

Force of Freedom

Whether in the Cradle of Civilization or an emerging democracy, voters are rejecting fear and choosing freedom.



BY MAYA ALLERUZZO—ASSOCIATED PRESS

A ballot for general elections in Iraq is displayed in a warehouse at Baghdad International Airport. Elections took place Jan. 30, 2005.

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An Integrated Curriculum For The Washington Post Newspaper In Education Program

Force of Freedom

Lesson: The impact of various forms of government, a diverse religious and ethnic population, and economic, social and political forces without and within a country

Level: Middle to high

Subjects: Civics, U.S. history, Comparative Government

Related Activity: Language arts, theatre, art

The articles from The Post and activities in this guide can be used to focus on one country—Iraq—for its current events and its history as a cradle of civilization and center of learning, for the forces of conflict and attempts at cooperation that affect the daily lives of Iraqis, and for a study of divisions of power in Iraq and the region. Materials in this guide can be used to compare democracies around the world and to review the different forms of government. The suggested activities lend themselves to discussion and debate, to mathematics, theatre and art projects, and to interviewing and desktop publishing.

This section of The Post NIE guides provides teachers and parents with suggested activities for using the articles and reproducibles we have provided. Instructors may spend one hour or one week, limit the work to one discipline or expand to include several, and use the articles as models or stimulus for discussion.

Talk About Iraq's Elections

An article from KidsPost is provided for our younger readers. Give students "Iraqis' Day of Choice." Rajiv Chandrasekaran, former Post bureau chief in Baghdad, on Thursday, January 27, 2005, answered questions about the upcoming elections in Iraq. You

could have students write follow-up questions they would like to ask Chandrasekaran about the children of Iraq, the elections or his experience in Iraq; read The Post for after-the-elections news; or write their own Q and A about Iraq based on articles they read in The Post

For older students, share "Shadid: Dateline Iraq." The series of ledes (first paragraphs) can be used to discuss the different viewpoints and people of Iraq from November 2004 to January's election day, the first to be held in Iraq in 50 years. The URLs in "Shadid Reports" allow teachers and students to access the complete articles.

Have students discuss what facts are provided in the first paragraphs, in which ones are they sure that Shadid was an observer, and in which ones does he interview his sources. Have students compile a list of the different people/groups that are represented in his ledes. You may wish to have students read the entire articles. For example, after reading "In an Iraqi ER," do students' viewpoint of Firas Abdel-Hassan change after they learn he was at work driving a truck loaded with lumber for a construction company when he was ambushed?

"Shadid: Dateline Iraq" can also be used by journalism teachers for a study of lede writing. When does he use description, state facts, introduce Iraqis, and include quotations? When is the traditional news lede most effective and appropriate? Compare these ledes with those in current reports from Iraq to develop a sense of Shadid's style and to contrast his style with that of other reporters.

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Read About It

Banks, Lynne Reid

Broken Bridge

The death of a boy who is murdered shortly after arriving in Israel affects the lives of his relatives, other members of their kibbutz, and the Arabs responsible for his death

Joseph, Lynn

The Color of My Words

A young girl writes as leaders of the Dominican Republic deny freedom of expression. Rebellion and tragedy become more than words in this lyrical story of community, loss and love.

Naidoo, Beverley

The Other Side of Truth

After the Nigerian government retaliates against their news columnist father and murders their mother, two children are smuggled into England. Winner of Britain's 2000 Carnegie Medal.

Sisula, Elinor

Day Gogo Went to Vote

A picture history book set in 1994 in South Africa where 6-year-old Thombi watches as her gogo (great grandmother) votes in the first post-apartheid national election.

UNICEF

A Life Like Mine: How Children Live Around the World

Explores the rights of children in different countries as well as their living conditions.

Zeldis, Yona

Peaceful Protest: The Life of Nelson Mandel

Biography of one of South Africa's modern leaders

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Read About Iraq

Iraq can serve as a case study of the impact of various forms of government, a diverse religious and ethnic population, and economic, social and political forces without and within a country. First introduce the history of the region. Give students "IRAQ: From Babylon to Baghdad" and discuss the peoples who inhabited Mesopotamia. Fill in with a summary of Britain's role, invading Mesopotamia in 1914 and drawing the borders of Iraq under a League of Nations' mandate in 1920. Rule by King Faisal I, a period of constitutional monarchy, the impact of the formation of Israel, the decade of the republic, and rule by Saddam Hussein could also be studied or assigned to groups to research and present.

Read from selected dispatches sent by Shadid from Iraq, March through December 2003 (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A43187-2004Apr26.html>).

Shadid won a 2004 Pulitzer Prize for his coverage of the Iraq war. These online articles give students a sense of the events taking place in Iraq after America's intervention and introduce them to Shadid's style.

Use the map of Iraq to study the topography of the land and its influence on settlement, to identify where different ethnoreligious groups of Iraq (Sunni Kurd, Sunni Arab, Shiite Arab) are settled and to locate events reported in the daily news.

Give students copies of "Shahid: Dateline Iraq."

Get an Outlook

Would American citizens defy random bullets and suicide bombers

to cast a ballot? Post Associate Editor David Ignatius uses the Iraqis who did just that to pose a different question: What can Americans and Iraqis do to avoid the mistakes of the past two years and build a country that's worthy of the bravery of its people? Ask your students this question before they read "Now It's Up to Iraqis." Then discuss his idea and compare their answers with those presented by Ignatius.

Connect with Cartoons

Editorial cartoons communicate opinions about current events using a picture combined with a few words. In addition to viewing the archived cartoons of Post editorial cartoonist Tom Toles (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/opinion/tolestom/>), visit Daryl Cagle's Professional Cartoonists Index (<http://cagle.slate.msn.com/>). Cartoonists from around the world have their work categorized for comparison and contrast. Categories include "War with Iraq," "Iraq's Elections" and the daily features. Use these cartoons to begin discussion of issues and to encourage respect for differing opinions.

Have students read the current issue of The Post. Select one or more articles on an event. Ask each student to draw a cartoon to relate his or her viewpoint on the event. Post on a display area.

Freeze Time

The Iraqi election included and impacted people around the world. Have students read "Voices From Iraq: 'Democracy Requires Sacrifice'" from the January 30, 2005, Post. Divide the class into groups and assign each team one

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WP's Shadid Reports

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A12168-2004Nov25.html>
Hazards On Trail For Sunni Politicians; Party Feeling Harassed Iraqi Rebels, U.S. Nov 26, 2004. Page A1

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A23464-2004Nov30.html>
After Fallujah, Son Is Gone but Fervor Remains; Father Who Left Reluctantly Waits to Fight Another Day Dec 1, 2004. Page A1

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A41483-2004Dec6.html>
Iraq's Shiite Clergy Push To Get Out The Vote; Suppressed Majority Urged to Fulfill Duty Dec 7, 2004. Page A1

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A57665-2004Dec11.html>
In an Iraqi ER, Doctors Attend to Disaster; Rush of Patients Hints at High Civilian Death Toll Dec 12, 2004. Page A1

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A47578-2005Jan29.html>
A Sealed, Silent City Awaits Voting Day With Hope and Fear; Mood in Baghdad Splits Along Religious Lines January 30, 2005. Page A16

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A50637-2005Jan31.html>
Leader Urges Unity After Iraq Vote; Allawi Vows to Involve Sunni Arabs in 'New Era' February 1, 2005. Page A1

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A48454-2005Jan30.html>
Iraqis Defy Threats as Millions Vote: Mood Is Festive; Turnout Appears Strong Despite Deadly Attacks January 31, 2005. Page A1

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report to analyze. After analysis, each group should create a tableau (or a frozen scene) representing the selection they read in which each student has a role to play. After the class views a tableau, the teacher or other students could interview the group about their roles, asking where they are (show on a map of Iraq), what they are doing and what they are thinking. Discuss the scenes and roles people played in the Iraqi election.

Talk with Graphs

Graphs communicate numerical information through a picture and can help readers understand an event. Have students read The Post election coverage. Ask students to create a chart of the candidates in the Iraqi election, number of votes earned and percentage of total votes. Guide students to create pie graphs of the election results using their charts. Students should also create a chart of the Iraqi voting districts and the number of votes cast in each region.

Use "The Voters" to illustrate how different types of information can be presented.

