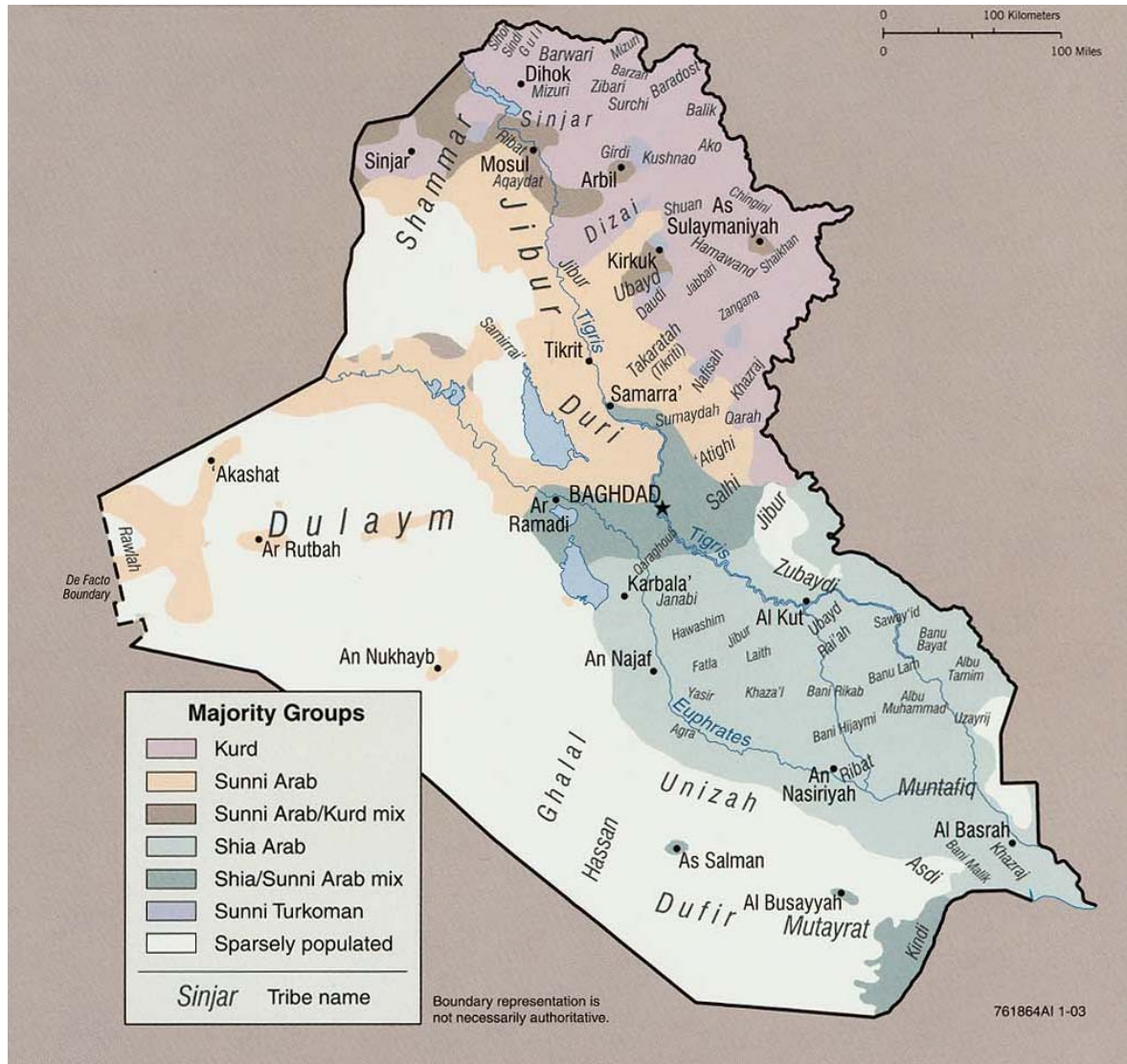




AL-ANBAR GOVERNORATE



ALBU FAHD TRIBE
ALBU MAHAL TRIBE
ALBU ISSA TRIBE

GLOBAL
RESOURCES
GROUP

GLOBAL
RISK

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**Iraq Tribal Study – Al-Anbar Governorate:
The Albu Fahd Tribe, The Albu Mahal Tribe and the Albu Issa Tribe**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The three target tribes of the study, the Albu Fahd, Albu Mahal, and Albu Issa, are all affiliated with the large Dulaym Tribal Confederation in al-Anbar Governorate, but they are not very high in the overall tribal hierarchy. In fact, the three tribes are relatively small in comparison with the dozens of tribes, clans, houses and families that exist in al-Anbar. However, the three tribes are currently important because they have presence and influence in the three key areas of insurgent activity in al-Anbar:
 - The Albu Fahd Tribe is located in al-Ramadi
 - The Albu Mahal Tribe is located in al-Qaim
 - The Albu Issa Tribe is located in Falluja
- Tribes are perhaps the oldest, most enduring and controversial social entities in the Middle East. From centralizing polities in the agrarian age, down to the era of industrialism and nation-states, tribes have sustained never-ending change, acting in and reacting to changing political, military, economic, and at times even topographical environments.
- Iraq's tribes and their tribal shaikhs provide a major resource through which the Coalition can influence portions of Iraq's population. They have been used successfully by Coalition forces as channels of influence, particularly in rural areas. The limits of their power must, however, also be understood if the Coalition is to make best use of limited resources.
- In order to understand the tribes of al-Anbar Governorate, it is necessary to first understand the underlying identity characteristics of the people who are members of those tribes: Iraqi Sunni Arabs. Sunni Arab identity is based on ethnicity and language, religion, tribal roots and membership, and historical experience. Sunni Arabs feel that they are part of a community that shares a set of similar characteristics, values, and experiences.
- The key components of Iraqi Sunni Arab identity are:
 - Arab Culture/Arabism
 - Islam
 - The Bedouin Tribal Ideal and Culture



