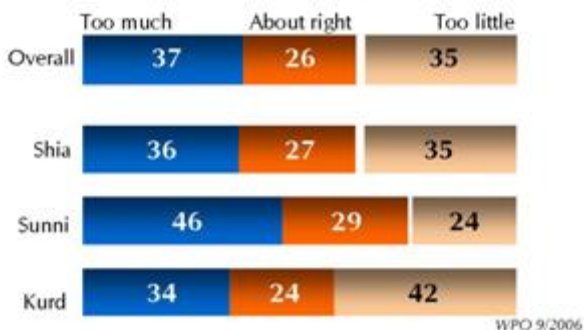


## Strength of Central Government

*Do you think that the new Iraqi system of government grants the central government too much power, too little power, or about the right amount of power?*



## Majorities of All Iraqi Ethnic Groups Want Strong Central Government

September 27, 2006

## Six in Ten Approve Maliki's Government, Though Optimism Down

[Full Report](#)

[Questionnaire/Methodology](#)

[Transcript of Brookings Saban Center Event](#)

Reports of conflict in Iraq may give the impression that the central government is so weak and unpopular that Iraq is on the verge of fragmenting into a loose confederation, and that major sectors of the population are aligning themselves with militias. However, the findings of a new WPO poll of Iraqis suggest a different picture.

Iraqis appear to agree on having a strong central government, and large majorities among all ethnic groups (Shias, Arab Sunnis, and Kurds) want the government to get rid of the militias. Majorities of all groups do not favor a movement toward a looser confederation and believe that five years from now Iraq will still be a single state. Six in ten approve of the job the Maliki government is doing in facing Iraq's problems—though currently, a slight majority does not think Iraq is going in the right direction.

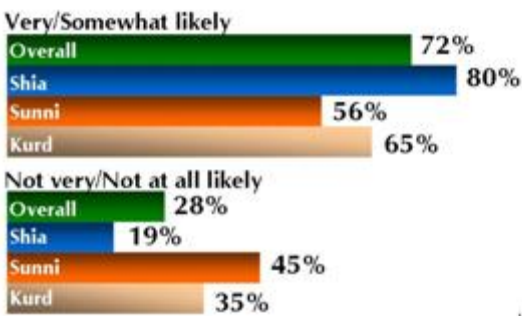
The poll was conducted for WorldPublicOpinion.org by the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) at the University of Maryland and was fielded by KA Research Ltd. / [D3 Systems, Inc.](#) Polling was conducted September 1-4 with a nationwide representative sample of 1,150 Iraqi adults.

The militias appear to be quite unpopular and very large majorities of all groups favor a strong government that would get rid of the militias. Just 21 percent overall—and a minority of all groups—say that they think “it would be better to continue to have militias to protect [their] security.” Rather, 77 percent overall say that they would “prefer to have a strong government that would get rid of all militias.” This view is held by 82 percent of Kurds, 65 percent of Shias and an extraordinary 100 percent of Sunnis.

Iraqis appear to agree on having a strong central government rather than changing the present system in favor of a looser confederation. Asked whether “the new Iraqi system of government grants the central government too much power, too little power, or about the right amount of power,” only 37 percent overall say that it grants too much power. The group with the largest percentage holding this view is the Sunnis, but still this is a minority of 46 percent. Overall 61 percent say that the central government is granted too little power (35%) or about the right amount of power (26%). Interestingly, the Kurds have the highest percentage (42%) saying that the central government has too little power.

## Iraq a Single State in 5 Years?

How likely do you think it is that 5 years from now Iraq will still be a single state?

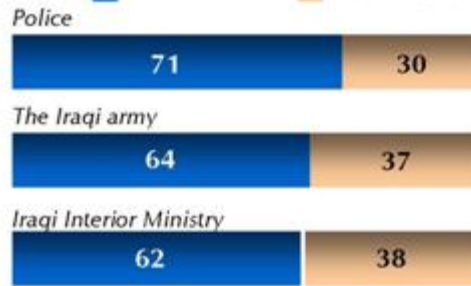


WPO 9/2004

## Confidence in Security Forces

Please tell me how much confidence you have in those forces to protect your security.

Some / A Lot    None / A Little



WPO 9/2006

Iraqis also express confidence that Iraq will survive as a single state. Asked,

“How likely do you think it is that five years from now Iraq will still be a single state?” 72 percent overall say that it is very (30%) or somewhat likely (42%), while just 28 percent say it is not very likely (24%) or not at all likely (4%). Majorities of all groups express this confidence, including 80 percent of Shias, 65 percent of Kurds, and 56 percent of Sunnis.