Guide students to create bar graphs to compare voter turnout in different districts. Analyze the graphs and ask students to share the information communicated and how graphs can help readers understand the Iraqi election. Students could also compare their graphs to published graphs about the Iraqi election or to results from the November 2004 presidential election in the United States.

Interview to Learn about Voting

The goal of this activity is to have students learn about voting in other countries. As an introduction to this activity, students might be read *Day Gogo Went to Vote* by Elinor Sisula. It is a picture history book set in

1994 in South Africa where six-year-old Thombi watches as her gogo (great grandmother) votes in the first post-apartheid national election.

Give students "Democracy Through Suffrage" as a background sheet on types of elections held. Give students "Elections in My Homeland." If yours is an international community, students will have many resources within their neighborhood to interview. If not, you may wish to invite three to four guest speakers who represent countries with different forms of government. When students know who they will interview, have them research about the countries—history, culture, form of government, current political, economic and social issues.

After gathering all of the information and conducting interviews, students may • write about the country and voting experiences shared by the person interviewed. Illustrate and collect these into a class book about elections around the world. • write a short essay on whether they will or won't vote one day. They should point to the person or persons that they interviewed that influenced them most in their decision. • research more about the country and write a chapter in a book about different forms of government, enfranchisement and the experiences of its citizens when voting. These could be collected for a computer technology application and made available online at a Web site or printed for each student to have a copy. • make comparisons with the American experience of voting.

Extension

You are writing the constitution for a newly formed country. It is a democracy striving to have fair and just elections. Set up its election laws.

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Q and A

Pulitzer Prize-winning Washington Post foreign correspondent Anthony Shadid was online from Baghdad on Monday, Jan. 31, at 11 a.m. ET to discuss the aftermath of the elections and the latest news from Iraq.

Kennesaw, Ga.: Good morning (or evening to you), Mr. Shadid. I've admired your reporting from Iraq for a long time. Do you have a sense of how the election was covered in Arab-language media? Obviously we do not here; it just occurred to me that the insurgency could have taken a body blow in terms of its support in other Arab countries. It must be harder to portray the insurgency as a popular resistance movement.

Anthony Shadid: Arab media covered the election intensively, often with more nuance than their Western counterparts. I think there were two aspects to what viewers saw. One was the coverage itself, which on election day at least, was pretty much the only story going. The other was the inundation of campaign advertising that went on some pan-Arab stations, as well as local Iraqi channels. I don't know what the impact of that will be. But there's no question that it was landmark. Simply put, the election was easily one of the freest in the Arab world. As for the insurgency, that's tough to answer. It's difficult to overstate how negative the U.S. image is in the Arab world. The U.S. enjoys little credibility, either in other Arab countries or, to be honest, in Iraq. Without the U.S. presence here, I suspect the election would probably have a bigger impact on Arab views, simply because the vote would have been unencumbered by U.S. baggage. That said, I would be surprised if there weren't some serious reverberations in the region from yesterday, particularly among the elite.

To read the entire transcript, visit <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A38687-2005Jan26.html>.

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Debate the Merits of Compulsory Voting

Have students debate the merits of compulsory voting.

Hypothetical

The state of Lidianna has seen a continuous drop in people voting in both national and state elections. Just last year only 20% of the people eligible to vote actually registered and voted. In six months Lidiannans will be voting for their governor.

Two people have already started campaigning. Jack Franks, a resident of Lidianna for 35 years is running and has stated that he will make the "environment better while increasing industry in the state." Franklin Jacks, also a resident of 35 years has said that unlike his opponent he will make the "industry strong while helping out the environment."

Already many people are complaining there are no distinctions in policy and they can't see a difference between the two candidates. Still many people want to get people to vote. Sally Mittens proposed that voting in the state should be mandatory. That way the person who wins will truly have the majority in the state versus a majority of the small percentage of people who show up.

Procedure

Divide the class into three groups.

- One third will discuss and represent the side arguing that mandatory voting is necessary and should be adopted as policy.
- Another third should argue that it is not necessary and should not be adopted as policy.
- The final third, playing the role of voters of Lidianna, will compose a statement of expectations of candidates and the significant issues that they want addressed by the candidates.

After the first two groups represent their sides, the final group will ask questions of the pro and con sides based upon their expectations of candidates and depth of issues. All will vote as to whether Lilianna will make voting mandatory. You may wish to initiate discussion by giving students examples of the two points of view:

Pro

Everyone will vote; therefore, many people will investigate the candidates more. In some cases they may even look beyond the two candidates and find someone that really talks to them.

Con

People who didn't want to vote before will only become upset about being forced to do it. They won't take it seriously and we will end with a bunch of useless write-in votes for cartoon characters.

Compulsory Participation

<http://www.debatabase.org/details.asp?topicID=44>

Compulsory Voting

The International Debate Education Association debate topic database presents pro and con arguments: Should voting in elections be compulsory?

<http://slate.msn.com/id/2108832/>

"You must Vote. It's the Law."

Australia requires citizens to vote. Should the U.S.?"

Reporter Eric Weiner relates the law in Australia and considers its application in the U.S.

<http://www.aceproject.org/main/english/es/esc07a>

Compulsory Voting

Administration and Cost of Elections Project takes a quick look at democracies with compulsory voting.

<http://www.cartercenter.org>

The Carter Center

Review the latest election observations and the archived file of Democracy Program reports.

<http://www.idea.int/themes/>

International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance

Trends in democracy, definitions of democracy, and electoral processes are among the topics to explore.

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Iraqis' Day of Choice

Iraqi citizens are set to vote in an election where they have real choices. Sunday's election is considered a key step toward having the Iraqi people create democracy for themselves. The United States invaded Iraq in March 2003 and brought an end to the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein. When Hussein was in power, Iraqis voted for him because they were afraid not to.

Still, there is a lot of fear among Iraqis as they get ready to go to the polls. Insurgents—people opposed to the presence of U.S. troops in Iraq, and some who are still loyal to Hussein—have killed hundreds as the election nears. U.S. and Iraqi forces will try to make it safe for people to vote, but even U.S. generals have said they can't guarantee that people won't be hurt or killed. (Thirty-seven U.S. troops were killed yesterday: 31 in a helicopter crash and six in combat. In addition, more than 10 Iraqis were killed in car bomb attacks.)

Rajiv Chandrasekaran, who led the team of Post reporters in Baghdad, answers questions about Sunday's elections.

Are the Iraqi people voting for national leaders, local leaders, president?

Iraqis will choose a 275-member national assembly. The assembly will have two jobs: It will write a constitution and it will govern the country until the constitution is written and approved by the people. The assembly will select a president, two vice presidents and a prime minister to run the government.

Are there parties in Iraq, such as the Democrats, Republicans and independents?

When Saddam Hussein was in power, there was only one party in Iraq: the Baath Party, which he controlled. Now that he's gone, new



ERIK DE CASTRO—REUTERS

An Iraqi boy holds a poster urging Iraqis to vote in the Jan. 30, 2004, national elections.

parties have formed. Many of them are small. Some represent people from certain parts of the country. Others represent ethnic groups (such as Kurds and Turkmen) and religious groups (Sunni Muslims, Shiite Muslims and Christians). There are also some parties that have members from different parts of Iraq and different ethnic and religious groups. There are differences among the parties, just like there are differences between Democrats and Republicans in the United States. Some want a government that is based on Islamic laws. Others believe government and religion should not mix.

Will Iraqi voters vote for candidates like American voters do?

No, it's a very complicated system.

Voters will choose from a list of parties. The party that gets the most votes will get the most seats in the national assembly, and so on. Party members who could serve in the assembly have put their names on a list.

Who is likely to win and who will make sure that the losing parties get some voice in the government?

It is expected that Shiite Muslim parties will win more than half the seats because Shiites make up more than half the Iraqi population. (Nobody knows exact figures because Iraq hasn't had a census.) Shiite party leaders have promised to respect the rights of other Iraqis. Iraq also has a kind of "rough draft" constitution in place that protects minority rights.

Are there women running for the assembly?

Yes. One out of every four candidates on each party's list must be a woman.

Why would anyone be against having elections?

Some Iraqi politicians and religious leaders want a delay because they say people will be too scared to vote. The insurgents have different reasons for opposing the elections. Some want Iraq to return to the way it was under Hussein. Others just want more violence in Iraq because they don't want Iraq to become a democracy.

