ARAB STUDIES COURSE

Iraq Module
CONTENTS

- Geography
- Economy
- Population
- History
- Politics
Located in Middle East

Bordered by 5 states
- Turkey
- Iran
- Kuwait
- Jordan
- Syria

Almost landlocked:
- Um Qasr access to Persian Gulf
Bubiyan Island (Kuwait)
Arid & semi-arid areas
- Syrian Desert

Two major river systems
- Tigris
- Euphrates

Rich alluvial river valleys
Zagros mountains
Northeast Iraq
Part of chain
  Turkey
  Iran
Source of Tigris tributaries
Centrality of Water

- *Iraq = downriver state*
- Tigris & Euphrates
  - Rise in Turkey
  - Flow through Syria
  - *Provide 90% of Iraq’s water!*
- Turkey building dams
  - Water flow shrinking
Like all regional states Iraq...

...*inherited contested borders*

**Dispute with Iran**

- Shatt al-Arab
- Iraqi position: border is in middle
- Iranian position: border is Iraqi bank
- Off/on problem
Iraq’s position:

- Kuwait is 19\textsuperscript{th} province
- ‘Stolen’ by British
- Claim pressed...
- ...claim relinquished
- (Never seems to go away)
- Claim unrecognized by other Arabs
- \textit{Current dispute: Bubiyan island}
ECONOMY
**CENTRALITY OF OIL**

- Est. reserves: 143 billion barrels
- More reported
- *May have largest reserves in world*
- Steady production increases
  - 2020: may >6 million barrels/day
  - Will drive future world crude prices
- *Funds 90% of government budget*
- Requires major investments
  - Storage, transportation, drilling
Remember:
- Iraq nearly landlocked
- Iraq antagonized neighbors
- Major export problems
  - Denied access to Gulf
  - Denied pipeline access
- Current situation favorable
  - Export through Gulf
Ancient History

Mesopotamia
‘Land between the Two Rivers’
- Tigris
- Euphrates

Rivers = reason for civilization

Earliest civilizations found here
- Sumer
- Babylon
- Assyria
Difficult terrain to defend

- Few natural barriers
- Constant invasions
- Oldest Cold War
  - Mesopotamia versus Egypt
  - Two riverine civilizations
  - Constant struggle for Syria, Palestine
Achaeminid, Sassanid province
Differences: languages, cultures
- Persia = Indo-European civilization
- Mesopotamia = Semitic civilization

636 AD: Battle of Qadisiyya
- Defeat of Persians
- Victory of Muslim Arab armies
- Iraq becomes Muslim
Qadisiyya: Part of Saddam’s Mythology
UMAYYAD EMPIRE

- Key province under Umayyads
  - Umayyad capital: Damascus

- Key Iraqi power centers:
  - Kufa
  - Basra

- Umayyads weakened
  - Corruption
  - Alienated non-Arabs
ABBASID EMPIRE

- Abbasids = dynastic family
- Originally from Khorasan
  - Eastern Iran, Afghanistan
- Claimed descent from Prophet
- Created powerful Caliphate
- Capital: Baghdad
- ‘Peak of Islamic civilization’
Strong Persian influences on:
- Arts
- Architecture
- Philosophy
- Poetry

Contributed to Renaissance
- Translations of Greek, Latin classics
- Retransmitting them to Europe

Universities, libraries
Mongol invasions

*Wiped out eastern Islam*

Sacked, pillaged, annihilated

- Herat
- Balkh
- Samarqand
- Nishapur

1258 AD Baghdad sacked

Some areas never recovered...
‘Iraq’ stuck between empires

Ottomans versus Safavids

Ottomans = Turkish rulers
- Based in Istanbul
- Sunni

Safavids = Turko-Persian rulers
- Based in Esfahan
- Shia

Ottomans ultimately prevailed
OTTOMAN LEGACY

- Authoritarianism
- Cultural stagnation
  - Arabic language suffered
  - Arts
  - Learning
- Economic decline
- Iraq = backwater of empire
UK ‘inherited’ Mesopotamia

Why?
- Defeated Ottomans in WWI

What was inherited:
- Velayet of Basra
- Velayet of Mosul
- Velayet of Baghdad

Velayet = province, governorate
British decision

- Fused three velayets together
- Create ‘Iraq’
- 1921: make Faisal King of Iraq

New state comprised of:

- 60% Shi’a Arabs
- 19% Sunni Arabs
- 20% Kurds

*UK decided NOT TO create Kurdish state*
Faisal was weak King
- Unassertive
- Vacillated
- Had to submit to UK demands

Maybe that was best for Iraq!

