 6
8. Irbil	January 8

These focus groups should be viewed as a work in progress. This is the first time RTI and IRI have worked together. Security was a constant concern, as with most activities in Iraq. Logistics for participants and staff were daunting for conducting groups in four cities in six days starting less than two weeks after the decision to do the groups. The capture of Saddam and resulting hail of celebratory gunfire during the Basrah focus groups introduced numerous twists to the research and security environments.

As such, numerous biases were introduced into the research. In the opinion of IRI, the data skews favorably toward the CPA and democracy, and this should be taken into account when using this information for decision making. Specific biases are discussed below.

Responsibilities
IRI and RTI collaborated on the development of the questionnaire. Focus group participants were recruited by RTI. RTI also selected the sites for the focus groups. IRI was responsible for selecting and training moderators. Additionally, IRI was responsible for the technical aspects of conducting the groups – setting up video and audio recording systems and a closed circuit television system with the intent of allowing expatriate staff from both organizations to view the groups without their presence being revealed to the participants. IRI and RTI researchers both wrote separate memos very specifically outlining focus group methodology for site selection and participant recruitment that was to be distributed to RTI field staff responsible for those efforts.

Additionally, the Independent Institute for Administrative and Civil Society Studies contributed to this project to supplement site selection and participant recruitment efforts.

IRI Research Staff
To fulfill its obligations to the project and to further its long-term project of increasing public opinion research capacity in Iraq, IRI brought in two Romanian public opinion experts with extensive experience in post-authoritarian public opinion research following the fall of Ceaucescu. Additionally, IRI resident staff in Baghdad has experience

conducting more than 100 focus groups in Russia, Romania, Indonesia and the United States.

Moderators
Finding qualified moderators in a country with no experience in public opinion research prior to June of this year was difficult. As such, IRI recruited a variety of moderators to test which moderator achieved the best result with the groups. Moderators trained for this effort included 3 PhD sociologists, a male medical student, a woman in her sixties and a female translators in her twenties. All were trained by some combination of IRI resident staff, Romanian consultants and Dr. James Mayfield from RTI.

Three sets of two practice focus groups were conducted in Baghdad the week of December 8 to prepare the moderators for their "live" focus groups on the road. Additionally, as many of the moderators as possible were in attendance while their colleagues were conducting their groups.

Analysis & Reporting
At least one IRI expatriate researcher attended each focus group live, and received translation from Iraqi translators. All tapes with the exception of the Basrah groups were transcribed roughly into English, and reviewed by another IRI expatriate researcher prior to the drafting of this report. The report was written in conjunction with most of the Iraqi moderators and translators for clarification on local issues and to double check Arabic translations.

Biases
As these are among the first focus groups conducted in Iraq, numerous problems arose which introduced biases into the study.

Moderator Inexperience
As might be expected, the moderators made errors associated with novice focus group moderators – explaining too much to the participants, giving their own opinion, not probing deeply enough on relevant issues, etc. Some participants may have changed their opinions to match or challenge the moderator's opinion.

Site Selection Error
The Basrah focus groups were located in a villa surrounded by razor wire and associated with expatriates. The Najaf groups were located across the hall from the governor's office. Asking sensitive questions about the performance of the government in a government building does not build the environment of trust required for a focus group in a post-authoritarian environment. IRI feels that these groups will be biased pro-CF.

Participant Recruitment Bias
In any focus group in a developing country, the recruiter may invite friends and family to take advantage of the payment for participation. IRI and RTI jointly

developed extensive methodology to minimize this bias. However, IRI identified numerous biases in the participant recruitment.

In Basrah, the participants were largely students and teachers. In Hillah, the women's group was notified a week ahead of time about the subject of the groups in order to prepare. In Baghad, most of the participants were associated with a District Advisory Council. In general, these groups skewed educated and pro-CF.

FINDINGS

1. Do you think things are better now, or things were better under the previous regime?

Baghdad
In general, the first women's group in Baghdad was surprisingly optimistic and pleased about the change in regime. This could be real, or could be a result of the bias of selecting participants who are closely associated with a Baghdad District Advisory Council.

"We are practicing freedom now – this is the best thing that has happened to the Iraqi people." – Middle-aged housewife wearing a head scarf

"In the past, if I was late at work, the institute punished me. Now, I am free to come and go without worry." – 23 year old instructor at the Ministry of Communications

Najaf
Participants perceive their life improved but not as they expected. Some complaints focus the poor services, unemployment. Some others are happy they are not forced to join the army anymore.

"The CPA promised a lot and did not keep their promises. No electricity, insecurity. I think the previous regime was better in one aspect, the security." (Male, Najaf)

All are glad they got rid of Saddam. However there is a certain degree of fear that Saddam's followers have resources to restore the regime or at least to continue the resistance.

"I saw Saddam captured and I remember my mother in prison." (Old Shia woman in Najaf)
"I don't think anything changes. I was unemployed before I am unemployed now" (young faculty graduate, female, Najaf)
"Former regime was oppressive with for no reason. I think now is better." (Male, Najaf)

In fact the security is the most serious problem all respondents face. All the information on the current life that was collected during the discussions includes security issues. All

opinions towards authorities, coalition forces, recent events that happened in Iraq should be understood with respect of the anxiety they have.

Hillah
Not surprisingly, in a focus group conducted just a few days after the capture of the former dictator, the capture of Saddam Hussein was one of the frequently mentioned happy events of the year.

