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OP-ED CONTRIBUTOR

## Legislation's Limits

By DOUGLAS J. FEITH

Last summer, in discussing benchmarks for Iraqi political progress, American legislators focused on whether the Iraqis were enacting legislation. But the essential issue is how well the political process in general is functioning — and new laws are only one aspect.

A key political development has been the decision of Sunni tribal leaders to change their strategy. Many who had previously allied themselves with Al Qaeda in trying to expel United States forces are now opposing anti-Shiite violence and cooperating with our troops against Al Qaeda in Iraq. This is an important success associated with the surge.

My questions:

1. Has the recent crackdown by the Shiite-dominated Iraqi government on Shiite militias contributed to consolidating and building on this success? Is it likely to promote further Sunni-Shiite cooperation within the country's new political system?
2. Assuming that strengthening the political process is crucial to draining the energy out of the insurgency, what key actions should the American government take (and avoid taking) to support the Iraqis in that work? And would a formal American-Iraqi agreement on the status of United States forces in Iraq be helpful?

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