Is it possible the elections won't be held?

Iraqi leaders have promised to hold the elections as scheduled, even if there is a lot of violence. They believe that delaying the elections would be a victory for the insurgents who do not want the elections to occur.

Will U.S. troops be coming home soon after the elections?

If the new assembly asks the United States to keep troops in Iraq, the troops likely will stay.

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Outlook: Now It's Up to the Iraqis

David Ignatius

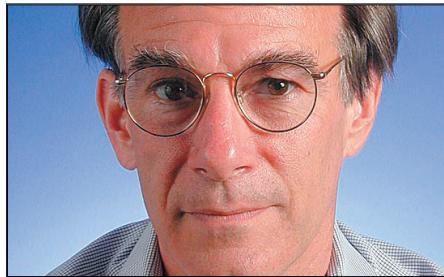
Think of Sunday's elections in Iraq as the starting point. It was the democratic revolution the Iraqi people never had as they watched U.S. troops sweep into Baghdad and then occupy their country. It was the moment in which individual Iraqi citizens, by risking their lives to cast their votes, finally began to make their own history.

The election was an experiment, and until Sunday nobody could be sure how it would turn out. Would Iraqis defy suicide bombers and mortar attacks to get to the polls? Did the people of Iraq want a new, democratic nation enough to die for it? In braving 109 separate attacks on polling places Sunday, a majority of Iraqis gave their answer.

The stories of election day courage should become part of the narrative of the new Iraq. Karl Vick of The Post described a man who voted at a girls high school in Baghdad where a suicide bomber had attacked just a few hours before. "I would have been happy to have died voting at the time of this explosion," the man said. The Post's Anthony Shadid quoted the director of a polling place in a Sunni neighborhood in Baghdad who described the election as a wedding for Iraq: "For a half-century, no one has seen anything like it. And we did it ourselves."

If Sunday was a new beginning, what can Americans and Iraqis do to avoid the mistakes of the past two years and build a country that's worthy of the bravery of its people? The important decisions lie with Iraqis, and that's the crucial point. This is now their country to shape or misshape.

Bush administration officials are understandably spinning and crowing about the success, but they should resist any new sense of mission



accomplished. "The bloodbath didn't happen, but the country remains deeply divided," notes Raad Alkadiri, an Iraqi consultant for PFC Energy who served as an adviser to the British occupation authorities in Baghdad. He says initial returns suggest that about 60 percent of eligible Iraqis voted; for all the commitment of those who went to the polls, more than four in 10 Iraqis apparently did not.

So the new government's first challenge will be to reach out to the nonvoters. Alkadiri quotes Winston Churchill's famous formula: "Magnanimous in victory." The largest vote probably went to the United Iraqi Alliance, which was blessed by Shiite Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani. If its Shiite leaders can reassure Iraqi Sunnis and other minorities that they will be equal citizens in the new Iraq, they can form a stable government that, over time, will defeat the insurgency. But if the Shiite politicians engage in sectarian politics and efforts to settle old scores, they will fail.

A key figure will be the wily former exile leader Ahmed Chalabi, who took cover under the Sistani umbrella last year. Administration officials are said to be worried by reports that the De-Baathification Committee, which Chalabi heads, has drawn up a list of 200 election candidates who should be denied a role in the new government, including several prominent

allies of interim Prime Minister Ayad Allawi. Perpetuation of those old feuds is the last thing a new Iraq needs.

The other big challenge for the new Iraqi government will be dealing with the United States. The polarity is now reversed: Now it's up to the Iraqis to shape the relationship. The right answer for both sides is a gradual process of U.S. military disengagement—in which the number of U.S. troops declines as Iraq's security forces increase in numbers and confidence. It's a delicate balance: Most Iraqis want the U.S. occupation to end, but they also fear the chaos that will erupt if American troops leave too quickly.

Mowaffak Rubaie, the current Iraqi national security adviser and a possible member of the new government because of his close relations with Sistani, told me last weekend that Iraq won't ask U.S. troops to leave until next year at the earliest. Pressure will grow for the Iraqis to negotiate a timetable for U.S. withdrawal. But it can be blunted if the Bush administration follows through on its tentative plan to shift its military role to training the Iraqi army, conducting joint Special Forces operations against the insurgents and turning over daily security chores to Iraqi forces wherever possible.

The Iraq story has had too many painful twists for anyone to offer rosy scenarios. Sunday's vote wasn't a culmination, but a beginning. The new Iraqi government may make as many mistakes as its American liberators have, but at least they will be Iraqi mistakes.

David Ignatius is a novelist and associate editor of The Post. He writes about international affairs and business. Ignatius may be reached at davidignatius@washpost.com

IRAQ: From Babylon to Baghdad

The peoples who once inhabited Mesopotamia, the fertile plains between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, have made great contributions to Western knowledge and civilization. Iraq was part of the Fertile Crescent, but today is dominated by the petroleum industry. It sits on the world's second-largest proven oil reserves. Of the more than 23.3 million people in Iraq, almost half is under the age of 15.

A Mosaic of Peoples

- Ancient times:** People settled along the Tigris and Euphrates as early as 7000 B.C., and some Bible historians place the Garden of Eden in that region. The Sumerians, who lived in the marshy south, developed a thriving civilization beginning about 3500 B.C. They used pottery wheels to make clay utensils, devised one of the first lunar calendars and developed advanced mathematical concepts. They constructed irrigation systems, enabling an agricultural society to thrive. Their cuneiform system of writing recorded commerce as well as epic poetry. It is in this region that urban centers first developed, including Ur, the city that Abraham left to find Canaan, according to the Bible. The Amorite king Hammurabi unified the city states and authored the famous Hammurabi code of law. The Amorites as well as other invaders blended their cultures with that of the Sumerians, and Mesopotamia flourished until the 500s B.C., with Babylon as its capital.
- Babylon destroyed and rebuilt:** After Babylon was destroyed by the Assyrians in 689 B.C., the city was reconstructed. Under King Nebuchadnezzar II, Babylon was considered the world's most beautiful, most advanced city.
- The Persians:** In 539 B.C., Persian king Cyrus took over, and Mesopotamia became one of the richest provinces in the Persian Empire.
- The Greeks:** In 331 B.C., Alexander the Great conquered the region, beginning an infusion of Hellenistic culture.

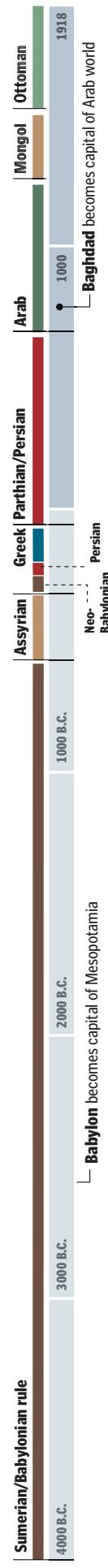
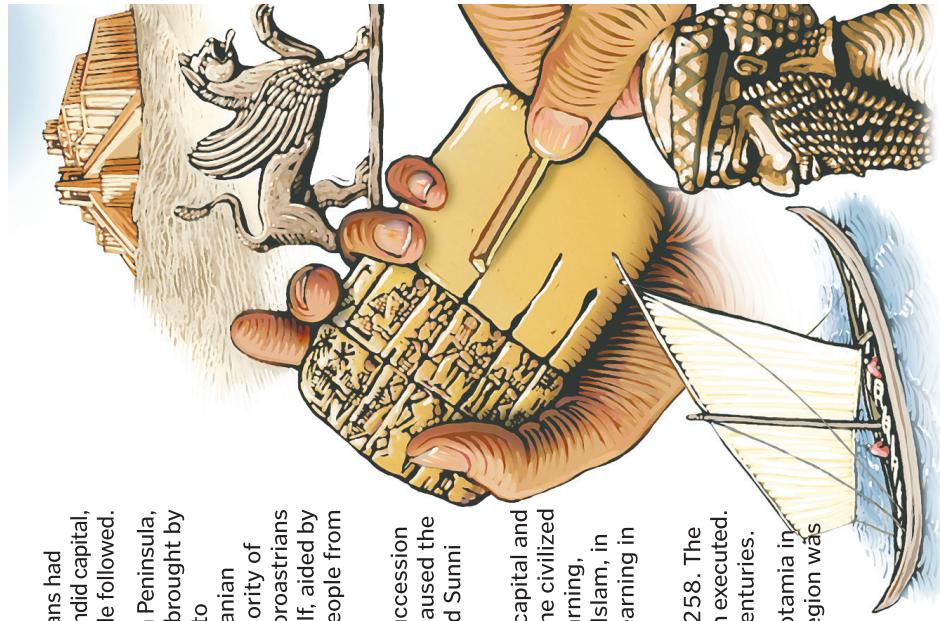


- The Parthians:** By 129 B.C., the Parthians had defeated the Greeks and built a new, splendid capital, Ctesiphon. Another period of Persian rule followed.
- The Arabs:** Bedouins from the Arabian Peninsula, who had become followers of Islam, brought by the prophet Muhammad, stormed into Mesopotamia and defeated the Sassanian Persians in 637. At the time, the majority of people living in Mesopotamia were Zoroastrians and Christians. Islam established itself, aided by conversions and the influx of more people from the Arabian Peninsula.