He *straddled Iraq’s divides*

Overshadowed by others
- Nuri al-Said

Nuri al-Said
Faisal bin Hussein
T.E. Lawrence
NURI AL-SA’ID

- Lawrence of Arabia’s companion
- De facto strongman of Iraq
- Monarchy generally weak
- Managed Iraq until 1958
- Backed by UK, US
Oil known to be in Iraq
- Mosul
- Kirkuk

Key reason for outside meddling
- Turkey
- France

1934: first oil exports begin
1941 REVOLT

- World War II
  - British Empire besieged
  - Early Nazi victories
  - British look very vulnerable
- Prime Minister Rashid Ali Gailani
  - Overthrew pro-British Emir Abdullah
  - Attacked British base
  - Called on Germans for help
- British invade, oust Rashid Ali
1955: Baghdad Pact
Pro-Western alliance
- Turkey
- Iraq
- Iran
- Pakistan
Baghdad Pact criticized
- Nasser (Egypt)
- Syria
- Saudi Arabia
EGYPT’S PROBLEM

- 1952 coup in Egypt
- Nasser became President
- Arab unity theme
- Rejected foreign alliances
  - (such as Baghdad Pact)
- Sought regional leadership
  - Egypt = Arab powerhouse
  - Opposed by Iraq, Saudis
SYRIA’S PROBLEM

- **Stuck in the middle**
  - Egypt-Iraq power struggle
- **Continuous coups**
- Threats from Israel
- Opposed Iraq and alliances
- Pressured Jordan
  - Iraq’s Hashemite ally
SAUDI PROBLEM

- Dynastic politics
- Al-Saud versus Hashemites
- Iraq = Hashemite powerhouse
- Memories of deprivation
  - ‘Loss’ of Hejaz to al-Saud
- Score-settling
- Competition for Syria
1958 COUP

- **Step 1:** Egypt-Syria union
- **Step 2:** Hashemite Union
  - Iraq and Jordan
- **Step 3:** *Jordan needs help*
  - Safeguard borders
- **Step 4:** Iraqi division sent to Jordan...
  - ...via Baghdad (oops)
- **Step 5:** Division leaders mutiny
  - Monarchy overthrown
New leader: Abd al-Karim Qassem
- Army officer

His options:
- Tilt to Soviet Union?
- Joined Egypt-Syria Union?
- Go it alone?

Qassem tilted to Communists
- Pulled out of Baghdad Pact
- Dissolved union with Jordan
Qassem fell out with Nasser
- *Intense Iraq-Egypt animosity*
Qassem turned on Ba’athists
Coup plotting
- 1959 coup against Qassem
  - Failed
- One player: Saddam Hussein
- Bloodbath across Iraq
- 1963 Ba’athist coup
MORE COUPS

1963-1968
- Iraq under Abd al-Salam Arif
- Union talks with Egypt
- Arif died in helicopter crash

1968 coup
- Ba’athists in power
- Led by MG Hassan al-Bakr
- Saddam = ‘chief enforcer’
- Saddam in charge of security
1970s
Era of prosperity
Oil wealth flowing in
Infrastructure built
Country at peace
1975 Treaty with Iran
  Settled Shatt al-Arab dispute
  Kurdish revolts crushed
RISE OF SADDAM

- Bided his time
- Gained strength
- Controlled secret police
- 1979: ousted al-Bakr
- Who was Saddam?
  - Born in Tikrit
  - Fatherless
  - Ba’athist thug
  - 1959-1963: exiled in Egypt
WAR WITH IRAN

1979 Iranian Revolution
- Khomeini threatened Iraq
  - Called for Shi’a uprising
- Saddam called for Arab uprising
  - Iranian ‘Khuzestan’ or ‘Arabistan’

September 1980: Iraq attacked

Goals:
- Overthrow Khomeini
- Iraq as regional great power
Iran in chaos

- Warring factions in Tehran
- Iranian military weakened
  - Officers executed
  - Equipment not maintained
  - US gone

Khomeini unpopular

Khuzestan Arabs want liberation

*A simple nudge...and Iran collapses*
Iraqi forces made progress
- Six divisions
- Occupied border areas

But...
- Iraqi army ran out of gas
- Ammo reserves exhausted
- Iranian resistance grew
- Khuzestan Arabs did not rise up
1982 Iranian offensive
- Human wave tactics
- *Iraqis pushed out of Iran*
- *Iranian invaded Iraq*
- Threatened Basra
- Panic in Baghdad
- CW used
- Attacks on Iranian oilfields, tankers
- Solicited aid from Gulf Arabs
Both sides exploited:

- Ethnic minorities
- Sectarian divide
- Dissidents

- Iran backed Shi’a insurgents
  - Da’wa, SCIRI Badr Corps
- Iran backed Kurdish insurgents
- Iraq backed Iranian dissidents
  - Mojaheddin-e Khalq
TANKER WARS

- Iraqi Super Etendard jets
  - Armed with Exocet missiles
  - Sank Iranian tankers
- Iran responds
  - Sank Iraqi tankers
  - Mined Iraqi, Kuwaiti ports
- 1987: US involvement
  - Reflagged Kuwaiti tankers
  - Escorted them through Gulf
‘WAR OF THE CITIES’

- Iraq unleashed Scuds
  - Scud variants
- Target: Tehran
- Goal:
  - Terror
  - Intimidate Iranian population
- Result:
  - Large-scale population move out of Tehran
WAR’S END

- Iran exhausted
  - Oil infrastructure damaged
  - Public demoralized
  - Growing US enmity
- Iraqi offensives
  - Liberated more territory
  - Gassed own Kurdish citizens
- 1988: *Iran accepted ceasefire*
- Both want to rebuild
Poor Iraq-Kuwait relations

Iraq: Kuwait is ’19th province’

Kuwait angered Iraq

- Exceeded OPEC quota
  - Drove oil prices down

*Iraq (desperately) needed higher oil prices*

Iraq: Kuwait is ‘slant drilling’

- ‘Stealing our oil’
August 1990
- Iraq invaded Kuwait
- Kuwaiti army crushed
- Kuwait royals fled
- Saudis alarmed
- West worried
- US forces deployed to region
February 1991
- Coalition air operations
- Iraqi forces pounded
- Iraqi air force destroyed
- Iraq retaliated with SCUDs

March 1991
- Coalition ground war
- Iraqi army pushed out of Kuwait
- Ceasefire
Saddam under siege
Defeat of his armies
Shi’a uprising in south
Kurds under Allied protection
Coup rumors swirl
Saddam survived
Security forces intact
Family stayed together
UN inspectors’ mandate
- Dismantle Iraq’s WMD
- Largely succeeded
  - Uncover advanced nuke program
  - Dismantled missile program
  - Ended CBW programs
- Iraqis tried to hinder, delay...
  ...sparking more suspicions
- US and UK resorted to military force
US strategy: containment
- Key: sanctions
- Alter Saddam’s behavior
- UN sanctions on imports, exports
- Iraqi infrastructure run down
- Increased poverty
- Literacy rates went down
- *Iraq limped along*
IN A BOX

- Saddam had few options
- Continued *Iranian enmity*
- De facto *Kurdish autonomy*
- US regime change plans
- Key Arabs against him
- UN inspectors destroyed his WMD
- *Shi’a primed for another uprising*
- No international allies
Saddam played shell game
- He didn’t have WMD...
- ...but fueled doubts he did

US intel assessments:
- Saddam had WMD
- Reconstituting nuclear capability

March 2003
- US invaded Iraq
- US overthrew Saddam
Insufficient occupation forces
Widespread Iraqi looting
Infrastructure damaged
**US dismantled Iraqi army**
- Anti-Ba’athist campaign
- Thousands unemployed
**Insurgency sparked**
- US, allies slow to respond
INSURGENCY

- Saddam Fedayeen
  - Ba’athist followers
  - Harassed Coalition LOCs
- Sunni uprisings
  - Fallujah
  - Ramadi
- Sunni sense of:
  - Deprivation
  - Marginalization
  - Fear
Several elections
Iraqi constitutional council
Establish Iraqi government
As expected:
- Shi’a dominated elections
- Sunni vote threatened
- Kurds gain more autonomy

Key challenge for government
Gaining Sunni Arab support
JIHADIS

- Strong Jihadi presence
- *Focused on Sunni Arab areas*
- Came from:
  - Syria
  - Saudi Arabia
  - Jordan, etc.
- *Tried radicalizing locals*
- *Ruled through fear, intimidation*
- Generated *resentment*
AWAKENING MOVEMENT

- Arab Sunni revolt
- Aimed at jihadi presence
- Based on tribal militias
- Gained coalition support
- Sunni resistance crested
- Jihadis eliminated

*Key to US ‘exit strategy’*
IRAQ TODAY

- Scarred
- Beaten
- Exhausted
- Torn
- Still a democracy
- Americans gone
- Tenuous power sharing
  - How long can it last?
Location

Borders non-Arab neighbors:
- Turkey
- Iran

Borders important Arab states
- Syria
- Saudi Arabia

Hard to be peaceful and quiet...
...when you have neighbors like these
What is an Iraqi?