> *"The capture of Mr. President"***(man, Hillah)**

Other events mentioned include the increasing of pensions, the new freedom and promise of democracy, increasing of salaries for some state employees and the fall of the Baath Party.

While the fall of Saddam was welcomed, people were disillusioned by the way that Iraq fell.

> *"The fall of Iraq in this way. It was supposed to be done by Iraqi people, not by Americans"*[1] **(man, Hillah)**

People were also disappointed by the rise in unemployment, the growing sectarian divide between Shiia and Sunnis and the increasing dissolution of Iraqi society.

2. Do you believe the Governing Council in Baghdad has done a good job or a bad job, representing the people of Iraq?

Baghdad
The Baghdad women's group reflects the trend noted by IRI in focus groups in other cities – widespread disdain for the Governing Council. All but one of the women had an unfavorable opinion of the IGC.

The primary characteristic of the governing council noted by participants is that Council members did not spend years in Iraq suffering under the previous regime. The second characteristic is that the group has produced no results for Iraq's people. The third is inordinate self-interest among Council members.

Contrary to conventional wisdom, the concept of the Governing Council being a tool of the CPA did not come up.

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[1] After a dictatorship there is a quite strong feeling of public humiliation referring to the impression that the society supported so long such a figure. The public believes that others are thinking that they are partially guilty for supporting the dictator. That was the case in Romania, East Germany and Serbia. That humiliation is known as producing various erratic manifestations in the aftermath of a revolution. One of this is the rapid creation of hundreds of political parties. In the case of Iraq it seems that a second humiliation factor is added: the fact that the removal of Saddam has been done by the American led coalition. What the Hilla participant says is that not Saddam has fallen, but Iraq. Because Saddam has been not removed by Iraqis, the participant believes the whole Iraq state and society is at risk.

The disdain for the Council is so deep-rooted that when one participant noted to other participants that their salaries had increased from some 16,000 ID to more than 100,000 ID, not one participant was moved even slightly from their anti-GC opinion.

"All the members of the governing council have not suffered like the Iraqi people have suffered. They have lived away from Iraq for many years. They never faced war or lived under war. They know nothing about Iraqi suffering. We have many doctors and well-educated people who have good experience. You can depend on them and trust them more than members of the council." – 23 year old teacher at a university

"The Governing Council is just a name. They do nothing." – 45 year old director of a secondary school wearing a head scarf

"Nobody on the governing council tries to make a solution for the people who need houses, or the people who have just gotten married and want to get their own house." – 45 year old director of a school wearing a head scarf

"This is the same situation as when Saddam used his Tikritis to get the benefits of power without looking after the Iraqi people. This is the same for the Governing Council. They only look after their followers." – 50 year old unemployed housekeeper

Najaf
The majority of participants were not aware of any of the actions of G.C. The members of the council were almost unknown by focus group participants. Only one highly educated woman commented the activity of the GC members, based probably on some direct contact with the institution.

"They do not represent the public interest. They have no power. They did nothing for the Iraqi people." (Female, complete superior education, Najaf)

"The GC did not explain their strategies to people. We have no clue, we don't understand anything of their theories. We don't know them and we don't know who represents us. So all we say is the Shiia part represents us. " (Female, Najaf)

3. What do you think about the CPA? In your opinion, would you say that they been liberators or occupiers? (Get a count on how they feel.)

Baghdad
A slight majority of participants feel that the CPA is an occupying rather than a liberating power. While the participants readily admit that without Coalition Forces in Iraq the country would disintegrate into civil unrest and sectarian strife, the mere presence of Coalition Forces causes many of the group members concern. They are not concerned primarily about violent interactions with the CF, but more about being near the CF when the soldiers are attacked by insurgents.

This opinion was not unanimous. Some participants saw the CF as a welcome contributor to the stability and order in Iraq. One exchange was illustrative of the dual concerns facing Iraqis about their security:

"I used to go to the market every day, but now I only go every three or four days. I see the Americans patrolling the streets, and I am afraid somebody will attack them and I will get hurt." – 50 year old housewife in a head scarf

<in response>

"I am afraid of the Iraqi police. I trust the Americans more than the Iraqi police. When I see the American forces at a gas station, I feel safer. I know that they have established order." (the implication is the Iraqi police are corrupt and ineffective) – 25 year old unemployed woman in a head scarf

"Without the Americans, there would be bloodshed. We would kill each other." - late twenties Masters student in a head scarf

Najaf

Certain consensuses were noticed regarding perceptions of the CPA in the Najaf focus groups. Although the dominant attitude is that of rejection (they are perceived as occupiers), we may say that people are inclined to accept their presence as long as it proves to be necessary for security reasons.

"The came as liberators, now they behave like occupiers." (Male, Najaf)
"After bringing those airplanes, tanks and stuff they may bring some generators to give us electricity." (Female, Najaf)

One of the most discussed issues during in the focus groups was the relation between the Iraq Police and the CPA. The majority agrees that the two organizations should work together on solving the problems. A woman in Najaf thinks that there are Baath policemen in Najaf. Nevertheless the general view is that CPA is in control in Najaf at this moment.