- The picture of Sunni Arab identity in Iraq that emerges from the interaction of the Arab, Islamic, and Bedouin Tribal components of that of identity is quite complex and is critical to understanding Iraqi Sunni Arab culture, which, in turn, is crucial to successful interaction with people and tribes of Iraq.
- Sunni Arabs are proud of their religious and political history. They tend to regard themselves as the descendents and heirs to a long and great history of intellectual development, wealth, and political rule over the massive Islamic empire. In addition, tribes have played a central role in the history of Iraq for thousands of years, and continue to do so today. Therefore, in order to understand Iraq one must understand the interaction between the tribes and other factors throughout the history of the land now known as Iraq.
- Historical analysis of tribal influence in Iraq and in counter insurgency operations involving tribes in elsewhere in the Middle East reveal lessons for working with tribes in the future.
- Many aspects of Iraqi society and politics today can be traced to the Mamluk, late Ottoman, and British Mandate periods. Events during these periods helped establish patterns such as conflict between tribal authority and effective agriculture, impoverishment of the countryside and resulting urbanization, and a tradition of weak government and lack of security in rural areas.
- **Ottoman Period in Iraq**
 - *Mamluk period.* During the Mamluk period, a pattern of conflict was established between the tribal world and central government authority. This situation was exacerbated during the late Ottoman and British Mandate periods, as shaikhs were granted privileges and responsibilities they had not experienced, and which degraded their relationships with their tribesmen.
 - Observations from the Mamluk period reinforce the lesson of the linkage between perceived government weakness and instability and tribal revolt. Another lesson from this period is that mutual interests can bind tribe and the state and thus prevent conflict.
 - *Late Ottoman period.* Turkish policy subsequent to 1831 sought to degrade shaikhly power, which the British would later work to restore. The Ottomans enacted administrative reforms such as a new land code, and turned independent tribal fiefdoms into districts with appointed governors.



Giving tribal shaikhs new powers reinforced divisions between them and their tribesmen.

- Weak government and tribal fragmentation combined to hinder state formation. Lessons from the late Ottoman period include the effectiveness of mutual economic interests in mitigating conflict, the danger of unintended consequences when empowering tribal leaders, and the importance of good cultural knowledge for those negotiating with the tribes.

- **British Period in Iraq**

- Distrusting the urban elites produced by late Ottoman reforms, the British attempted to govern through the shaikhs, imposing new and unfamiliar authoritative responsibilities on the shaikhs instead of building up government institutions. This disrupted traditional relationships among shaikhs, tribesmen, foremen, and landlords, and backfired when the shaikhs proved inadequate in their new roles. The British enforced their rule through the use of “air policing,” reinforcing Iraqi perceptions of British despotism and undermining British effectiveness.
- Lessons from the British period include the danger of disconnects between local officials and the ground and policymakers at home, the effectiveness of indirect methods such as economic and status incentives in securing shaikhs’ loyalty (though often temporary), the importance of avoiding displays of weakness and equivocation, and the danger of unintended consequences when empowering the shaikhs.

- **Counter Insurgency in Oman: The Dhofar Rebellion, 1962-1975.** The Oman government and its British supporters integrated all aspects and principles of counterinsurgency, used force appropriately and discriminately, addressed popular grievances, and won over the civilian population by putting forth and delivering on a political vision. The Oman case also demonstrates the centrality of intelligence in counterinsurgency campaigns, and the potential effectiveness of amnesty measures, especially those that use former insurgents to provide intelligence and local security.

- **Strife in Yemen: British Counterinsurgency Operations in Aden, 1955-1967.** Britain’s conflict in Aden and the surrounding areas was the least successful of its counter-insurgency campaigns in the Middle East, demonstrating what can happen when a counterinsurgency campaign is not anchored to sound government policy. Britain’s failure to achieve its objectives in Yemen can be attributed to a policy-strategy mismatch, a lack of political will, and a failure to understand the impact of regional political



developments such as the rise of Arab nationalism. Britain's use of force in Yemen was heavy-handed, indiscriminate, and produced unintended consequences such as undercutting local rulers upon whose support the British depended.

- **Tribal Warfare in Saudi Arabia: Ibn Saud's Consolidation of Power, 1902-1924.** Ibn Saud's conquest of rival tribal territories and consolidation of power in the 1910s and 1920s is an example of harnessing tribal characteristics and channeling them into military and political effectiveness. Ibn Saud was a master at understanding tribal psychology and communicating unifying messages that affirmed tribal values and the tribesmen's place in society. Lessons that can be drawn from ibn Saud's experience include the power of a compelling narrative and unifying ideology, the importance of tribal alliances, and the effectiveness of momentum in a military campaign. Cautionary lessons can be observed as well, in the form of tradeoffs between state and tribal authority.
- **Saddam Hussein Period in Iraq**
 - **Resilience of Tribes.** The Baath regime fostered competition between tribes in a “divide and rule” campaign. This method was, and remains, effective because it exploits tribal honor and competition over limited resources. Competition between tribes can be a compelling way to secure the cooperation of one tribe at the expense of another. A tribe is likely to cooperate to keep another tribe from getting the benefits.
 - **Leveraging Tribal Disputes.** Sunni tribes north and west of Baghdad (the Sunni triangle area) have the greatest number of and most intense internal tribal conflicts. In 1989, when Saddam sought tribal support for his regime, he increased funds for public works in Sunni tribal regions and sent the funding directly to tribal leaders, so they could distribute it to the tribe. This had two effects on intra-tribal relations in the Sunni triangle.
 - First, by quickly investing such a great deal of wealth and power in the shaikhs, it destabilized tribal leadership. Ambitious members of the tribe began to compete for power, to the point of attempting to assassinate rivals to gain control of government funds.
 - Second, Sunni tribes became more and more stratified, as the shaikh delegated wealth and responsibility to those close to him, who, in turn, entrusted individuals in their social circle with funds and responsibility. The increasingly hierarchical nature of the tribes meant that tribesmen outside the shaikh's circle began to see violence as the only means of



social mobility. Saddam Hussein's manipulation of the tribes disrupted their internal power dynamics.