Most Iraqis (65%) see the current Iraqi government as “the legitimate representative of the Iraqi people.” However, while 82 percent of Shias and 76 percent of Kurds feel this way, 86 percent of Sunnis do not.

## Confidence in Government and Security Forces

Despite Iraq’s troubles, a large majority expresses confidence in the government led by Prime Minister Nouri Maliki. Sixty-three percent say that “in its effort to deal with Iraq’s problems,” the government is doing a very good job (17%) or a somewhat good job (46%).

Large majorities also express confidence in the Iraqi government forces’ ability to protect their security. As mentioned above, 64 percent say they have some (40%) or a lot (24%) of confidence in the Iraqi army. Though controversy has swirled around Interior Ministry forces, they fare only a little less well, with 62 percent expressing some (34%) or a lot (28%) of confidence. For the police, 71 percent express some (34%) or a lot (37%) of confidence.

Perhaps most significantly, when asked, “Do you feel that if all militias were to disarm now, that you could or could not rely on the government alone to ensure security in your area?” a large 68 percent say they feel they could.

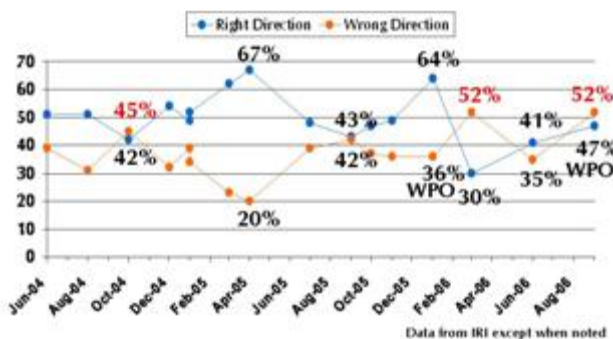
## Complex Sunni Attitudes

While Shias and Kurds are similar in their confidence in Iraqi security forces and approval of the performance of the Maliki government, Sunnis express more complex attitudes. On one hand, a large 93 percent say that if all the militias were to disarm, they could rely on the government to ensure their security, and a striking 100 percent would “prefer to have a strong government that would get rid of all militias.”

On the other hand, Sunnis express low confidence in the Iraqi government and its security institutions. Eighty-two percent say that the Maliki government is doing a bad

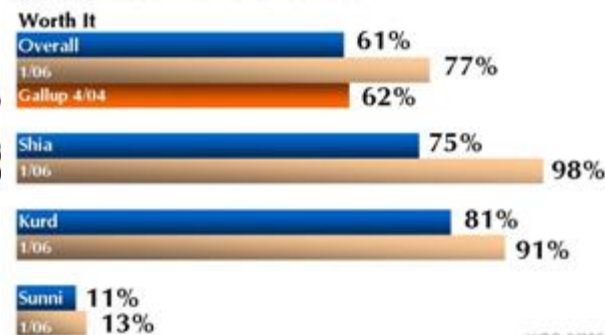
## Is Iraq Going in the Right Direction?

Do you think that Iraq today is generally headed in the right direction or wrong direction?



## Ousting Saddam Hussein

Thinking about any hardships you might have suffered since the US-Britain invasion, do you personally think that ousting Saddam Hussein was worth it or not?



job. Seventy-six percent say that they have no confidence at all in the Iraqi

Interior Ministry forces (often reputed to be a Shia stronghold) and 77 percent express little or no confidence that the police protect their security. The only institution that engenders a bit of confidence is the army (perhaps because it is under a Sunni defense minister). Forty-six percent of Sunnis say they have at least some confidence in the army, though 54 percent say they have little or no confidence.

It appears that Sunnis support a strong central government in principle and would like to see the government get rid of the militias, most of which pose a threat to the Sunnis. At the same time, the dominance of Shias in the government, and especially its security institutions, do not engender full confidence in Sunnis that they will be protected.

## General Optimism Down

The conflict and instability in Iraq has taken its toll. A majority of Shias (59%) and Kurds (64%) continue to say that the country is going in the right direction, but these numbers are down sharply from January when 84 percent of Shias and 76 percent of Kurds expressed optimism. Combined with the unchanged 93 percent of Sunnis saying that the country is going in the wrong direction, a slight majority of Iraqis (52%) now say that the country is headed in the wrong direction—one of the highest recorded in a long series of polls asking this question.

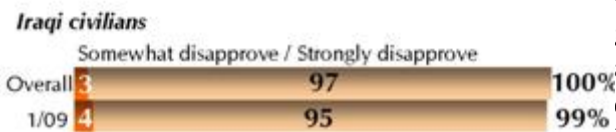
Majorities of all ethnic groups believe that six months from now the level of violence will be the same or higher than it is today. Overall, 31 percent expect the violence to be about the same and 30 percent expect it to be higher; only 38 percent think it will go down. Sunnis are the most pessimistic, with only 23 percent believing that the violence will go down and 43 percent assuming that it will rise.