- Schism of Islam:** A fight over the succession to Muhammad as the political ruler caused the schism of Islam in 661 into Shiite and Sunni branches, a division that still deeply affects Iraq.

- Baghdad is born:** In 762, Baghdad became the new capital and developed into one of the most important cities in the civilized world. For centuries, Baghdad was the center of learning, science, philosophy and poetry. This golden age of Islam, in which Arab rule extended as far as Spain, revived learning in Europe and helped spark the Renaissance.

- The Mongols:** Baghdad fell to attacking Mongols in 1258. The city was destroyed, citizens massacred and the caliph executed. The economy of Mesopotamia did not recover for centuries.
- The Ottoman Turks:** The Ottomans conquered Mesopotamia in 1533 and ruled until 1918. During that time, the region was just a backwater in the empire.



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Shadid: Dateline Iraq

"In covering Iraq, we've always kind of challenged ourselves to look at the story in different ways, to understand the voices that are out there, not go in with preconceptions or misunderstandings, to just listen," Anthony Shadid shared with The Post newsroom by phone from Baghdad after he had learned he had received the 2004 Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting for his coverage of the Iraq war. Meet Iraqis, learn about the situation and their first elections in 50 years through the reports of Anthony Shadid.

Hazards On Trail For Sunni Politicians Party Feeling Harassed by Iraqi Rebels, U.S.

BAGHDAD, Nov. 25—Instilled with an engineer's precision and an idealist's defiant optimism, Saad Abdel-Wahhab looks out at the campaign trail that begins at the headquarters of his political party, one of the few Sunni Muslim groups that have chosen to defy a boycott and take part in Iraq's nationwide elections in January. Along the way, he sees a gantlet.

In the northern city of Mosul, the stronghold of his Iraqi Islamic Party, insurgents overran a government warehouse and torched hundreds of boxes of voter registration forms. The party's candidates in the city begged Abdel-Wahhab and other election organizers not to print candidate addresses on applications, fearful their houses would be bombed.

One of the party's candidates for a local council was slain this week, and a militant Sunni group, the Ansar al-Sunna Army, has warned it would attack candidates as well as voters. That's from the insurgents.

Abdel-Wahhab said he had to contend, too, with U.S. forces and their Iraqi allies, who in a pre-dawn raid last week arrested one of the party's most prominent leaders at his home in Baghdad. By Abdel-Wahhab's count, U.S. and Iraqi forces have raided five of the Iraqi Islamic Party's offices. He fears another raid on the white stucco, two-story headquarters in Baghdad. His response: He and others copied campaign documents and dispersed them for safekeeping in colleagues' homes.

© The Washington Post, Nov. 26, 2004; Page A1

After Fallujah, Son Is Gone but Fervor Remains Father Who Left Reluctantly Waits to Fight Another Day

BAGHDAD, Nov. 30—In a cramped room that has become his refuge, with walls of grimy plaster and sloppy brickwork, a man known as Abu Mohammed sat with his children.

It was evening in Baghdad, and the Muslim call to prayer wafted over the neighborhood that takes its name from its main avenue, Palestine Street. As the invocation became audible, scratchy but melodic, Abu Mohammed paused for a moment in respectful silence. Soon after, the electricity returned to his shack, powering a lone fluorescent light that offset the gray of dusk. He sipped his sweet, dark tea and dragged again from a locally made Miami cigarette.

Then, with humility and pride, 39-year-old Abu Mohammed began his story—a tale of death, life and prospective martyrdom. Unlike so many accounts of a conflict that has reshaped Iraq, it came not from the U.S. forces prosecuting the war, but from among the ranks of the men they fought.

A blacksmith turned insurgent, Abu Mohammed undertook an odyssey this month that carried him from the battlefields of Fallujah, roiled with religion, to a harrowing escape across the Euphrates River and a lonely exile in Baghdad, where he waits to fight another day. It began with the death of his son, Ahmed, whose short life was ended by an American bullet.

"He was only 13, but he was the equal of a thousand men," Abu Mohammed said, in words that served as an epitaph.

His hard face, framed in short, graying



hair, softened. Almost imperceptibly, a glimmer passed over his limpid eyes. Sitting on a thin, tattered mat with a floral design, he leaned his short, wiry body forward, his hands clasped at his waist.

"He had more guts than me, a hundred times more," the father said. "He was still a child, but he was a hero."

In the fervent streets of Fallujah before this month's U.S. assault, residents recalled, Ahmed was a mascot of sorts among the hundreds of men who called themselves mujaheddin, guerrillas fired by faith. He was shorter than his father and more conscious of his looks: He wore his dark hair fashionably long and, residents said, preferred shirts that showed off biceps built with a regimen of weights.

He spent his hours at the Hadhra Muhammadiya mosque, a gathering place for fighters, where he became familiar with insurgent leaders such as Abdullah Janabi and Omar Hadid. Abu Mohammed said Janabi gave Ahmed a bottle of fragrance—a tradition of the prophet Muhammad, who adored musk and believed its aroma could awaken the spirit.

© The Washington Post, Dec 1, 2004; Page A1

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Iraq's Shiite Clergy Push To Get Out The Vote Suppressed Majority Urged to Fulfill Duty

BAGHDAD, Dec. 6—Maher Hamra pointed to a stack of papers piled high on his desk with the commanding air of being in charge. More than 10,000 leaflets were distributed with the message that participation in Iraq's Jan. 30 elections is "a religious and national duty." The Shiite Muslim sheik also boasted that his office hung 150 banners fluttering along streets with the same message.

Over the past month, Hamra said, that message was uttered daily by turbaned prayer leaders in the 50 mosques in his neighborhood of Kadhimiya, built around Baghdad's most prominent Shiite shrine.

Delegates were dispatched to more than 20 high schools. And the elections were the subject of seminars and lectures organized every few days by Hamra's office, which wields religious authority in the name of Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, the country's preeminent religious figure.

"We're deciding our destiny," said Hamra, 48, a burly, bearded man with an ever-present cigarette next to a scalding glass of sweetened tea. "We have a responsibility to help build the new Iraq."

As Iraq's first nationwide elections in more than a generation near, Hamra and other Shiite clergy, perhaps the country's most powerful institution, have led an unprecedented mobilization of the Shiite majority population through a vast array

of mosques, community centers, foundations and networks of hundreds of prayer leaders, students and allied laypeople. The campaign has become so pitched that many Iraqis may have a better idea of Sistani's view of the election than what the election itself will decide.

The momentum they have created has made a delay in the ballot difficult, if not impossible. Voters will choose a 275-member National Assembly, but powerful groups within Iraq's Sunni Muslim minority are boycotting the election or have called for a postponement so that they can bring calm to restive Sunni regions where insurgents have threatened to attack those taking part.

© The Washington Post, Dec 7, 2004; Page A1

In an Iraqi ER, Doctors Attend to Disaster Rush of Patients Hints at High Civilian Death Toll

BAGHDAD—It was morning, the skies tinted gray by a winter storm, when the station wagon careered toward Yarmouk Hospital. Crowds scurried from its path before it screeched to a halt at the emergency room. Desperately, the driver pulled the bloodied body of Firas Abdel-Hassan from the back seat, which was littered with broken glass. Then he crumpled to the ground.