"We want Iraqi Police and CPA to protect us. And I want our sons to be in the police not the ex-Baathists who are now in the police." (Uneducated woman in Najaf)

1. What is something that has happened to you in the past year that was a good thing

2. What is something that has happened to you in the past year that was a bad thing

3. Did any of you loose family members to Saddam? Get a count.

Hillah
Almost all participants had an executed family member (cousin, brother, father) during the Saddam regime or a death soldier during the Iran-Iraq war or the Gulf war. However, they state their loss in quite a matter-of-fact way – quite a fatalist attitude.

The group seemed to be mostly Dawa members, according to the moderator.

On 15 November 2003, the CPA announced that political authority would be transferred to the Iraqi government, on June 30th, 2004.

4. Were you aware of this decision? How many were, how many were not aware?

Baghdad
One person heard it on Al-Jazeera, another on Al-Aribiya. Most had heard about it. Only a couple had not.

Najaf
Very few of the female respondents had any idea of the agreement. Men were aware of it. Some heard of it on TV (Arbia, Al Jazra) or from newspapers, the other were told about the announcement during the holly service. All those who knew about the agreement had no idea of the announcement's content.

Hillah
9 our of 10 people heard about it. No one knew in details what it is inside.
As a main source of information regarding the Agreement and, generally speaking, the political news, Arabia (UAE), Al-Jazeera (Qatar) El-Alam (Iran) has been nominated. No local or national TV channel seems to be the main source of information, due to the lack of credibility.

(For those of the participants who already were aware of the announcement, ask:)

5. How did you find out? (Have each participant give his answer personally.)

**Now let us read through this announcement. (hand the agreement out)

6. What were your feelings upon reading this?

Basrah

The howzah is quite powerful in Basrah. All ten participants in the men's groups liked the agreement. When asked who might change your mind, and prompted "religious leaders" nine out of ten said that religious leaders would not cause them to change their minds. The lone dissenter was a fellow dressed in sheikh attire. Coincidentally, our moderator left the room to confer with us for five minutes. During that time, the sheikh convinced the rest of the group that they should listen to religious leaders about the agreement. This dramatic shift in opinion was a clear indication that they did not want to be seen as against their religious leaders.

Whether this shift in opinion was due to peer pressure, or the fear of being video-taped as being anti religious leader, or the persuasive arguments of the tribal leader is not clear. It does document the volatile nature of opinion in Iraq at the present time. Similarly, the women when posed the same question asked if the group was indeed secret, then said that they would defy their religious leader to support the agreement. This illustrates the desire for democracy vs. the concern about offending religious leaders.

A. Is this announcement believable: Do you believe it will happen as scheduled?

B. Are you happy with the timetable or unhappy?

(Have each participant indicate why they are happy or unhappy?)

7. What is your opinion, should the Americans leave before June, not until June, or should they stay longer?

Baghdad

The opinion of the Baghdad women's group followed that of other groups tested in Iraq in their view of the IGC/CPA agreement. With a few caveats, the agreement is greeted with cautious but enthusiastic approval.

However, the Baghdad women's group is more skeptical that the agreement will be implemented than the groups further south.

"Let's wait and see if the agreement will be true. How can we be sure if the agreement will be fulfilled?" – female, Baghdad

"We want to feel that the IGC is doing something in real life, not just making agreements on paper." -- female, Baghdad

"There is no indication by the Americans over the last eight months that they will do these last 4 topics (the agreement) that we are talking about." – middle aged woman in head scarf

"What did we do for the last five months? The Governing Council did nothing. Now we are going to have another Governing Council, and another year with them doing nothing."

Some conspiracy theories involving American intent also emerged in this group:

"Are the Americans going to desert us? Are the CF going to leave Iraq as soon as they get rid of Saddam and that is it? We want them to stay in Iraq until the reconstruction is completed." – female, Baghdad

Najaf

Mostly positive reactions towards the announcement occurred after respondents read the agreement. While male is more critical on the agreement points, females' comments were very positive.

Some believed it, others did not. One man in Najaf said that "they did not believe Saddam will be overthrown but it happened. With the help of Americans, I believe it will work."

"It will come true because people want this to happen, we have no alternative." (Male, Najaf)

Majority of the participants had doubts regarding the way these declarations will be put in practice. Their doubts have nuances as follows:

- Who will supervise the elections?
- Progress on security related issues is not apparent;
- Timeline is too short to decide who will represent our interests;
- The agreement must hide some CPA plans; Would they leave as it is stated in the agreement?
- CPA should stay longer to protect us from the followers of Saddam and Al-Quaida;
- We need to know first what the clerics say on it;

"All will follow Sistani because he is an expert in religion (a shaaria). He watch and understand what happens in Iraq and we have to follow him" (female, Najaf)

"Sistani knows better than us what to do and he actually agreed on this. I saw him on TV." (Male, Najaf)

Participants completely agreed on the following points of the document:

- sovereignty
- end to occupation;
- security.

Hillah
The following agreements were reached by the group following the reading of the agreement:

- The major problem is the security
- We wonder if it is going to be implemented

8. As you read through this announcement, please write down any part of the document that is not clear. (Have each person indicate which section they have concerns and have each one explain why)

(Take back the agreement.)

9. Do you expect security to be better or worse after authority is returned to the Iraqi government on 30 June 2004. Why do you believe this? What role should the Coalition Forces play? What role should the Iraqi police play? (We want comments from as many people as possible.)