- **Establishing New Tribes and Replacing Shaikhs.** Saddam established the Office of Tribal Affairs and categorized sheikhs into A, B, or C categories based on their influence. Through these categories, Saddam paid sheikhs monthly salaries. There are many disputed rights to tribes today because of the appointments of “Fake Shaikhs” during Saddam's regime. Giving tribal leaders money and significant autonomy over their areas in exchange for their allegiance helped Saddam control the countryside and force recruitment for the Iraqi army.
 - **Tribal Cohesion When Under Threat.** In spite of internal rivalries and conflicts over power and wealth, the Sunni tribes almost invariably pull together at the sign of a threat from outside. At the core of each tribe's and tribesman's identity is a consciousness of their Bedouin roots in the harsh desert culture. The Baathist regime skillfully manipulated the image of the Bedouin tribe as united against adversity throughout the Iran-Iraq War. State propaganda cultivated a consciousness among the tribes that they were a key front against the Persian threat and that tribesmen must be prepared to sacrifice for the state and for the tribe, or face terrible shame.
- **Emerging Insights on Influencing the Tribes of al-Anbar**
 - The examination and analysis of a wide range of case studies concerning controlling and influencing the tribes of Iraq and the tribes of other Middle East countries, as well as counter insurgencies in general, reveal a number of emerging insights on influencing Iraq's tribes today.
 - First and foremost, the insurgency in Iraq's al-Anbar Governorate, like any insurgency, is a human endeavor undertaken to attain political power and is focused on gaining the active or passive support of the local population, willing or coerced. Likewise, counter insurgency operations must be focused on the human dimension of the conflict with the same goal of gaining the support of the population or, at the very least, denying it to the insurgents.
 - In Iraq's security vacuum, all communities, including tribes, need to be engaged to improve conditions. Tribes are among the most potentially effective organizations in the country's shattered social landscape. Assertions of tribal authority are not necessarily permanent. In Iraq's history, balances of power between tribes and governments have ebbed and flowed, with strengthened government institutions corresponding to both declines in tribal influence and more harmonious relations between government and tribe.



- Tribal engagement and influence operations are primarily efforts to gain the support of a part of the population. However, rather than gaining the support of each tribal member individually, the influence of tribal leaders is used as leverage to garner the support of large segments of the population in a relatively short period of time.
- Based on an examination of the identity and history of Iraq's tribes and attempts to influence them; case studies of influence of other Middle East tribes; and an analysis of a wide range of counter insurgencies, a number of insights on influencing Iraq's tribes have emerged. These insights are key to successful tribal engagement and influence operations aimed at the Sunni Arab tribes of al-Anbar Governorate:
 - Implement as Part of an Integrated Strategy;
 - Ensure an In-Depth Understanding of Iraqi and Tribal Culture;
 - Identify Tribes and Tribal Interests;
 - Leverage Traditional Authority;
 - Use a Compelling Ideology;
 - Use Appropriate Coercive Force: Proportionate/Precise/Provision of Security;
 - Use Economic Incentives and Disincentives;
 - Explore the Use of Non-Iraqi Tribal Intermediaries; and,
 - Understand Insurgent Use of Tribes.
 - It is also imperative to avoid key pitfalls in dealing with tribes and to learn from previous coalition efforts to influence Iraqi tribes.
- **Implement as Part of an Integrated Strategy.**
 - Tribal engagement in Iraq is critical because tribes wield considerable political, economic, cultural, and military/coercive power in many areas of the country, particularly in predominately rural areas distant from central governmental control such as al-Anbar Governorate. As a result, a comprehensive strategy for tribal engagement and influence, tailored for the specific tribal areas, should be a key component of the Coalition's counter insurgency plan in Iraq.
 - A failure to integrate tribal engagement and influence operations with other counter insurgency efforts, particularly military operations, will result in conflicting and contradictory policies and operations affecting the tribes, which will undermine or nullify efforts to gain their support.
- **Ensure an In-Depth Understanding of Iraqi and Tribal Culture.**



- In order to be successful, those conducting counter insurgency operations must know the population they are trying to influence. Therefore, any successful effort in working with the Sunni Arab tribes of Iraq's al-Anbar Governorate must begin with an in-depth understanding of Iraqi culture and the Arabic language, the interaction of the various components of Sunni Arab Iraqi identity, the nature and influence of tribal society, and the interests and motivations of the target population.
- The degree of in-depth understanding necessary to successfully engage Iraq's Sunni Arab tribes requires considerable experience, education and training. Therefore, a cadre of specialists may be required to provide this expertise either as an adjunct to, or in place of, conventional military forces.
- **Tribal Culture.** The fundamental aspect of tribal society is extended kinship and collectivism, but tribes are actually more than just kin-based groupings. Within the tribe, family ties and a strict honor code bind its members, often to a greater degree than ethnic background, religion, or professional association.
- Iraqi history has shown that its tribes are extremely adaptive and that the power of the tribes is normally inversely proportional to the power of the central government or authority. That is, when governments or central authorities were strong and wielded extensive power and control over tribal lands, the tribes tended to be weak and subservient to the state. However, when governmental authority was weak, the tribes had significantly more power and influence, often to include effective or real autonomy from the state.
- As a result, the tribes have become accustomed to acting with semi-independence, have followed a different rule of law than the rest of the country, and have precedent and tradition on their side. Any attempt to influence the tribes will require a combination of benefits, diplomacy, and force, just as Saddam, the British, the Ottomans, and other authorities used to influence them in the past.
- **Tribal Ritual and Conflict Resolution.** A critical aspect of dealing with tribes is the fact that ritual in negotiations and conflict resolution, in tribal culture, often comes before what is considered substance in the West. As a result, Western-based conflict resolution models will seldom succeed in addressing tribal matters because such models seldom recognize the importance of indigenous ways of thinking and feeling, nor do they take into account local rituals for managing, reducing, and resolving conflicts.