Is Iraqi identity stronger than:
- Kurdish one?
- Sunni one?
- Shi’a one?
- Arab one?

Can nation be created...
...for existing Iraqi state?

What does being Iraqi mean?
Who can rule Iraq?

- Strongmen prevail
  - Nuri al-Sa’id
  - Qassim
  - Saddam

- Democracy is new idea
  - Can it last?

*Can only strongman hold Iraq together?*
Corollary to strongman motif

Iraq usually police state
  Strong arm of regime

Usual adversaries:
  Dissidents
  Kurds
  Shi’a
  Spies
  Army officers

Saddam created ‘coup proof’ state
SOCIETY
Est. population: 31 million
Growth rate: 2.345% per year
3.58 children born per woman
Median age: 21 years
Life expectancy: 70.8 years
Urbanization: 66%
## NEIGHBORHOOD COMPARISONS

<table>
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<th></th>
<th>Iraq</th>
<th>Iran</th>
<th>Turkey</th>
<th>Syria</th>
<th>Jordan</th>
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<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>31 million</td>
<td>79 million</td>
<td>80 million</td>
<td>23 million</td>
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<td>Pop. growth</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>1.25%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>-0.7%</td>
<td>-0.9%</td>
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<td>Median age</td>
<td>21 years</td>
<td>27 years</td>
<td>29 years</td>
<td>22 years</td>
<td>22.4 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Life Expectancy</td>
<td>71 years</td>
<td>70 years</td>
<td>73 years</td>
<td>75 years</td>
<td>80 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Multi-ethnic society

What is ‘ethnicity’?
- Language
- Culture
- Tribe

*Majority is Arab*
Also stratified by sect

- Islam
  - Sunni
  - Shia majority
- Christianity
Successive Iraqi regimes failed...
...to accommodate sects, ethnicities

Results:
- Kurdish uprisings
- Shi’a uprisings

Situation today:
- Shi’a in charge
- Sunnis disgruntled
- Kurds have \textit{de facto} state
Kirkuk
- Key city in northern Iraq
- Sits on sizeable oil field
- Majority Kurdish population
- Saddam’s ethnic cleansing
  - Introduction of Arab immigrants
  - Displacement of Kurds
- Kurd claims reasserted after 2003
- Whose city is it?
Iraq’s ethnic, sectarian wars...
...spill-over to neighbors
Let’s look at Kurds
Kurds found in:
- Turkey
- Iran
- Syria
- Iraq

*Iraqi Kurds most liberated today*
Turkey did not welcome OIF

Why?

-One reason: *Kurdish autonomy*

-Long-term risk:
  - Iraqi Kurdish independence
  - *This will inspire Turkish Kurds*
  - Could reignite insurgency in Turkey

Turkey has *threatened invasion*...

...to stop Iraqi Kurdish independence
Syria has Kurdish population too

Generally quiescent... for now

- Generally allied with Asad regime

But, what if:

- Syrian government falls?
- Muslim Brothers take over?
- Iraqi Kurds declare independence?
Iran also has Kurds
Most of whom are Sunni
Periodic Kurdish unrest
Watchful of events in Iraq
Backed Iraqi Kurdish groups
- PUK
- KDP
- Ansar al-Islam
Understandings with Iraqi Kurds
Many Arab neighbors fear ‘Shia crescent’

Belt of Shi’a states
- Iran
- Iraq
- Syria
- Lebanon

Fear of Shi’a uplift

Iraqi government held at arm’s length
Iraq’s ethnic, sectarian struggles... 
...are part of regional politics
Iraq increasingly urban society

65%+ urban

Largest cities:

- Baghdad: 5.8 million
- Mosul: 1.4 million
- Irbil: 1 million
- Basra: 900,000
- Al-Suleimaniya: 800,000
Now that sanctions are over...

...Iraqi can revive

Significant progress in literacy

80% literate

Very good for Arab world

Reduced infant, maternal mortality

Key is harmonized politics!
2005 Iraqi constitution
- Empowered prime minister, parliament...
  - ...at expense of President
- President: Jalal Talabani
  - Kurd
  - Leader of Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
  - Up for reelection in 2014
- Prime Minister: Nuri al-Maliki
  - Arab Shi’a
  - Elected in 2006
Parliament elections held 2010
Next elections in 2014
325 seats in lower house
Council of Representatives
Majority selects Prime Minister
8 seats reserved for minorities
Maintaining democracy
Easing internal strife
Accommodating religious, ethnic differences
Keeping meddlesome neighbors at bay
  - Iran
  - Saudi Arabia
  - Turkey
Suppressing terrorism
Build up military...w/o alarming neighbors