Baghdad
The first reaction of the group is that security will improve following the implementation of the agreement on June 30. This exchange illustrates the dueling tensions Iraqis face in dealing with the country's insecurity. On the one hand, Iraqis believe that Iraqi police will deal with Iraqis better on an inter-personal level. On the other hand, CF are seen as tremendously more effective at curbing security threats.

"I think that when Iraqis rule Iraqis, security will be better. Iraqis know the Iraqi habits, concerns and customs."—Baghdad female

"The Americans are capable of doing so many things to restore order because they have the authority. The Iraqi police have no authority. We see the Americans doing so many things to restore order, but the Iraqis can't do these things because they are afraid of the other Iraqis. They don't command the respect of other Iraqis, can't influence their behavior, and don't want to be humiliated in front of other Iraqis." – Baghdad Female

Some Iraqis both in Baghdad and Basrah lay at least partial blame for the ineffective IPF with the selection of the police force.

"Now anyone can get a police job. In the past, they had to be screened, and the leaders and the people in their district had to vouch for them. Now anyone can get a police job – even some looters have jobs as police!"

Some see the general ineffectiveness of Iraqi police as symptomatic of the larger state of uncertainty in the country.

"There is no law, there is no government, there is no president. Nobody is responsible. If anyone breaks the law, what are the Iraqi police going to do to them?"

"Iraqis need law, and a firm law. Without these laws, Iraqis will not respect anything."

"Iraqis need to sense fear. Without fear nobody obeys the law."

Finally, while the argument was not terribly persuasive to the group, the dissenting voice of the optimist was refreshing.

"The security situation is in our hands. Look at us during Ramadan. We went out, we went to the market, we visited our friends until 1 or 2 o'clock in the morning. It is up to the Iraqi people not to be afraid, and take charge of our own security situation." – 23 year old teacher at a university

Basrah

The focus group participants both male and female saw the Coalition Forces (CF) as an essential component to restoring security. Joint Iraqi Police Forces (IPF) and CF patrols were much more highly thought of than either force acting alone to increase security. We heard numerous anecdotes of Iraqi police being unable to perform their duties because of threats by gangs and tribal militias.

One person relayed the story of being at a checkpoint watching the car in front of him being searched, and seeing the IPF officer finding a weapon. The participant heard the car owner say to the police officer, in a very threatening way: "I know where your family lives." The IPF officer quickly put the gun back where he found it and let him go. . One young man complained that the Iraqi police are only issued ten bullets, "what can they do to protect the ordinary citizen, with such little ammunition."

The women also went into depth about the role of the police. They felt the Iraqi police dealt better with Iraqis, but required training and backup from Coalition Forces. One middle aged teacher wearing a head scarf said "In Basrah, we have no system for justice. We can throw nobody in jail. Nobody is afraid of punishment, nobody respects the law."

Another woman in her thirties without the veil noted "The British Forces don't care. They saw the looting, they saw the killing without doing anything."

The women transferred this lawlessness to their perception of democracy. "We care about democracy, but there is nothing real. I don't know the meaning of democracy. There is nothing real." This is in reference to security – they see the lack of security as evidence that democracy is not real in Iraq.

Najaf

The timeline was almost unanimously agreed to in the Najaf focus groups. Some even believe that the CPA should stay longer, so that they guarantee the security in Iraq. Others believe that they should leave after transferring authority to Iraqi people.

"One ship with two captains will sink So they should leave right after establishing an Iraqi government." (Female, Najaf)

"They should stay longer because we still are afraid of Saddam followers. They have weapons and they will join other forces to destroy us." (Female, Najaf)

Hillah

There is a strong expressed feeling of lack of security[2]. The Americans should leave only after the security is guaranteed. The problem is not chronological – June, or after June – but after a number of conditions are met.

"Once the security is guaranteed the Americans could leave the power" **(man, Hillah)**.

The Americans are responsible for building up security forces. They should take care of it". ***(man, Hillah)***

Although in the session the attitude which transfers the responsibility for security to the American led coalition seem to be dominant, there are different opinions:

We, Iraqis, have to clean up our country. The Americans cannot give us back our country as a white paper. We have to get it. We actually need an iron hand to calm down Iraq[3] ***(man, Hillah)***

"Actually, if the Americans transfer the power on 30th of June, the security will improve. It is a hope it is not a certainty. That is because the Iraqis might be able to produce more security for themselves." **(man, Hilla)**

10. Some people say that Iraqis should be able to vote for their leaders as soon as possible. Other people say that these first elections will be the most important in Iraq's history and should not be rushed. What is your opinion?

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[2] From other sources (interviews with political leaders, ordinary people it seems that the lack of security feeling is composed by various strata. There are at least 5 sources of insecurity: the fear that if the Americans leave the former Baath paramilitary structures would come back, vengeance; the SCIRI and Kurd militias (in the North and in central Iraq); the fear of a civilian war; organized crime, based on various paramilitary groups which could be formed with the existing guns; the fear of criminals liberated by Saddam Hussein on 15th of October 2002. On top of these sources one might add the fear of ethnic and religious clashes, which might not develop into a civilian war. All these potential sources of anxiety should be clearly checked in the coming quantitative and qualitative surveys.

[3] In all post-dictatorship societies the need for a strong political direction has been emulated by the expression "iron hand". In Spain after Franco the king Juan Carlos has been identified as such. In Portugal after Salazar the General Secretary of the Communist Party Alvaro Cunnal. In Romania, Ion Iliescu. In Russia Vladimir Putin. The expression doesn't imply a nostalgia after a dictator but the need for order, stability, public discipline.