- **Identify Key Tribes and Tribal Interests.**

- Based on an extensive and detailed assessment of the target area of operations, key tribes must be identified for the tribal engagement and influence efforts. The targeted tribes must be associated with the target area and must be large and influential enough to be worth approaching.
- Analysis and selection of the targeted tribes should include a complete analysis of their genealogy, history, leadership, linkages, supporters, alliances, enemies, territory, and recent activities in order to determine the best approach to engage the tribe.
- Part of the process of identifying key tribes for engagement and influence, is to identify their key interests. This is done in order to determine if the tribe will be open or susceptible to engagement and influence, as well as to determine the right mix of incentives and disincentive to use when dealing with the tribe.

- **Leverage Traditional Authority.**

- Traditional authority in a particular culture or society is usually invested in a hereditary line or invested in a particular office by a higher power. Status and honor are accorded to those with traditional authority, and this status in turn helps maintain dominance. Leaders with traditional authority can use their authority to influence large segments of a population, greatly reducing the efforts that would otherwise have to be expended to influence each member of the population individually.
- Tribal and religious forms of organization rely in particular on traditional authority. Traditional authority figures often wield enough power, especially in rural areas, to single-handedly drive an insurgency. The process of engaging and influencing tribal leaders in Iraq is a classic example of leveraging traditional authority.
- **Identify The Key Shaikhs.** It is crucial to properly identify the legitimate key shaikhs at the national, provincial and local levels who can assist in Coalition objectives. The first step in identifying the key shaikhs is to first identify the Shaikh Generals of large tribes and tribal confederations. The Shaikh Generals can identify the influential and authentic shaikhs in the provinces and assist in engagement with these shaikhs.
- **Develop Personal Relationships.** The central concepts of extended family, kinship and honor in tribal organizations highlight the importance of personal relationships in interacting with Iraq's tribal society. Developing



personal relationships with key shaikhs can lead to cooperation with an extended network of tribal entities throughout al-Anbar Governorate, and can also help vet Coalition policies or proposed policies.

- **Understand Influence of Shaikhs.** In attempting an outreach to the tribes, it must be understood that the influence of today's tribal shaikhs spans the spectrum from complete control to pleasant conversation with advice. As influential and respected members of the society, shaikhs can be a bridge between western and eastern understandings of action. The challenge for the Coalition is to know who can do what and who cannot.
 - While trying to leverage traditional authority, caution must be taken to enhance the status and influence of tribal leaders without unduly weakening government and civil society actors.
 - **Adopt an Interest-Based Approach.** The history of the Ottoman and British periods suggests that shaikhs are acutely attuned to opportunities to further their self-interest, and that their positions rest on their ability to meet the needs of their constituencies. Shaikhs have responded well to financial incentives, particularly when they are given the means to extend financial patronage, as well as enhance their personal well-being.
- **Use a Compelling Ideology.**
 - The ability to leverage a compelling ideology is an important tool in a counterinsurgency. Mass movements of all types, including insurgencies, gather recruits and amass popular support through ideological appeal. Individuals subscribe to ideologies that articulate and render comprehensible the underlying reasons why practical, material interests remain unfulfilled.
 - In order to employ (or counter) ideology effectively, the cultural narratives of the insurgent group and society must be understood. To effectively counter the insurgents' message, utilizing Arabists with a comprehensive knowledge of not only the Middle East, but also Iraq specifically, and more importantly Islam, is a prerequisite for an effective Information Operations Campaign.
 - **Leverage the Influence of Religious Leaders.** Religious leaders can be extremely useful in communicating compelling ideologies to the tribes of al-Anbar. Since the fall of the Hussein regime, Sunni mosques, organizations, and Islamic trusts (*awqaf*) have sought to reclaim the right of religious expression they were denied for so long.



- **Use Appropriate Coercive Force.**

- The use of force is always required in counter insurgency operations. However, due to the constant proximity of the local population when engaging insurgents, care must be taken in the application of proportionate force to avoid unnecessary damage and accidental death.
- There is a direct relationship between the appropriate proportionate use of force and successful counterinsurgency. History shows that the use of excessive force by the Coalition and Iraqi government may not only enhance the legitimacy of insurgent groups, but also cause the Coalition to lose legitimacy in the eyes of the civilian population.
- A corollary of the rule of the appropriate use of force is rule is that force must be applied precisely. Force must be applied precisely so that it functions as a disincentive to insurgent activity.
- One of the core functions of a state is the provision of security to citizens within its territory. Security is the most basic pre-condition for civilian support of the government. State failure to provide security may cause citizens to accept alternative security guarantees from non-state actors, and this can be a major driver of insurgency.
- Effective tribal engagement and influence by the Coalition can enlist the support of tribes in al-Anbar Governorate to improve security in the area by:
 - Having the tribes provide intelligence on insurgent groups and activities;
 - Forming community police forces with recruits from the local tribes;
 - Providing combat support to tribal forces at war with insurgent groups and their allies;
 - Forming local security/military units to work with Coalition forces to defeat insurgent groups;
 - Establishing liaison and/or joint operations centers to coordinate tribal and Coalition military/security operations;
 - Providing weapons, training and equipment to tribal forces for use in policing tribal urban and rural areas, securing Iraq's borders, and conducting counter insurgency operations; and,
 - Embedding Coalition units in tribal areas to enhance tribal capabilities and closely coordinate (and, if possible, control) tribal military operations.