For a few minutes, the driver, Mohammed Abdel-Jabbar, sat in the parking lot, embracing his friend's body and weeping as blood collected in a pool on the pavement. His wails drew stares from some in the lot. Others gazed at the car—four bullet holes in the windshield, three side windows shattered by gunfire, blood smeared across the dashboard.

"Help me! Help me!" he shouted finally. "Can someone help me put him in a stretcher?"

A bullet had burrowed a gash across Abdel-Hassan's scalp. His left arm was twisted at an angle impossible in life. Blood soaked his gray shirt; his dark blue pants were still a shade darker. With practiced routine, and barely a word, nurses rolled his corpse into the emergency room, where his name was recorded as the day's first entry in the tattered register of patients.

"Arrived deceased," it read.

"This is the grimmest shift," Luai Rubaie, a physician at the hospital, said as he settled into work. "You haven't seen anything. It's just the beginning."

He shook his head, as if uttering what was self-evident. "Day and night," he said.

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A Sealed, Silent City Awaits Voting Day With Hope and Fear Mood in Baghdad Splits Along Religious Lines

BAGHDAD, Jan. 29—On the expressway from Dora, Baghdad's southern gateway, the election banners fluttered in a brisk wind along a chain-link fence. There were the promising words that have punctuated life here for the past month as Iraq prepared to vote for a parliament: prosperity, stability, security, an end to the occupation and the beginning of democracy.

On Saturday, hardly a car passed to bear witness.

Those that did—a white Toyota carrying a coffin draped in a worn blue blanket, a battered orange-and-white taxi, a transport truck—were turned back from a checkpoint at the city's edge that was barring traffic between Baghdad and the provinces. Waist-high concrete barricades and coils of razor wire sat across ramps that fanned from the highway. Columns of Iraqi tanks and armored personnel carriers, followed by their U.S. counterparts, rumbled down the street, its median plowed by the treads of others.

Guns at the ready, they passed a billboard recruiting for the Iraqi National Guard. "Determined to protect and serve," it read in part. The rest was unreadable, splashed by black paint. At times, the crack of gunfire echoed in the distance, and muffled blasts rolled across a city as deserted as it was on the day before the U.S.-led invasion in March 2003. In neighborhoods like Dora, the only image of ease was boys kicking soccer balls in abandoned streets they had turned into playing fields.

"God watches over us," Ahmed Daliyan said simply, as he surveyed the scene from his car. "God is present."

Baghdad was a city under siege Saturday, suspended between hope and fear.

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Iraqis Defy Threats as Millions Vote Mood Is Festive; Turnout Appears Strong Despite Deadly Attacks

BAGHDAD, Jan. 30—Millions of Iraqis turned out Sunday to cast ballots in the country's first free elections in a half-century, the ranks of voters surging as attacks by insurgents proved less ferocious than feared and enthusiasm spilled over into largely Sunni Arab regions where hardly a campaign poster had appeared.

At least 44 people were reported killed in suicide bombings, shootings and mortar and rocket attacks. But for the first time since the fall of Saddam Hussein in April 2003, the haggard capital and other parts of Iraq took on the veneer of a festival, as crowds danced, chanted and played soccer

in streets secured by thousands of Iraqi and American forces. From the Kurdish north to the largely Shiite south, at thousands of polling stations, voters delivered a similar message: The elections represented their moment not only to seize the future, but also to reject a legacy of dictatorship and the bloodshed and hardship that have followed the U.S. invasion.

Lines that began small at polling stations grew during the 10 hours of voting, sometimes dramatically. After casting ballots, many Iraqis triumphantly pointed their index fingers, stained with the purple ink that indicated they had voted, and hardly flinched at gunfire and explosions that interrupted the day. At one station, a woman showered election workers with handfuls of candy. At another, a veiled,

elderly woman kept repeating "God's blessings on you" to election workers. Across town, three Iraqi soldiers carried an elderly man in a wheelchair two blocks to a voting booth.

"It's like a wedding. I swear to God, it's a wedding for all of Iraq," said Mohammed Nuhair Rubaie, the director of a polling station in Baghdad's Sunni neighborhood of Tunis where, after a slow start, hundreds of voters gathered as the cloudless day progressed. "No one has ever witnessed this before. For a half-century, no one has seen anything like it."

"And we did it ourselves."

© The Washington Post, Jan. 31, 2005; Page A1

Father Seeks Vindication But Finds Death in Fallujah Bereaved Insurgent 'Was Ready for Martyrdom'

BAGHDAD— On a piece of paper torn from a notebook and folded four times, writing in Arabic that was at once reserved and casual, Saadi Mohammed Abu Shaiba penned what would be his last testament.

To his childhood friend Abu Sufyan, he declared that he was returning to Fallujah, where he and his family had left their home at the height of the U.S. offensive to retake the guerrilla stronghold in November. He had given money to his wife, he said, and he wanted Abu Sufyan to administer the funds and ensure that his family was never in need.

"If I am killed please take care of my wife and children," he wrote. "I hope you will be with my family after I am absent."

The Washington Post profiled Abu Shaiba, 39, known to his friends as Abu Mohammed, in December, as the former blacksmith turned insurgent bided his time in a cramped house in Baghdad. He waited to return to a city deserted by residents and

occupied by U.S. troops, swaths of it destroyed.

"I would kiss your hand if you could show me the way," Abu Shaiba said at the time.

Within weeks, someone did. Four days after that, on Dec. 17, his friends said, he was killed in a lopsided fight with U.S. forces.

The account of the death and life of Abu Shaiba is based in part on a lengthy interview with his brother, who had remained in Fallujah and was present when his brother was killed. Written answers to questions delivered by an intermediary were provided by his wife, who has since moved to the city of Ramadi, and two other insurgents who said they fought with Abu Shaiba in his last battle. The U.S. military said it had no record of an event that matched their description, although it added that "naturally, events occurred over those two days and that night."

The recollections of Abu Shaiba's last days paint a portrait far more complicated



THE WASHINGTON POST
The graves of Saadi Mohammed Abu Shaiba and his son, Ahmed, in Martyrs' Cemetery in Fallujah.

than the usual black-and-white renderings of the insurgency that has beset the U.S. occupation for nearly two years and cost the lives of more than 1,000 U.S. soldiers and Marines and thousands of Iraqis. His odyssey from Fallujah to the capital and back, across a landscape roiled by religion, tradition and militancy, illustrates the insurgent campaign's stubborn resilience and what may be its growing weakness.

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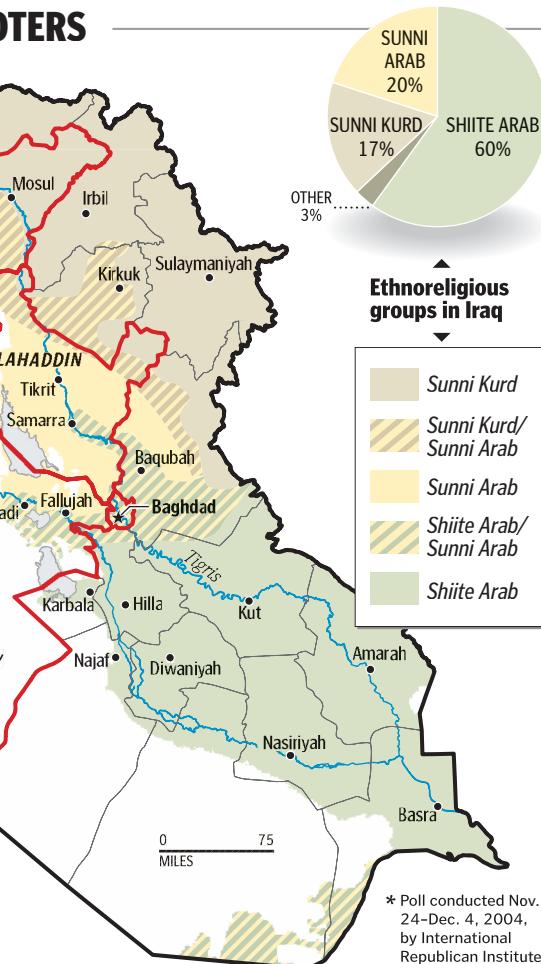
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THE VOTERS

Until the fall of Saddam Hussein, the Sunni Muslim minority dominated Iraq's government and military. Only about 20 percent of Sunnis said in a recent poll that they were "very likely" to vote, compared with 77 percent of Shiites. The Shiite majority sees the elections as a chance to cement its power. The Kurds in the north, autonomous since 1991, are also keen to send as many representatives as possible to the assembly to press their interests.*

- About 14 million names are listed on the voter registration list. The registration process was based on a public database established for distribution of food rations.
- More than 280,300 Iraqis, living overseas in 14 countries, have registered to vote.