Baghdad
Opinion is diverse and not very solid on this issue, with the group slightly leaning toward Iraq taking its time and getting the process right. In many ways, these comments express a link between the lack of progress on security and the lack of belief in the likelihood of elections.

"We have suffered for 35 years, what is another five months going to do to us? It is only a short time." – female, Baghdad

"Six months and we have a government? That seems OK… but if you look at it since the fall of Saddam, it is a long time. Is it possible for any country to be without a government for a year and a half?"

"Things are getting worse and worse. We need a government as soon as possible to get someone in charge." – female, Baghdad

However, the discussion highlighted fears that arise in the group from rushing the process too much.

"We don't need to rush things. We don't need each new minister to bring their relatives as ministers. This government is too important." – female, Baghdad

<in response>

In our ministry (Ministry of Communications), the minister is from Dawa Party. The Dawa Party is putting up banners on the wall to order women to wear the head scarf. My male colleagues are filing a grievance with the dean because the women's clothes are agitating them sexually. The Dawa Party tells us that if our family members join the party, they can get jobs at the Ministry. – 23 year old teacher at the Communications Ministry not wearing a head scarf

Hillah
"CPA should follow and arrest the real criminals. It was a mistake for the Coalition to let people take all those guns and weapons. There are too many guns on streets. Now, to have a weapon to protect yourself and yours, became a necessity" **(man, Hillah)**

"Maybe it is a good idea to organize a secret police to work against criminals" **(man, Hillah)**

"The Iraqi police cannot perform its role properly. They are afraid. The police should be backed up by the government and just do its job: catching criminals, protecting people. The police should be better organized, and the policemen should be better selected. There is no real change in the police. The same people known as being corrupt and ineffective." **(man, Hillah)**

"For example, in Hilla if you show up on streets with a gun, the CPA forces do not care. You can walk on streets with that." **(man, Hillah)**

"The Americans did not destroy only Saddam but also Iraq. Before, there were 8-9 departments in charge with security. Now, there is only the police, which is not of a good quality" **(man, Hillah)**

"The police are powerless. They are very weak." **(man, Hillah)**

Please write this down.

What do you fear if the vote is rushed? What do you fear if the vote is postponed? Please write this down. When do you think Iraq will be ready for elections – 2004, 2005, 2006?

Baghdad
The group was unanimous in their belief that 2005 is a good year for Iraqi elections.

When asked who should play the largest role in selecting the members of the National Assembly, there were no dissenting opinions to "The Iraqi people."

Najaf

Participants in the male group agreed on the date of elections. Almost all admitted that vote shouldn't be rushed. A majority of them would like voting to happen in 2005.

Most of the women would like the elections to happen as fast as possible. Only one of them (superior education) disagreed.

"It is not good to rush the timetable because we must avoid confusion. People don't know anything about elections. We must wait for census data to know how many are sunny, how many are shia. The elections should not rely on ratio cards. The census itself needs a lot of time." (Male, Najaf)

"We prefer the elected members of the National Assembly to be people like us, who suffered with us all these 35 years. The elections should be as fast as possible. (Female, Najaf)

"We would like the Iraqi people (individuals) to have the largest say in selecting the ITNA." (Male, Najaf)

Hillah
4 out of 10 participants are of the opinion that the elections should be quickly organized. 3 participants were for 2004, 3 for 2005, and 4 for 2006.

"There is no any reason for waiting too much. We are going anyway to elect people we trust and we know. Currently all kind of thinks happens. For example, in Hilla, the religious leaders fired the former governor. They want to install their own man. A lot of people don't like that".

The moderator insisted on those indicating 2006 as a preferable moment for elections.

Why is that?

"Because there is enough time to prepare everything. People will learn what is that democracy and they will become more open minded. All those now under 40 years old only know the Baath party. Mass/media doesn't help too much. They don't cover the real events. The local IMN is not independent, and it is promoting just one man".

11. Who should be responsible to ensure that these elections would be fair and democratic -- the CPA, the US Government, UN, European Union, or other. Please write this down.

Baghdad
The United Nations had the support of four of the ten participants, but perhaps the remark that sparked the most response among group members was that Iraqis should supervise their own elections.

"The election operation should be supervised by Iraqis, because it is humiliating for any decent Iraqi to be supervised by a non-Iraqi." – Baghdad female

Najaf
"The elections should be supervised" almost all said. The most trusted in supervising the elections are UN, USA and European Union. Very few (those who want elections as fast as possible) presume that Iraq should do elections by itself.

Hillah
No participant indicated the CPA, or the US Army. The majority indicated a combination between Iraqis (preferably independent, sometimes religious) and the UN.

12. Who do you believe should have the largest say in selecting the Iraqi Transitional National Assembly in June 2004? (wait for a response)

probe: Political Parties

probe: Religious leaders
probe: Tribal Leaders
probe: Governorate Councils
probe: University Faculties
probe: CPA officials
probe: leaders from Private Associations

(When a participant mentions one of the above, ask them for specifics, which part, which religious leader, tribal leaders, if possible, if not, then get a count for each answer.)

Baghdad
Perhaps most telling in this subject is that none of the probes elicited much of a response from the women. The sentiment of the group was that all groups should be included in selecting the Transitional Assembly. Among this group, tribal chiefs and religious leaders did not fare well.