- The tribes' knowledge of the culture, actors, language and local area – currently significant weaknesses of the Coalition – can provide the Coalition with the critical support it needs to deal effectively with the insurgency.
- **Project Strength and Resolve.** Applying coercive force proportionately and precisely does not mean that military forces should project an image of weakness. On the contrary, the Mamluk and British experiences teach us that tribal Iraqis are quick to act on perceptions of both strength and indecision.
- **Use Economic Incentives and Disincentives.**
 - In order to win the support of the population, counterinsurgency forces must create incentives for cooperation with the government and disincentives for opposition to it.
 - In Iraq, high unemployment, lack of basic services, and widespread poverty are driving the insurgency. Economic incentive could be used to reduce support for the insurgency in Iraq either by employing young men in large-scale infrastructure rebuilding projects or through small-scale local sustainable development programs.
- **Explore the Use of Non-Iraqi Tribal Intermediaries.**
 - Unfortunately, relations between western Iraqi tribal leaders and Coalition and Iraqi government officials are at a low point, impeding the Coalition's ability to reach agreements with the tribes. It may be useful to use non-Iraqis with ethnic links to the tribes as intermediaries for negotiation and as sources of human intelligence.
 - A more likely prospect may be to use prestigious members of extended tribal confederations to use their influence with their tribal 'brothers' in Iraq. There are strong ethnic and tribal links among the peoples of Yemen, Saudi Arabia, and al-Anbar Governorate, owing to a history of back and forth migrations between the Arabian Peninsula and the Mesopotamian river valley.
- **Understand Insurgent Use of Tribes.**
 - Insurgents exploit their implicit understanding of tribal culture and are currently reaching out to segments of former tribal clienteles. Payment for military attacks against Coalition targets is increasingly seen as the only



means to provide for the family, and is often used as a recruitment tool, due to high unemployment.

- Insurgent control of the tribes is established through a network of loyal tribal leaders. Attempts are made to make every member of the tribe feel that the Coalition has shamed them and to regain their honor by becoming part of the struggle. The greatest danger to the insurgency movement is if its popular base of loyal tribes can be won away and realigned with the Coalition.

- **Avoid Key Pitfalls in Dealing with Tribes.**

- Beware of the limits of tribal authority.
- Distribution of incentives should be equitable – or, more importantly, perceived as equitable.
- Beware of granting too much tribal power, which could end up undermining long-term stability.
- Avoid the “Tribal Trap” of being drawn into inter-tribal rivalries.

- **Learn from Previous Coalition Efforts to Influence Iraqi Tribes.**

- **Coalition Mistakes Inflaming the Tribes.**

- The greatest wild card that the insurgents can exploit is the Coalition’s lack of cultural understanding and ability to communicate with the rural population. Insurgents continue to reinforce the message that the Iraqi government and the Coalition attack cultural norms, honor, and way of life. One example is the rough handling of patriarchal family heads in front of their families during cordon and sweep/knock operations, which shames family honor and requires revenge in the form of resistance.
- The Coalition’s lack of inclusion of tribal leaders in policymaking and implementation shames tribal leaders and ignores thousands of years of Arab socio-political culture.

- A resolute and persistent effort to cultivate the tribes and their elders can lead to alliances so strong that they become effective instruments of policy and useful in combat operations. The previous experience of US Army Special Forces all over the world, in Vietnam and more recently in Afghanistan, points



clearly to the great benefits that can be gained by sincere and consistent approaches to tribal peoples.

- **An Example Application of the Emerging Insights to the Three Target Tribes Reveals Ways to Engage and Influence the Tribes.**
- **How to Persuade the Tribes to Stop Supporting Insurgency.**
 - To effectively marginalize the insurgency in Iraq, it is necessary to separate the actors into respective factions, and then to develop a specific tribal engagement and influence plan, and information campaign plan, for each.
 - Generally, all of the three target tribes are involved in the insurgency for similar motives. All of the three tribes are primarily nationalistic in their ideologies; feeling betrayed by the Coalition after the fall of the former regime. In addition, the three tribes, or significant parts of them, are part of the growing movement in al-Anbar against AQIZ and its associated foreign insurgents. This presents a window of opportunity for engagement and influence of the tribes by the Coalition. However, due to the volatile situation in al-Anbar, this window of opportunity may not be open for long.
- **How to Persuade the Tribes to Support the Coalition.**
 - Members and selected leadership from all three tribes have worked with the Coalition at various times over the past three years. The future challenge is not necessarily how to get these tribes to support the Coalition, but how to marginalize the tribes' support for the insurgency.
 - In the case of the Albu Fahd and Albu Mahal, the focus should be on creating a relationship to drive the foreign insurgents from their areas (al-Ramadi and al-Qaim, respectively) with specific intentions to eliminate al-Zarqawi's network in the al-Anbar Governorate, while creating long-term relations with the tribes. This is an achievable objective with the proper team of Middle East/Iraq experts that can create the necessary sustained relationships with the tribal leaders.
 - As with most begrudging business associations in Iraq, the alliances formed between the Coalition and the Albu Fahd and Albu Mahal tribes will unquestionably exist for no other purpose but to rid the area of a common enemy – AQIZ. Cooperation on the part of the tribes should not be considered as support for, or even acceptance of Coalition activities. Nevertheless, this partnership, if properly managed, can establish a bond of trust that can transcend the immediate mutual interest. In fact, if done



well, it could possibly lead to a longer-term relationship – as long as the relationship remains in the interest of both parties.

- As for the Albu Issas, there is a Middle Eastern proverb that says, “Put a black turban on a scorpion and you still have a scorpion.” This proverb applies to the tribe. While it would be inappropriate to stereotype the entire tribe, as a course of action, the recognized leadership plays both ends of the insurgency – Coalition verses the insurgents – against the middle while maintaining a single motive, to force the Coalition to leave Iraq.



CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to conduct research and analysis to:

- Provide a historical background of three target tribes in the al-Anbar Governorate of Iraq:
 - The Albu Fahd Tribe
 - The Albu Mahal Tribe
 - The Albu Issa Tribe
- Provide an initial set of analytic and operational tools that:
 - Have been applied historically during counter insurgency counter insurgency operations to influence tribes or other similar indigenous organizations
 - Can provide a current approach to give relevant insights on how to influence the tribes in al-Anbar Governorate
- Identify emerging insights on how to influence the tribes of al-Anbar Governorate using:
 - Research and analysis of the cultural identity and history of Sunni Arab tribes in Iraq
 - The analytic and operational tools to provide a methodology
- Perform an example analysis on data related to the three target tribes in al-Anbar Governorate using:
 - Customer provided current data (as available)
 - Emerging insights on how current actions may be influencing the tribes and how to better influence them

To ensure maximum dissemination, the study will be conducted using unclassified information. A classified annex with additional detailed information on the specific target tribes will be distributed separately.