The areas in white are largely unpopulated.
Provinces outlined in red are Sunni-majority provinces where insurgents have been the most violent.



* Poll conducted Nov. 24-Dec. 4, 2004, by International Republican Institute.

Security

- The Independent Electoral Commission has prohibited travel between provinces, banned weapons on the streets and closed international borders and airports from Jan. 29 to Jan. 31.
- Iraqis also will be banned from congregating near polling centers and checkpoints.

Estimated security personnel

(figures vary by source)

U.S. TROOPS
150,000

OTHER FOREIGN TROOPS FROM 37 COUNTRIES
25,300

TOTAL NUMBER OF IRAQI SECURITY FORCES
126,000

POLICE (PARTIALLY OR FULLY TRAINED AND EQUIPPED)
59,000

NATIONAL GUARD
37,000

ARMY
14,800

BORDER GUARD
14,800

Voices from Iraq: ‘Democracy Requires Sacrifice’

Following are reports on Sunday’s election in Iraq from Washington Post reporters and special correspondents across the country.

Special correspondent

Salih Saif Aldin in Tikrit:

A rumor spread here that anyone who did not vote would lose his or her food rations. But that did nothing to boost turnout in ousted president Saddam Hussein’s home town.

“It is a very weak participation in Tikrit,” said Khalaf Muhammed, 43, the electoral commission official in charge of a polling station in the city’s center—who acknowledged spreading the false rumor to try to lure voters.

“Even though we spread a rumor in the city saying anyone who doesn’t vote will be deprived of their food ration, only 10 people voted . . . mostly old men.”

The rumor about food rations also was rife in the Sunni neighborhoods of Baghdad, gaining credence because voter registration rolls were taken from centralized records for the ration of rice, flour, oil and other staples.

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ERIK DE CASTRO—REUTERS

Specialist Neil Smythe of the U.S. Army’s 445 Civil Affairs unit distributes posters urging Iraqis to vote.

Special correspondent Bassam Sefti in Baghdad

At the Fine Arts Institute for Girls, in the upscale neighborhood of Mansour, about 40 people, some with children, gathered at a polling station soon after it opened. About 20 policemen patrolled outside, manning checkpoints at the end of the street and near the station itself. Blasts could be heard in the distance, but the mood was festive.

“We wanted to be the first to vote here,” said Amir Mahmoud Jawad, 18, a high school student. “This is our country. We have to do it. There should be no excuse for anyone not to come. These elections will decide the destiny of the country.”

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BY ALI JASIM—REUTERS

U.S. Army soldiers guard the Australian embassy in Baghdad.

Correspondent Steve Fainaru in Mosul:

Sunni areas of Mosul, 220 miles north of Baghdad, were among the low-to-no-turnout districts. At four polling stations visited in the southeastern part of the city during the afternoon, four voters were seen.

Two of the polling places reported they had been attacked in the past 24 hours. One had been mortared. Another had taken small arms fire.

An improvised explosive was found at a mosque around the corner from one of the polling stations. The device apparently had been planted right after Iraqi security forces used a loud speaker in the mosque to try to encourage people in the neighborhood to vote, urging them not to be scared.

In the first three hours at another polling place in Mosul, 15 members of the Iraqi security forces were the only voters to cast their ballots.

At one point, U.S. troops raided al Sabrine Mosque in search of a suspected insurgent just after noon prayers and detained 35 worshipers in the mosque courtyard.

Dressed in their military gear, the troops then started searching homes, asking people about voting as they did. People responded they were too frightened to vote.

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Voices from Iraq: ‘Democracy Requires Sacrifice’

Special correspondent Khalid Saffar in Baghdad:

Unlike the barren scene at some polling stations in Sunni areas, there was a veritable crowd at the voting place in the capital's Karrada neighborhood, which is predominantly Shiite.

At one point, around 150 to 200 people gathered to vote. The contrast was striking—young families with children, on the one hand, and elderly men and women being carried by

relatives on the other.

Samir Sabih, 37, a businessman, came with his sister. “The most important thing is that fear has no place in our hearts anymore. We became free. This is the first time in my life I go to a polling center freely.”

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Special correspondent Emad Zainal in Basra:

About 30 people turned out to vote in the first half hour after a polling center opened in the Abbasiya neighborhood of this Shiite-dominated southern city.

Abdul-Hamid Sayab and his 21-year-old daughter, Azal,

voted for the communist party. “We came early because we couldn’t wait,” he said. “This is a historical event that we could vote freely for the first time in decades.”

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Special Correspondent Dlovan Brwari in Mosul:

Ali Abas Khalid was waiting to vote until he could see if anyone else was going. When he finally cast his ballot, he was so tearful, he was able only to say a few words: “We win.”

In areas of the city where Kurds and Christians live, people were angry because ballot boxes had not arrived and they

were unable to cast ballots.

Officials ultimately went on television to announce that voting will be permitted Monday for those left out.

In some other areas, voting lists arrived late, delaying balloting. Local voting officials got permission to extend the hours to make sure everyone got a chance.

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An Iraqi policeman looks at one of the burning four-wheel drives soon after a car bomb ripped through Saadoun street in Baghdad. The bomb targeted two trucks carrying foreign nationals.

SAURABH DAS—ASSOCIATED PRESS

Voices from Iraq: 'Democracy Requires Sacrifice'

Special correspondent Marwan Anie in Kirkuk

Nervous voters lined up at polling centers in this oil-rich city, looking left and right as small arms fire crackled nearby and the sound of an explosion could be heard in the distance. The appearance of Iraqi army and police units near the polling places added to some voters' anxieties – but reassured others.

"I did not sleep all night long," said Yalchin Mohammad Omar, a Turkmen voter in this ethnically divided city, about 150 miles north of Baghdad. "I was frightened, but at dawn, I and my wife made a decision to go to the polls. We did our prayers, and then headed for the ballot center despite the threats, and the chaos overtaking Iraq. . . .

"I felt assured when I saw that security measures in and around the polling center. . . . were adequate," Omar added.

Omar said he went to the polls "to choose my leadership in Iraq, so that my vote would not be lost, because a single vote could decide the local elections for the provincial council election."

Shakhwan Hama Aula was undaunted by security concerns. "I don't care much for the threats, and I feel that the building of democracy requires sacrifice," Aula said.

Aula, a Kurdish voter who was driven from the city during the era of Saddam Hussein, returned to Kirkuk after the fall of the former president's government. Aula planned to vote for a Kurdish slate "because they fought for giving us, we the displaced ones, the right to take part in the elections, and today I am here to pay back the favor."

Hamida Qader, 55, a Kurdish woman from

Chamchamal, came to Kirkuk to vote two days before the election. Qader said she came in order to "ensure my return to this city, from which I was driven out during the rule of the dictator Saddam Hussein."

Qader said she was staying in the city with her daughter. "I brought along my 3-year-old grandson to keep me company. I carried him as I walked for more than five kilometers" – about three miles.

Sheik Abdul Rahman Abdulla, a well-known Arab figure in Kirkuk, said "this is going to be a sacred day for us as Iraqis."

Abdulla said he hoped all Iraqis could be able to cast their votes, as he had, "despite the threats by the terrorists, and the difficulties the Sunni Arabs are facing in this area. But their participation will ensure balance and stability for the new provincial council, and . . . that the Arabs will not be absent after they were marginalized by the occupation authority."

Another Arab, Hasan Khalaf Juboury, said he and his wife decided to vote despite threats of violence.

"I hope my friends and relatives will also come to vote because, after I saw the large turnout by Kurds and the absence of the Arabs . . . I decided to vote in spite of the threats by the armed groups against voting."

For many voters in this city, in which ethnic Kurds, Arabs and Turkmen are vying for power, election day was as much an opportunity to celebrate their heritage as to choose their representatives.