"We don't want the tribal chiefs or the religious leaders". – middle aged woman wearing head scarf

Among the surprises of the group – even for IRI's Iraqi translator – was this comment by a woman in a head scarf.

"If we are going to have a national assembly, we should separate politics from religion." – 30 something woman wearing a head scarf

Najaf
Among the most trusted people who would have a say in the election of the Transitional Assembly was Dr. Abdul Hakim (dean of Kufa University).

Hillah
The participants had a low understanding of the question. However, Mr. Ali Sistani was indicated by 4, Muktada Sadr by 2, Dawa Party, Ablazz Al Hakim (SCIRI).

Some people say that religious leaders are the most qualified to write Iraq's new constitution, while others say that constitutional experts, academics, lawyers and elected officials are most qualified to write the constitution. What do you think? Why?

Najaf

Constitution must be written by religious persons or scientists, male group believes. The females responses are not relevant. Some didn't know what constitution is…

"Sistani should write it or supervise the process." (Males, Najaf)

Hillah

Almost all participants agreed that religious men were not the best choice, because that course of action would divide the country. Technocrats, lawyers, judges, academics, and people of law were preferred.

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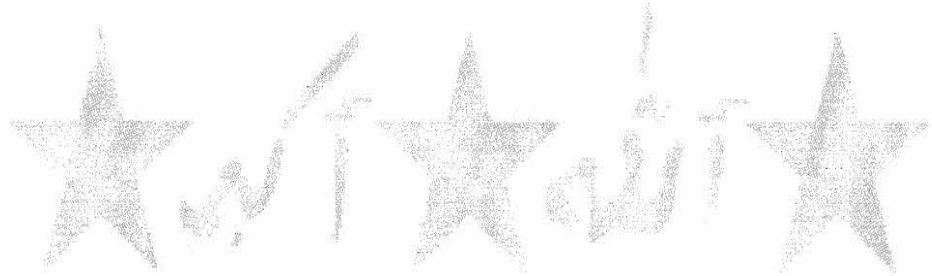
RTI/IRI Focus Group Study
Key Findings
December 22, 2003



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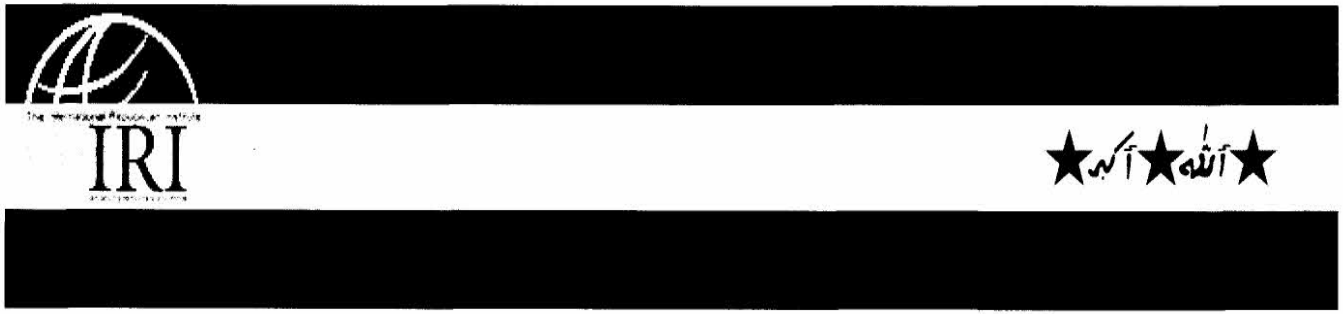


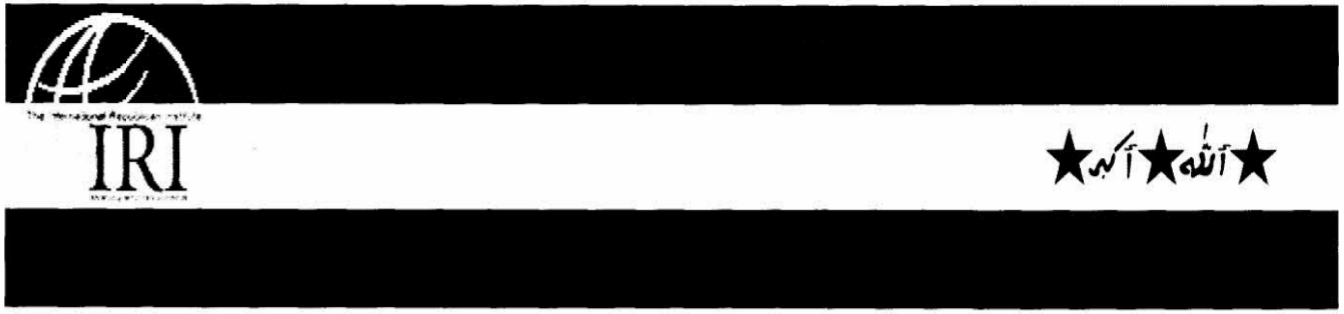
- What is a focus group?
  - Focus groups are qualitative instruments for analyzing public opinion
    - Cannot be extrapolated to a larger population

IRI

- What is the difference between a poll and a focus group?
  - Polls work because of random selection
    - Think about jelly beans

IRI

- Polls measure opinions; Focus groups discern how opinions are developed
  - Wouldn't we like to hear what the Iraqis are talking about around the dinner table?