The Three Target Tribes: Albu Fahd, Albu Mahal, and Albu Issa

The three target tribes of the study, the Albu Fahd, Albu Mahal, and Albu Issa, are all affiliated with the large Dulaym Tribal Confederation in al-Anbar Governorate, but they are not very high in the overall tribal hierarchy. In fact, the three tribes are relatively small in comparison with the dozens of tribes, clans, houses, and families that exist in al-Anbar. However, the three tribes are currently important because they have presence and influence in the three key areas of insurgent activity in al-Anbar:

- The Albu Fahd Tribe is located in al-Ramadi
- The Albu Mahal Tribe is located in al-Qaim
- The Albu Issa Tribe is located in Falluja

Unfortunately, because of the place of the tribes in the tribal hierarchy, and the difficulty in gathering information in al-Anbar due to the ongoing violent insurgency there, the amount of available information on the tribes for this study was limited.

The Structure of the Study

Iraq's tribes and their tribal shaikhs provide a major resource through which the Coalition can influence portions of Iraq's population. They have been used successfully by Coalition forces as channels of influence, particularly in rural areas. The limits of their power must, however, also be understood if the Coalition is to make best use of limited resources.

Tribes are perhaps the oldest, most enduring and controversial social entity in the Middle East. From centralizing polities in the agrarian age, down to the era of industrialism and nation-states, tribes have sustained never-ending changes, acting in and reacting to changing political, military, economic, and at times even topographical environments.

In order to understand the tribes of al-Anbar Governorate, it is necessary to first understand the underlying identity characteristics of the people who are members of those tribes: Iraqi Sunni Arabs. Sunni Arab identity is based on ethnicity and language, religion, tribal roots and membership, and historical experience. Sunni Arabs feel that they are part of a community that shares a set of similar characteristics, values, and experiences.

Chapter Two of the study examines in depth the key components of Iraqi Sunni Arab identity:



- Arab Culture/Arabism
- Islam
- The Bedouin Tribal Ideal and Culture

The picture of Sunni Arab identity in Iraq that emerges from the interaction of the Arab, Islamic, and Bedouin Tribal components of that of identity is quite complex and is critical to understanding Iraqi Sunni Arab culture which, in turn, is crucial to successful interaction with people and tribes of Iraq.

Sunni Arabs are proud of their religious and political history. They tend to regard themselves as the descendents and heirs to a long and great history of intellectual development, wealth, and political rule over the massive Islamic empire. In addition, tribes have played a central role in the history of Iraq for thousands of years, and continue to do so today. Therefore, in order to understand Iraq, one must understand the interaction between the tribes and other factors throughout the history of the land now known as Iraq.

To address the topic of Iraqi Tribes, particularly Sunni Arab tribes, throughout the history of Iraq, **Chapter Three** examines the role of tribes during the following periods:

- Ancient History through the spread of Islam
- Early Islamic Conquest
- Umayyad Period
- Abbasid Period
- Ottoman Period
- WWI and British Mandate
- "Independent" Iraq
- Baath Party through 1991
- Baath Party through 2003
- Post Operation Iraqi Freedom

Next, **Chapter Four** of the study looks at the tribes of al-Anbar Governorate and examines the three target tribes in detail by researching and analyzing the following areas:

- Ancient History Through 20th Century
- Territorial Issues
- Lineage, Linkages, and Alliances
- Key Traits and Cultural Narratives
- Actions During Previous Crisis Periods
- Religion
- Economic Issues
- Influential Leaders



- General Background Since March 2003
- Participation in Insurgency / Relations with Insurgent Groups
- Relations with Coalition

Chapter Five then provides a historical analysis of tribal influence in Iraq and in counter insurgency operations involving tribes in elsewhere in the Middle East, in order to identify emerging insights for influencing Iraqi tribes today. The study addresses the following in this historical analysis:

- Ottoman Period in Iraq
- British Period in Iraq
- Counter Insurgency in Oman: The Dhofar Rebellion, 1962-1975
- Strife in Yemen: British Counter insurgency Operations in Aden, 1955-1967
- Tribal Warfare in Saudi Arabia: Ibn Saud's Consolidation of Power, 1902-1924
- Saddam Hussein Period in Iraq

Since the purpose of engaging and influencing the tribes of al-Anbar Governorate is to assist the US in conducting successful counter insurgency operations in Iraq. **Chapter Six** reviews the nature of insurgency and counter insurgency operations and identifies useful analytic and operational tools for use in efforts to influence tribes in the counter insurgency in Iraq.