"Today for me was like a festival," said Shereen Omar, a 22-year-old Kurdish woman. "I wore my Kurdish costume to affirm my Kurdish identity."

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Special correspondent Naseer Nouri in Baghdad:

After the polls closed today, Um Rami, 56, a Christian, served orange juice to a group of women and children outside her house in the Iraqi capital. "My sisters, did you have the same feeling I had? I felt as if it was Eid," she said, referring to Eid al-Adha, a four-day Muslim holiday.

"Every one at the poll center was happy . . . , " she continued. "We proved to the world and to the insurgents that no one is supporting them. We win and they lost. They did not think that all of us will gather together for the best of our country. They did not scare any one of us."

Rami's view was shared by many others who defied threats of violence to vote in the capital and across the country.

Hikmat Ani, 46, a retiree, said today's scattered violence showed "how much those terrorist hate the Iraqis. They were trying to kill us just because we want to do the thing we like to do."

Suha Ali, 24, a graduate student who is looking for a job, said today's turnout made her proud.

"I am so happy that I lived to see this day," she said. "The Iraqis proved to the world that nothing can scare them. . . . I wish that from now on we will live just like any other democratic country."

Saad Dulaimi, 38, a school teacher and a Sunni, said he originally did not plan to vote. "I just thought that no one deserve my voice," he said. "But when I saw all the Iraqis are voting, I told myself that I will give my voice to Iraq, not to a person. I have the right to vote so why should I not use this right."

Dulaimi said voting was a moving experience. "You cannot imagine how proud I was there when I saw that big Iraqi flag over the ballot box," he said. "My eyes were full with tears when I was looking at the flag, while I was putting the ballot in the box, when one of my teardrops went inside with that ballot through the opening of that box."

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Voices from Iraq: 'Democracy Requires Sacrifice'

Special correspondent Salih Saif Aldin in Tikrit

Omar Nouri, 24, a student here, said he and his friends were "very hesitant at the beginning" of Sunday's vote. "But when I saw that many people went" to the polling place, "I was impressed and encouraged to go and vote and I said to myself that I have to vote. This is my right and I won't leave it. Before I went, I agreed with all my friends to vote."

Bassam Sebti in Baghdad

"Oh God! This is the first time I do it," said Jasim Ihsan, a policeman guarding a polling center in Baghdad's upscale Mansour neighborhood, as he prepared to cast his own vote.

Ihsan said he and his Iraqi police colleagues had spent three days at the polling center preparing for today's balloting.

"My feeling is that no problems will be done here because we are protecting and searching the people," he said. "We are ready and prepared to end this day with success."

Employees at the polling centers worked quietly and with confidence.

"May God bless you. May God bless you," an old woman told the employees as she entered the polling center Sunday morning. "May God bless you and bless your efforts. May God protect you."

Abdul Zahra Rajihi, 50, a physician, said it didn't matter which slate of candidates he voted for – only that he voted. "This is the new dawn of the new Iraq with all its people and sects," he said. "When we decided to come, we weren't hesitant because this is a chance and if the people hesitate, they will lose it and might not get it again."

Rajihi's wife, Maha Hameed, 45, was optimistic for Iraq's future after Sunday's vote. "This is a great day and I am full of hope that these elections will succeed and all the Iraqis will be like one hand," she said. "When I go back

Thikra Khairo, an employee at the Uqba Bin Nafea polling center, described a similar phenomenon, noting that at the beginning of the day few women showed up to vote. But when they saw that others were voting and "did not face any problem," they too went to cast their ballots.

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Special correspondent Khalid Saffar in Baghdad

The Khadra neighborhood in the western section of the capital has consistently been a tough area for the U.S. troops and Iraqi security forces. Many residents maintain family and tribal ties to their brethren in the restive western cities of Ramadi and Fallujah, and some were involved with Saddam Hussein's deposed government.

Few election signs were seen in this neighborhood when the campaign started. And early on election day, it appeared that hardly anyone would vote. The streets were deserted.

But as the day progressed some people ventured out to the polling station. More followed and more followed them.

By the afternoon, the Salahudeen school building in section 633 of Khadra was teeming with voters.

Najia Abbas, 46, came with her husband to cast their votes. "I came here to exercise my right," she said. "We are origi-

home, I'll tell all my neighbors and friends to go out and decide their fate. We are very happy to see Iraq moving like this. We were sad for a long time and this is the first happiness we ever had."

As with Rajihi and his wife, voting for many was a family affair.

Arkan Mahmoud Jawad came to vote with his mother and younger brother. "This is the salvation for the Iraqis and it is a big challenge," he said. "I hate the terrorists and I was waiting for the day to fight them. Now, I am fighting them by my vote and this is the least thing I can do."

Harbi Timimi, 64, came with his daughter and granddaughter. "This is the first step in the right road of democracy to achieve justice and equality," he said.

Timimi's daughter, Nada Harbi, said, "We are happy to be here because this is the duty of all the people. Those who are killing the innocent people should take a big lesson from this event. We are here to tell them that is enough. The country has people that will defend it and it is not in need for them to protect it or to protect Islam."

Nada Harbi said her five-year-old daughter insisted on coming with her to the polling center. "She drew an Iraqi flag yesterday and she told me that she is going to put it in the box with my ballot," she said. "She did that by herself."

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nally from Fallujah and were displaced by the fighting there, but I want to vote for Ayad Allawi. Although he devastated our homes, we have trust in him nevertheless."

"Enough fear," she said when asked whether she was afraid of terrorist threats. "Let us breathe the air of freedom."

Hassan Ahmad Ali, 54, who retired from the government and is currently working as a salesman for a private company, was standing in line at the gate of the center. "This is the best time of my life," he said.

The director of the polling place, Abdul Sattar Mohammad, a 61-year-old retired teacher, said he "did not expect this large number of voters. We were under the impression that this neighborhood is against elections, but I have seen a large turnout, and a lot of women too."

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Democracy Through Suffrage

When people think of voting, they usually think of one of the most integral rights of a healthy democracy. Just look at the elections of 2004 and 2005. People across the United States monitored voting polls and assured people could vote—and 118,049,259 did cast their ballots. Elections were held in Serbia, Afghanistan and Romania. Ukrainians marched and forced a fair election between presidential candidates Victor Yushchenko and Leonid Kuchma. Assassination attempts were made in Taiwan in a close and controversial election. Former U.S.

YOU AND YOUR RIGHTS

in January 2005, and in 2004, he was in Indonesia in July, in Venezuela in August, and in Mozambique in December. The Carter Center has monitored more than 50 elections in nations “that were facing some kind of crisis or problem in their democratic institutions—either a form of dictatorship making a transition to democracy or an established democracy under serious threat.”

Protected by a Constitution

Enfranchisement is established, but not set in stone when a constitution is adopted. For a majority of U.S. history, people of color and women could not vote. Although men of color received the right to vote before all women, it wasn’t until the 1960’s that devices such as poll taxes and literacy tests were abolished. People are legally able to vote at 18 in the United States. This right

to vote can be denied due to several reasons, including prior prison sentencing and mental incapacity. Citizens in the U.S. territories—Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands and American Samoa—cannot vote for the President of the United States unless they have official residency (domicile) in a U.S. State or the District of Columbia and vote by absentee ballot or travel to their State to vote.

Voting—a Right or Responsibility?

Suffrage is not an individual right of the citizen which he may use and abuse as his personal interests dictate; it is rather a function and a duty which is entrusted to him in order to insure representative government and the best interest of the nation.

—Proposal Nine by the 1919 commission for the Vermont Constitution

Is forcing citizens to vote really a freedom? Several countries force their citizens to vote through mandatory voting laws. These include Australia, Belgium, Cyprus, Greece, Luxembourg, Lichtenstein, Switzerland (one canton), Panama, Dominican Republic, Brazil, Bolivia, Argentina, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Uruguay, Venezuela, Egypt, Fiji, Thailand and Singapore. Other countries have gotten rid of the mandatory vote. The Netherlands in 1970 and Austria more recently repealed the legal requirement to vote. Many people have noted that

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In the Know

Absentee Ballots: A way of voting in a district or state without actually showing up at the polls. A form is usually sent to a person in another state or country and it is filled out and sent back to their home state or district with their choices.