- What about our focus groups?
  - Conducted in Basrah, Najaf, Hillah & Baghdad during and after Saddam's capture
  - 2 groups each day; 1 men & 1 women
  - IRI responsible for moderators & IT setup
  - RTI responsible for recruiting participants and site selection
  - Joint responsibility for discussion guide

IRI

- What about our focus groups?
  - Screen for participants: diverse age & education
  - Analysts:
    - Dr. James Mayfield
    - Alin Teodorescu
    - Elena Nica
    - Steven Moore

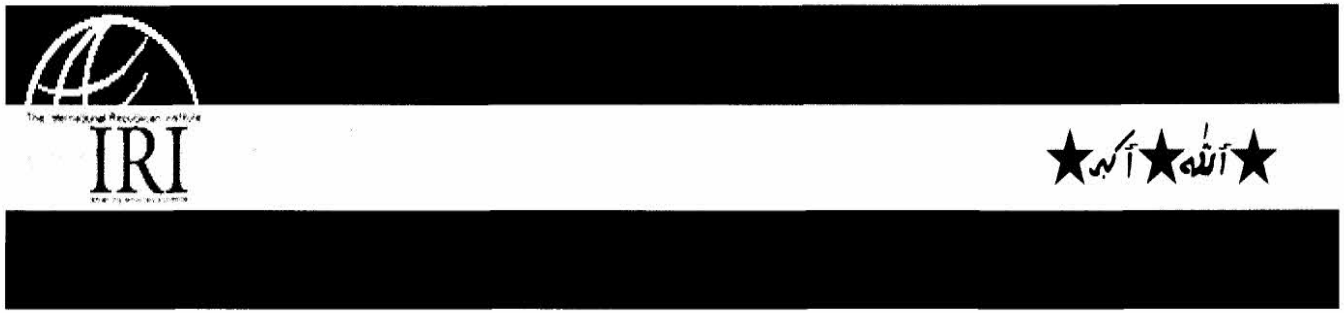
- What about our focus groups?
  - Moderators
    - 3 male PhDs in their forties and fifties, 1 woman in her fifties, 1 male medical student, 1 Kurdish woman in her twenties, 1 Arab women in her twenties

IRI

- What about our focus groups?
  - Biases
    - Moderator Inexperience
      - Inserting opinions, insufficient probing, inability to control the discussion
        - » May cause respondents to change opinions
    - Site Selection Error
      - Focus groups conducted in buildings associated with CPA
        - » May cause pro-CPA bias
    - Screening Biases
      - Respondents homogenous or coached
        - » Respondents may skew higher education and/or pro-CPA

IRI

- Key Findings
  - The reaction to the content of the agreement is positive throughout, but Iraqis are reluctant to varying degrees to believe that the agreement will be executed.
    - *"Let's wait and see if the agreement will be true. How can we be sure if the agreement will be fulfilled?" – female, Baghdad*
  - The perception that CPA has not delivered on its promises, plus the continuing lack of security, is fueling the disbelief that the elections will occur.
    - *"There is no indication by the Americans over the last eight months that they will do these last 4 topics (the agreement) that we are talking about." – middle aged Baghdad woman in head scarf*
    - *"The CPA promised a lot and did not keep their promises. No electricity, insecurity. I think the previous regime was better in one aspect, the security." (Male, Najaf)*



- Key Findings
  - Many participants see the Iraqi police as too poorly trained and too ill-equipped to deal with Iraq's tremendous problems with law and order.
    - *"The Iraqi police cannot perform its role properly. They are afraid. The police should be backed up by the government and just do its job: catching criminals, protecting people. The police should be better organized, and the policemen should be better selected. There is no real change in the police. The same people known as being corrupt and ineffective."* **(man, Hillah)**
  - Sentiment among the participants is that while the presence of the Coalition Forces (CF) is unpleasant and threatening, CF are the only way to deal with many security issues.
    - *"I used to go to the market every day, but now I only go every three or four days. I see the Americans patrolling the streets, and I am afraid somebody will attack them and I will get hurt." – 50 year old housewife in a head scarf*

      "I am afraid of the Iraqi police. I trust the Americans more than the Iraqi police. When I see the American forces at a gas station, I feel safer. I know that they have established order." (the implication is the Iraqi police are corrupt and ineffective) – 25 year old unemployed woman in a head scarf

IRI

- Key Findings
  - Tribal conflicts, organized crime, Islamic militias and external threats are a few of the areas where Iraqis see their own forces as inadequate.

IRI

- Key Findings
  - That being said, significant numbers of participants tell us that Iraqi police are best equipped to deal with Iraqis on an interpersonal basis.
    - *"I think that when Iraqis rule Iraqis, security will be better. Iraqis know the Iraqi habits, concerns and customs."— Baghdad female*
    - *"Actually, if the Americans transfer the power on 30th of June, the security will improve. It is a hope it is not a certainty. That is because the Iraqis might be able to produce more security for themselves."* **(man, Hilla)**

IRI

- Key Findings
  - The most frequently mentioned remedy is to have CF and Iraqi police cooperate closely. Better screening of police applicants is also mentioned frequently.
    - *"We want Iraqi Police and CPA to protect us. And I want our sons to be in the police not the ex-Baathists who are now in the police." (Uneducated woman in Najaf)*