## Ousting Saddam Hussein

A majority of Iraqis (61%) still believe that ousting Saddam Hussein was worth the hardships, but this is down from the 77 percent who said this in January. Among Shias, the majority saying getting rid of Saddam Hussein was worth it has slipped from 98 percent to 75 percent, while among the Kurds it has dropped from 91 percent to 81 percent. The number of Sunnis saying it was not worth it has drifted upward from 83 percent to 89 percent, with only 11 percent saying that it was worth it.

## Attacks on Iraqis

## Disapproval of Attacks on Iraqi Government Security Forces and Civilians



W/PO 9/2008

Attacks on government security forces and civilians continue to be rejected by very large majorities of all groups. There are differing perceptions of the source of such attacks. The majority of Sunnis think that attacks on Sunni civilians mainly come from other Iraqis, while Shias and Kurds believe they come from foreign fighters. A majority of all groups agree that attacks on Shias mostly come from foreign fighters. Majorities of all groups believe that the violence against ethnic groups is intended to drive them from their neighborhoods, so that a militia can solidify its power.

Attacks on government security forces and civilians continue to be rejected by overwhelming majorities of all groups, just as they were in January. Ninety-six percent disapprove of attacks on Iraqi government security forces, and 68 percent disapprove strongly. One hundred percent disapprove of attacks on civilians (97% strongly).

Sunnis are a little less emphatic in their opposition to attacks on Iraqi security forces: while 86 percent disapprove, only 29 percent disapprove strongly. Fourteen percent approve somewhat of these attacks, but only 1 percent express strong approval. However, Sunnis are no different in their total opposition to attacks on civilians, with 99 percent disapproving (95% strongly).

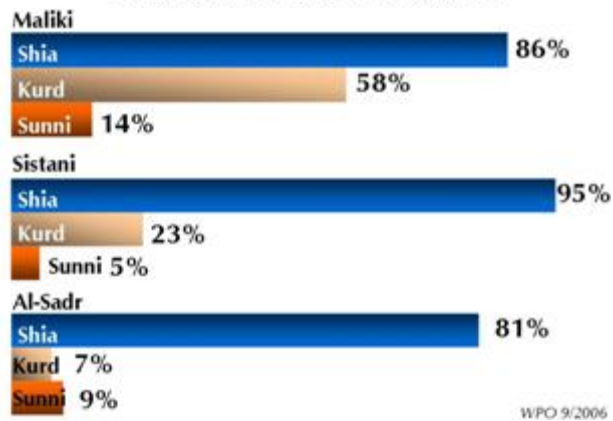
Respondents were asked in two separate questions whether they thought attacks on Sunni civilians, and on Shia civilians, mainly come from foreign fighters or from other Iraqis. When it came to attacks on Sunni civilians, the majority of Sunnis (69%) thought the attacks mainly came from other Iraqis—presumably by Shia death squads. However, the majority of Shias (63%) thought these attacks were primarily coming from foreign fighters, and a modest majority of Kurds (52%) agreed.

When it came to attacks on Shia civilians, a majority of Shia (57%) thought that the attacks were primarily coming from foreign fighters. A large majority of Kurds (63%) and a modest majority of Sunnis (53%) agreed. This perception may be influenced by claims al Qaeda in Iraq has made about attacks on Shias.

Majorities of all groups believe that the intent of violence against ethnic groups is to drive them from their neighborhoods, so that a militia can solidify its power. Overall, two-thirds (67%) ascribed “some” (39%) or “most” (28%) of the violence against ethnic groups to this purpose; 76 percent of Shias, 56 percent of Sunnis, and 52 percent of Kurds held this view.

### Views of Shia Leaders

### Favorable Views of Shia Leaders



Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki is the only major Shia leader with appeal that reaches beyond his own ethnic group. Fifty-eight percent of Kurds view him favorably, as do 86 percent of Shias (45% very). However, an overwhelming 85 percent of Sunnis view him unfavorably (48% very).

Though Grand Ayatollah Sistani and Shia leader Muqtada al-Sadr are at odds with each other on the direction of Iraq, they both get overwhelming support from Shias. Sistani is seen favorably by 95 percent of Shias (77% very), while Muqtada al Sadr is viewed favorably by 81 percent (52% very).

However, neither are viewed favorably by Kurds or Sunnis. Sistani is viewed unfavorably by 78 percent of Kurds (39% very) and 95 percent of Sunnis (50% very). Muqtada al Sadr is viewed unfavorably by 94 percent of Kurds (75% very) and 91 percent of Sunnis (80% very).