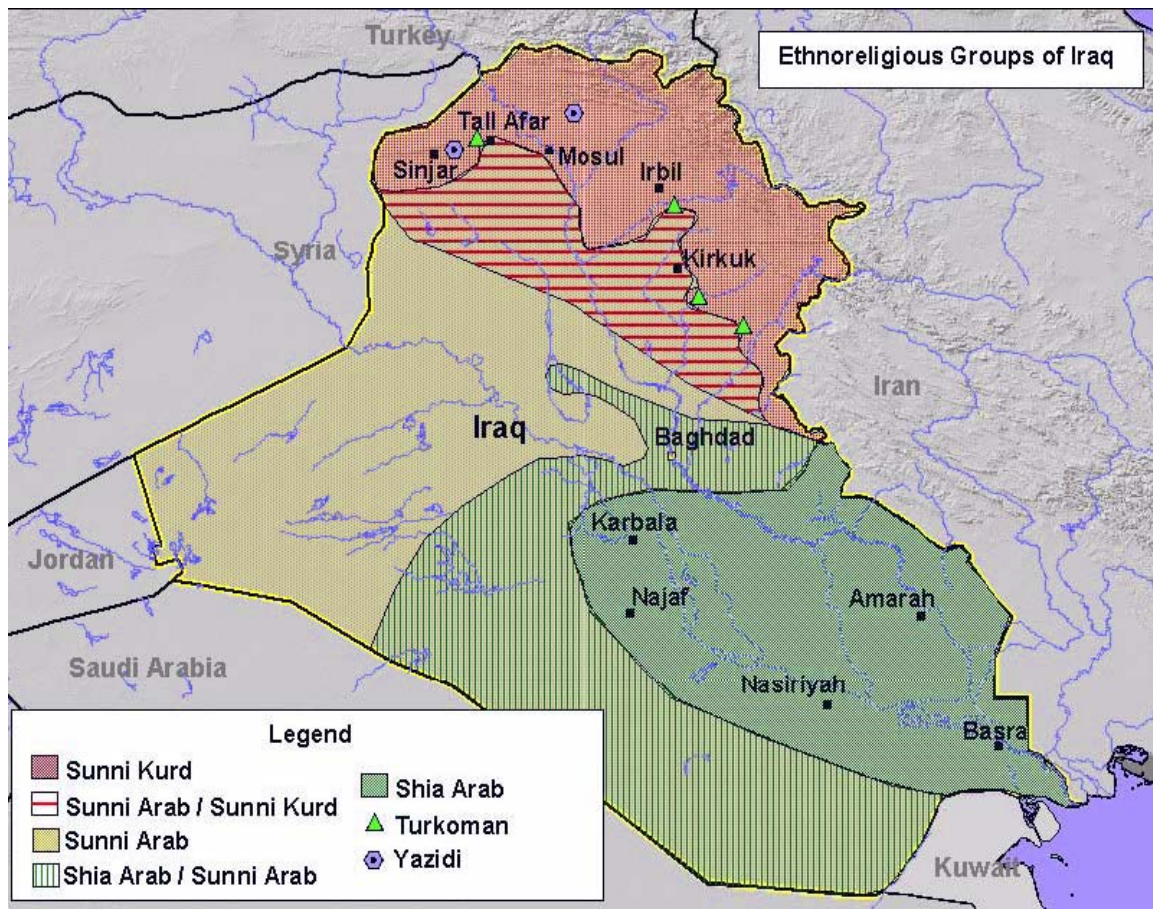
Chapter Seven of the study provides emerging insights for influencing the tribes in Iraq based on the work of the previous chapters. The insights are then applied to the example case of the three target tribes and specific recommendations are made concerning how to influence those tribes to both stop supporting the insurgency and start supporting Coalition efforts in Iraq.



CHAPTER TWO: UNDERLYING IDENTITY CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TRIBES OF AL-ANBAR GOVERNORATE

Introduction

In order to understand the tribes of al-Anbar Governorate, it is necessary to first understand the underlying identity characteristics of the people who are members of those tribes: Iraqi Sunni Arabs. The Sunni Arabs of Iraq make up less than twenty percent of the total Iraqi population,¹ but have been the dominant ethno-religious group in the country since the 1600s and at various times as far back as the Arab Conquests in the 7th century. Since then, they have comprised the wealthiest and best-educated segment of Iraqi society. Sunni Arabs' control of the institutions of government and the oil wealth of the country has allowed them to reap benefits out of proportion with their population. The Sunni Arab population is concentrated in Baghdad and in the area north and west of the capital in the "Sunni Triangle," and they make up the majority of inhabitants of al-Anbar Governorate.





The fall of Saddam Hussein and the Baathist regime has resulted in a major shift in the position of the Sunni minority in Iraqi society. Many Iraqi Sunnis feel dispossessed - they have experienced a drastic reversal of fortune. Being a Sunni under the previous regime meant enjoying a higher standard of living than other Iraqis, such as a home in a neighborhood with better sewer, electricity, and phone service; access to superior educational opportunities; and a well paying job. In the post-Baath environment, the Sunni Arabs are unlikely to enjoy the same privileges and benefits. The emergence of a more representative system means that the previously under-represented Shia population will dominate the government. Iraqi Sunnis fear that the Shia will not only control the government, but also persecute Sunnis for past Baathist oppression of the Shia. Sunnis also fear a religious extremist government ruled by Shia clerics.

The superior educational and professional opportunities the Sunnis enjoyed under the Baath prepared them to run the government, economy, and the military. To take advantage of these opportunities, Sunnis had to join the Baath Party. Many did so only for personal advancement, not out of a sense of true loyalty to the party. After Operation Iraqi Freedom, many of the people who are most qualified for government positions are also former members of the Baath Party, which disqualifies them from service. This poses a practical problem that complicates the formation of a new Iraqi government and bureaucracy. It also frustrates many Iraqi Sunnis who are now unemployed and feel rejected for doing what was considered normal under the Baath regime. The Sunnis' increasingly marginalized position in the new Iraq feeds their distrust of Coalition forces and the new Iraqi Government, prompting some to join the insurgency.

The Iraqi Sunnis lack organized and unified political representation in post-Baath Iraq. The Baath Party spoke for the Sunni Arabs in Iraq, and with its demise, older banned political parties must be resurrected and new parties formed. The disarray among the numerous Sunni parties compounds the uncertainty that the Sunnis feel about their place in Iraq. Without functioning political representation, the Sunnis turn to tribes to advocate for Sunni interests.

The tribe is the most enduring and important social structure for the Iraqi Sunni Arabs. The tribe provides protection, representation, and a sense of identity for its members. Saddam Hussein recognized the importance of the tribes among the Sunni Arabs and used the tribes' natural tendency to compete with each other as the basis of a "divide and rule" policy. In the post-Baath environment, the Sunni Arabs lack a unified tribal organization;



after more than thirty years of competing with each other, cooperation does not come easily.