Base: People who vote traditionally for a particular political party

Democracy: A government by the people; especially through rule of the majority. A government in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised by them directly or indirectly through a system of representation usually involving periodically held free elections.

Dictator: A person who rules absolutely and often times oppressively

Misnomer: Incorrect term or phrase

Poll taxes: Form of voter intimidation. This was used to prevent many poor people and African Americans from voting in the South. Individuals would be told they have to pay a certain fee in order to vote. Many people did not have the amount of money and therefore couldn’t vote.

Suffrage: The right to vote

Voting polls: Place where people go to vote in local or national elections

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the term mandatory voting is really a misnomer. The countries cannot really force people to vote; usually they require people to register to vote and show up at the polls. But once voters are in the booth, they can deface the ballot or write in a cartoon character's name on the ballot.

To have a mandatory voting system you have to have a manner of enforcement. There needs to be an office or agency that monitors who votes. When someone does not vote then that office will most likely levy a fine of some sort. For example in Australia, where voting is mandatory, the violator will receive a letter explaining the violator's options. The violator can either pay the \$15.00 fine (which is significantly less than parking violations) or offer an excuse that may include sickness, travel or religious reasons. For most people the matter ends here; however, every year a few hundred actually end up in court where the fine goes up to \$37 and, in extreme cases, people have gone to jail.

Proponents of mandatory voting claim that it will naturally increase voter turnout and assure winning politicians represent the will of the people. It also helps politicians who are campaigning. Instead of politicians worrying about getting their base out to vote, they can concentrate on convincing people to vote for them. Many supporters also believe that those who normally pay little attention to issues and candidates become more educated. Finally, voting is a responsibility much like paying taxes, serving on juries, and in times of war, fighting for one's country. Unlike those activities, voting only lasts a day and is probably less invasive of a person's rights.

Opponents of mandatory voting note that Saddam Hussein's Iraq

had mandatory voting and it didn't protect it from a dictator. Also voting is a right that people should have to exercise or not exercise. If people are required to vote won't that take away some of the excitement and freedom of voting? Finally, wouldn't forcing uneducated citizens to the polls result in uninformed voting? Wouldn't that be a greater detriment to the political system than a smaller percentage of people voting? Why would a country need mandatory voting anyway?

Increasingly, people simply don't vote. Either they are not interested or they don't feel that they have anyone they believe in. In some cases, countries are reeling from tyrannical dictatorships where voting for one person or one party was mandatory.

So how do you get more people to the polls? Some states in the United States have toyed with lowering the voting age. For example, in California some legislators had suggested lowering the voting age in local elections and granting teenagers fractional votes. Other incentives have included public service announcements by celebrities and chances offered by radio stations or clubs to win prizes for registering to vote.

Today, many people argue that young people take advantage of the right to vote. Other people complain that people are too wrapped up in superficial differences between political parties to really appreciate the effects of their vote. No one would disagree that there will always be imperfections in a voting system whether it's mandatory or voluntary.

Whatever our view, we cannot forget what former President Lyndon B. Johnson expressed: "The vote is the most powerful instrument ever devised by mankind for breaking down injustice and destroying the terrible walls which imprison men because they are different from other men."

About Country

The Book of Rule: How the World Is Governed

The pictures and infographics are great starting points in DK's introduction to governmental structure. Rule by monarchy, theocracy and military form the shortest section. The types of democracies are divided into subcategories (parliamentary, multiparty, presidential, presidential regimes and non-party) for closer examination.

Governments of the World: A Student Companion

Richard Pious, Oxford Press

Countries, political leaders and political science terminology are presented in alphabetical order in three volumes. Country entries include political history, government, domestic and international issues and human rights.

Junior Worldmark Encyclopedia of the Nations

Gale Group

Profiles of 192 countries, Afghanistan to Zimbabwe, are found in the 2002 edition. Alphabetical listings include topography, government and political parties and social development.

CultureGrams

The Americas, Europe, Africa, and Asia and Oceania are presented in four volumes. Arranged alphabetically by country in each volume, this is a quick reference for people, culture, customs and society (including government).

Elections in My Homeland

You can read about a country, its culture, history and government. You can also talk to people who have lived in another country to tell you about the daily life, customs and special events. Our focus is on the political atmosphere and the voting experience of citizens in other countries, if they are allowed to vote. Ask a family member, friend or acquaintance who was born in or lived extensively in another country the following questions.

Interviewee's Name _____

Relation to you _____

Country _____

1. How long did you live in (name of country)?
2. When was the first time you voted in (name of country)? How old were you?
3. Which is true about voting in your country?
 - Voting is optional. Citizens register to vote.
 - Voting is compulsory.
 - You are fined if you don't vote.
 - Voting does not take place.
 - Other:
4. How are candidates selected to run for office?
 - Individuals run independently.
 - Parties determine the slate of candidates.
 - There is only one party. It determines who will be on the ballot.
 - Other:
5. How well did you get to know the candidates in local elections? If known, how?
6. How well did you get to know the candidates in national elections? If known, how?
7. To what extent were you informed about the issues? How were you informed?
 - Very well informed.
 - Knew about some issues; had no information about others.
 - Little or no information available on issues. Source of information:
8. If the interviewee didn't vote, ask why the person did not vote.
9. What would it take/have taken to get him or her to vote if the interviewee doesn't/didn't vote?
10. Has the interviewee or someone he or she knows had trouble voting (barred, civil rights issues, prison sentence)? Ask if you may record the story.
11. Ask the interviewee to share the attitude that people in his or her country/city/village had/have about elections. Perhaps relate a story that illustrates that feeling about voting.
12. What else does the interviewee think you should understand about (name of country), about its elections and about its people?

An Integrated Curriculum For The Washington Post Newspaper In Education Program

Academic Content Standards

This lesson addresses academic content standards of Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia.

Maryland

Social Studies, Political Science

Students will understand the historical development and current status of the fundamental concepts and processes of authority, power and influence, with particular emphasis on the democratic skills and attitudes necessary to become responsible citizens.

Grade 7: Students will compare the characteristics and structure of various systems of government

- Describe the pros and cons of limited governments, such as representative and parliamentary democracy; and
- Describe the pros and cons of unlimited government, such as authoritarian and dictatorship.

Students will analyze the methods used by individuals and groups to shape governmental policy and actions.

English

Students will read, comprehend, interpret, analyze and evaluate informational texts. Develop comprehension skills by reading a variety of self-selected and assigned informational texts. Grade 3: newspapers; Grade 8: editorials and commentary.

A complete list of State Content Standards of Maryland can be found at <http://www.mdk12.org/mspp/standards/>.

Virginia

World History and Geography

1500 AD to the Present

WHII.15: The student will demonstrate knowledge of cultural, economic and social conditions in developed and developing nations of the contemporary world by

- identifying contemporary political issues, with emphasis on migrations of refugees and others, ethnic/religious conflicts, and the impact of technology, including chemical and biological technologies; and
- assessing the impact of economic development and global population growth on the environment and society; including an understanding of the links between economic and political freedom.

World Geography

The student will analyze how the forces of conflict and cooperation affect the division and control of the Earth's surface by

- explaining and analyzing reasons for different spatial divisions at the local and regional levels; and
- analyzing ways cooperation occurs to solve problems and settle disputes.

English

Reading, Grade 7: The student will read and demonstrate comprehension of a variety of informational texts.

A complete list of Standards of Learning of Virginia can be found on the Web at <http://www.pen.k12.va.us/>.

Washington, D.C.

Social Studies

Political Ideas, Turning Points, and Institutions. Students understand the historical evolution of political ideas, ideologies, and institutions. They see how different political institutions have affected human life and how technological, economic, social, cultural, religious, and philosophical forces in history have shaped politics.

Grade 3: The student explains how government does or does not provide for needs and wants of people, establish order and security, and manage conflict.

Grade 8: The student explains conditions, actions, and motivations that contribute to conflict and cooperation within and among nations.

American Government

Forms of Government. Grade 12: Students study, compare, contrast and analyze diverse forms of government.

English

Language as Meaning Making. Students comprehend and compose a wide range of written, oral and visual texts in the process of making meaning.

A complete list of Standards for Teaching and Learning of the District of Columbia Public Schools can be found at <http://www.k12.dc.us>.