- Key Findings
  - The opinions of religious leaders on political issues are very important in Basrah and Najaf, and to a lesser degree in Hillah, and to a much lesser degree in Baghdad, according to our participants.
    - *"All will follow Sistani because he is an expert in religion (a shaaria). He watch and understand what happens in Iraq and we have to follow him"* (female, Najaf)

- Key Findings
  - A subtle undercurrent of self-reliance showed itself in the groups.
    - *"The security situation is in our hands. Look at us during Ramadan. We went out, we went to the market, we visited our friends until 1 or 2 o'clock in the morning. It is up to the Iraqi people not to be afraid, and take charge of our own security situation." – 23 year old teacher at a university*
    - *We, Iraqis, have to clean up our country. The Americans cannot give us back our country as a white paper. We have to get it. We actually need an iron hand to calm down Iraq.* (man, Hillah)

IRI

- Key Findings
  - The Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) has high negatives among our participants.
  - The perception of the IGC is that they are self-interested and do not act on behalf of the Iraqi people.
  - Our focus group participants are almost unanimously interested in supporting leaders "who have suffered like the Iraqi people have suffered," and have a disdain for returning Iraqi expatriates as leaders.

IRI

- Conclusions:
  - The agreement is well received, and fairly well understood.
  - The agreement is widely disbelieved.
  - The disbelief stems primarily from lack of security, both perceived and real.
    - Anecdotally, security seems to be improving.
    - Doubling the police will not handle the perception problem.
  - Communications need to emphasize gains made in security.
    - Show Iraqi police dealing with criminals.

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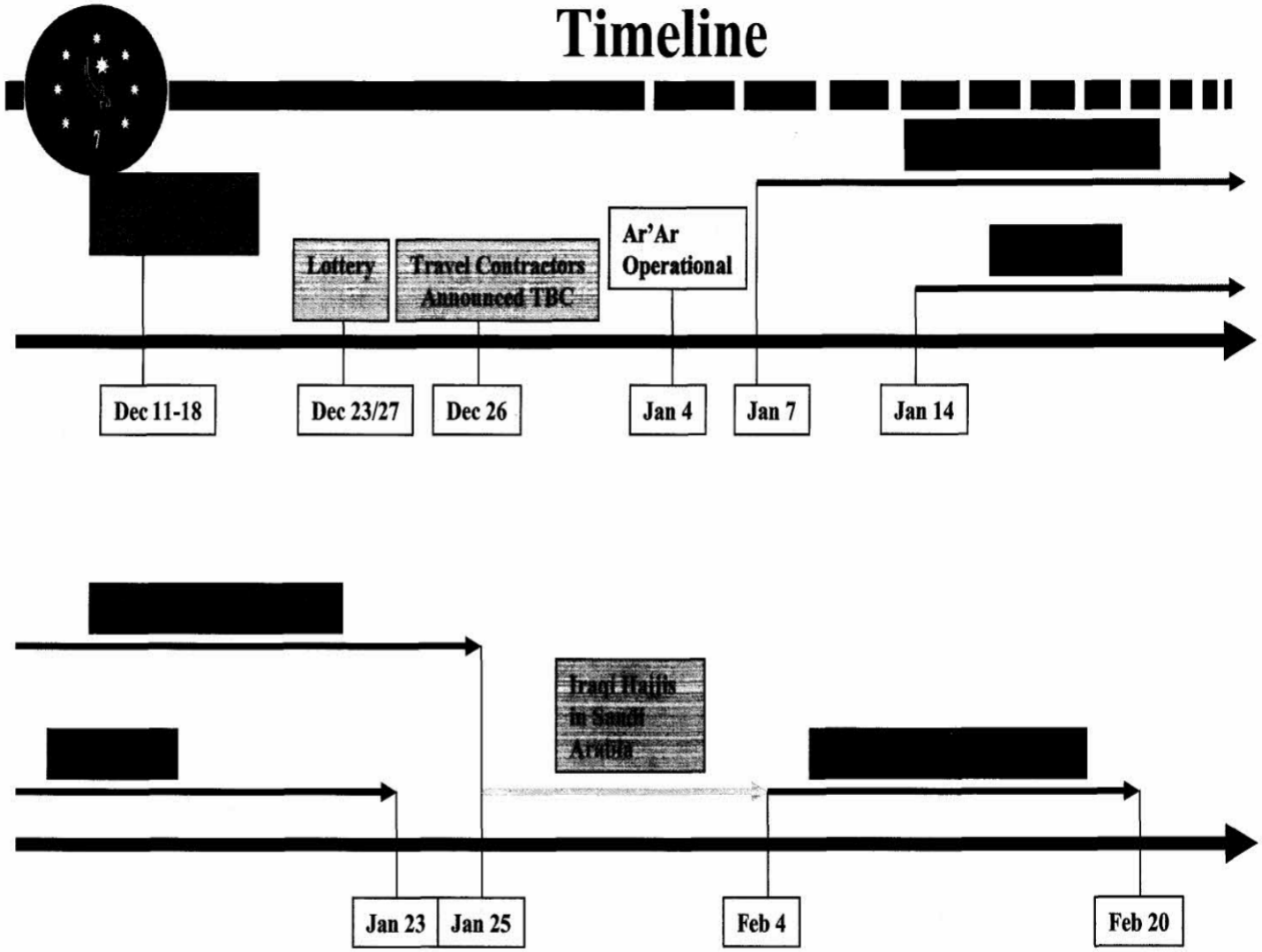
Timeline



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