

ESCALATING TENSIONS IN IRAQ THREATEN SECURITY AGREEMENT EXTENSION

Relations have reached new lows in Iraq as tensions escalated between Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's State of Law coalition and former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi's Iraqiyya bloc. Iraqiyya is now threatening to withdraw from both the Council of Representatives and the Council of Ministers. Meanwhile, the State of Law is maneuvering to establish a majority government that bypasses Allawi and much of Iraqiyya. This development would represent a fatal blow to the U.S.-backed national partnership government and could have important implications for U.S. efforts to renegotiate a new Security Agreement by the end of this year.

DUELING PROTESTS TURN VIOLENT

- On Friday June 10th, pro-democracy activists staged a small demonstration to mark the end of Maliki's 100 day initiative to improving governance and service provision.
- That same day, more than one thousand pro-government protesters gathered in Baghdad's Tahrir Square ostensibly to demand the execution of one of the suspects accused of masterminding a 2006 wedding massacre that killed 70 people in a town north of Baghdad.¹ The suspects were arrested in May 2011 and were about to stand trial in Baghdad.
 - Pro-government protesters were reportedly bused into Baghdad from areas of southern Iraq by Maliki's Da'awa Party.²
 - The demonstration also took on an anti-Allawi and anti-Ba'athist tenor, as protesters carried posters denouncing the Iraqiyya leader as well as the return of any former Ba'athists into government.
- Ultimately, the protests turned violent, as pro-government demonstrators attacked the democracy activists, accusing them of being Ba'athists.³

IRAQIYYA AND STATE OF LAW TRADE THREATS AND ACCUSATIONS

- The evening of the protests, Allawi read a prepared statement denouncing Maliki's handling of the demonstrations, a scathing critique of the prime minister and the Da'awa party. Throughout the speech, Allawi accused Maliki of being an aggressor, a liar, an Iranian puppet, and a corrupt politician.⁴ Allawi also lashed out at the international community for not playing a balanced role during the government formation process after the March 2010 parliamentary election, which led to Maliki retaining the premiership for a second term.
- Iraqiyya walked out of a parliamentary session on Sunday June 12th, when the body reconvened after a month-long recess.⁵
- Iraqiyya has also threatened to withdraw from government if its demands are not met. These demands include a full implementation of the Barzani initiative (including the creation of the National Council for Higher Policies), the appointment of a Minister of Defense from Iraqiyya, and a say in the selection of the Minister of Interior. Given existing political realities, it is unlikely these demands will be met anytime soon.

- Maliki and his Da'awa allies have responded by threatening to pursue a course that would remove Allawi from parliament, on grounds that he has failed to attend a requisite number of parliamentary sessions.⁶
- State of Law is also moving towards establishing a majority government, presumably with the Sadrist Trend and the Kurdish Alliance. Such a move would force factions within Iraqiyya to choose between siding with Maliki in order to retain their government positions or with Allawi and risk losing them.

GROWING UNCERTAINTY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SECURITY AGREEMENT

- Da'awa has returned to its previous hard-line stance against a renewed Security Agreement with the United States. In a statement issued on June 14th, the Da'awa party announced it would oppose any continuation of the U.S. troop presence after 2011.⁷
- A State of Law-led majority government would make Maliki even more reliant on the Sadrist Trend. This combined with the hostile political environment would further reduce the likelihood of an extended U.S. troop presence beyond 2011.

IRAQ'S SECURITY CONTINUES TO DETERIORATE

The security environment continues to worsen in Iraq, despite the formation of a new government last December after a nine-month political stalemate. In April, Shi'a cleric Muqtada al-Sadr made it clear that he would reinstate the Jaysh al-Mahdi militia and renew armed resistance against the U.S. military should American forces remain in Iraq after this year. As these Sadrist threats continue, security officials have seen a revival of Shi'a militia activity, especially in southern Iraq.⁸

- Eight U.S. soldiers have been killed in the first half of June—all at the hands of Shi'a militias. On June 6, five U.S. soldiers were killed in Baghdad by the Iranian-backed Kaitab Hezbollah, representing the highest single-incident death toll for the U.S. since 2009.⁹
- Back in April, the U.S. military suffered eleven total fatalities—tying the highest monthly toll since June 2009, when U.S. combat forces were patrolling Iraq's cities. There were 162 attacks on U.S. forces in April, up from 128 in March and 93 in February. U.S. military spokesman Maj. Gen. Jeffrey Buchanan stated in early June, "Various extremist groups and illegal militias have said they will increase attacks against U.S. forces and they are trying to do that to claim credit for driving out our forces."¹⁰
- Iraq's security forces and governmental institutions continue to be targeted by both Sunni insurgents and Shi'a militiamen, undermining the fragile government's credibility in the eyes of an increasingly frustrated population.¹¹
- Political assassination operations continue to be an effective tool. In these attacks extremists primarily use firearms with silencers and so-called "sticky bombs," which are largely used to attach to a target's vehicle.¹²
- Maliki's coalition, the Sadrists, and the Iraqiyya bloc have failed to form a consensus on appointing an interior and defense minister. As of this moment, Maliki is serving as the de-facto head of each ministry, as Iraqi politicians blame one another for causing the ongoing disputes and deterioration in security. Maliki has even gone far enough to accuse "political parties" and "their security guards" for orchestrating some of the political assassinations plaguing the government.¹³

ENDNOTES

- ¹ “Iraq detains 25 over 2006 wedding massacre,” Agence France-Press, May 28, 2011.
- ² Ned Parker and Raheem Salman, “Pro-government demonstrators attack protesters in Baghdad,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 11, 2011.
- ³ Ned Parker and Raheem Salman, “Pro-government demonstrators attack protesters in Baghdad,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 11, 2011; Tim Craig, “Anti-government protest blocked in Iraq,” *The Washington Post*, June 10, 2011.
- ⁴ Address by Ayad Allawi, Wifaq Website, accessible at <http://www.wifaq.com/more.asp?NewsID=2655&CatID=13&lang=arb>. Translated from Arabic.
- ⁵ “Iraqiya boycott adjourns parliament session,” AKnews, June 12, 2011.
- ⁶ “Iraq MPs call to deal with non-attendance of Parliament sessions,” Al-Sumaria TV, June 16, 2011; “State of Law Alliance strives to withdraw trust from MP Iyad Allawi – MP,” Aswat al-Iraq, June 14, 2011.
- ⁷ Statement of the Political Bureau of the Islamic Dawa Party on the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq,” June 14, 2011, Islamic Dawa Party website, accessible at http://www.al-daawa.org/main/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1218:2011-06-14-12-28-50&catid=15:computer&Itemid=11. Translated from Arabic.
- ⁸ Rebecca Santana, “US troops face increasing dangers in southern Iraq,” Associated Press, May 17, 2011.
- ⁹ Michael S. Schmidt and Jack Healy, “Shiite Militia Claims Responsibility for Attack in Baghdad,” *The New York Times*, June 10, 2011.
- ¹⁰ Ben Lando, “Iraq Militants Ratchet Up Attacks On US Bases, Personnel,” *The Wall Street Journal*, May 24, 2011.
- ¹¹ Habib al-Zubaidi, “Suicide car bomber kills more than 20 in Iraq,” Reuters, May 5, 2011.
- ¹² Aaron C. Davis, “In Iraq, assassinations are a nightly event,” *The Washington Post*, May 3, 2011.
- ¹³ “Maliki blames politicians for Iraq assassinations,” *Al-Arab Online*, April 26, 2011.