Key Characteristics of Sunni Arab Identity

Sunni Arab identity is based on ethnicity and language, religion, tribal roots and membership, and historical experience. Sunni Arabs feel that they are part of a community that shares a set of similar characteristics, values and experiences. Sunni Arabs are proud of their religious and political history. They tend to regard themselves as the descendents and heirs to a long and great history of intellectual development, wealth, and political rule over the massive Islamic empire. They regard themselves as a group apart from other ethnic and religious groups, who they see as less worthy of political power and cultural-religious legitimacy.² Iraqi Sunni Arabs tend to be very nationalistic and patriotic in their philosophy towards Iraq.

Arab Ethnicity

The identity of the Sunni Arabs of Iraq is deeply rooted in Arab ethnicity, which is, in turn, intertwined with religion and tribal influence. “*Arab*” is a name originally given to the nomadic inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula. It is now largely a cultural/linguistic designation, embracing various national, regional, and religious groups in several different countries. As a result, anyone who speaks Arabic could claim membership in the global community of Arabs. The language itself was, and is, a source of great pride to Arabs for several reasons. First, as the language of the Quran, Arabic is endowed with a sense of prestige. Islamic prayers may only be performed in Arabic and the Quran is only regarded as holy when recited in its original language. Modern Sunni Arabs tend to feel that their language endows them with an intellectual advantage in understanding theology, in comparison with non-Arabic speaking Muslims.³

Modern Arab identity is not based solely on linguistics. In modern Iraq, for example, most Kurds speak Arabic, at least as a second language, and Arabic is the first language of many Turkomen. Yet neither of these groups defines themselves as Arab. Arab identity in modern Iraq is based on the historical linguistic identification with Arabic-speakers, but, more importantly, from shared social values, a common historical legacy, and perceptions of the world, both past and present.⁴



The Impact of the Arabic Language

The impact of the Arabic Language on the identity of Arabs is quite profound. Indeed, despite the hundreds of different spoken dialects of Arabic, it forms the foundation of Arab identity – and Classical Arabic, the Arabic of the Quran, is the most highly revered version of the language. While other languages often have the effect of bringing together people of differing nationalities who speak them, most languages seldom over shadow or replace one's national identity. However, Arabic often does have the effect on its speakers of eliminating national identities under a unified Arab identity – the “Arab nation.” Arabic also transcends many ethno-religious identities – there are Sunni Arabs and Shia Arabs, as well as Christian, Druze, Sufi, and Alawi Arabs, among many others.

Arabic is a complex language, but its structure and phonetics makes it exceptionally adaptable to poetry, songs, and descriptive rhetoric. In fact, Arabic grammar, while complex, is extremely logical, resulting in clear repetitive patterns in word formations. This, in addition to the uniform endings and nunation of Arabic words, greatly facilitates lyrical rhythms and rhymes in the language.

Raphael Patai uses the term “rhetoricism” to describe the exceptionally high value Arabs put on their language, their attachment to it, and the strong influence it exerts over them. Thus, rhetoricism is a key feature of the Arab “modal” personality. As a result, for many Arabs, Arabic is able to penetrate beneath and beyond intellectual comprehension directly to their emotions to make its impact upon them.⁵

In addressing the effect of Arabic on its speakers, Historian Philip K. Hitti notes:

No people in the world has such enthusiastic admiration for literary expression and is so moved by the work, spoken or written, as the Arabs. Hardly any language seems capable of exercising over the minds of its users such irresistible influence as Arabic. Modern audiences in Baghdad, Damascus and Cairo can be stirred to the highest degree by the recital of poems only vaguely comprehended, and by the delivery of orations in the classical tongue, though only partially understood. The rhythm, the rhyme, the music, produce on them the effect of what they call “lawful magic.”⁶

Arabic is a key component of Arab identity to such an extent that Arabs put an exceptionally high value on eloquence in the language. In fact, an examination of the roots of the word eloquence (*balugha*) in Arabic reveals that it is, to an Arab, an achievement akin to the attainment of masculinity or manhood. Eloquence in Arabic is also related to the word for exaggeration, which is used



extensively in Arabic. The use of exaggeration and over statement is normal in the Arabic language. Such usage is not meant to be taken literally, but serves the purpose of effect. While the use of exaggeration and over statement seems unnecessary to non-Arabic speakers, it is necessary among Arabs in order for one to be sure not to be misunderstood – it is a crucial part of the communication process.⁷ The failure of Coalition forces to understand this nuance creates misunderstandings particularly if the translator literally interprets the words and not the meaning.

Another key trait of Arabic speakers that is misunderstood by non-Arabic speakers is the tendency in Arabic to substitute words for actions. This is especially true of threats of dire action – where words are substituted for action and accepted at the same value as action. Non-Arabic speakers often see such statements as lies by the Arabic speaker if they do not carry out the threatened act. However, to the Arabic speaker and his Arabic speaking audience, the intentional act stated in Arabic can have the same weight as if the act were completed physically. In addition, in some cases, the words are seen to be even nobler than the physical act itself, particularly if the physical act might have resulted in widespread harm or destruction. Arabic speakers understand this because it is an integral part of how they communicate within their culture.⁸ Therefore, understanding the centrality of the Arabic language to the identity of Arabs is critical to understanding Arab culture and how Arabs operate within that culture.

Arabism

As an ethnic-cultural nationalist movement, Arabism received much of its inspiration from 19th century European nationalism, especially from the German and Italian examples. Until the late 19th century, the inhabitants of Iraq existed within a variety of overlapping authority and political structures. The Ottoman Empire, Islam, and local tribal and village structures all affected various factors of peoples' lives and gave shape to their identities. As westernized elites began to study European ideas, a number of Arab intellectuals argued that all those who spoke Arabic had a common identity and a shared past. However, most individuals identified themselves by religion, familial and tribal affiliations, and local residence.

Arab nationalism first became part of the language of political protest and cultural renaissance in response to a series of reforms planned by the Ottoman Empire to promote Turkish culture. Elites called for instruction in the Arabic language, greater local autonomy, and the protection of Arab rights within the Ottoman Empire. Overall, the episode stimulated greater interest in Arab history and culture and a common identity based on language and ethnicity. The death of the Ottoman Empire following World War I nurtured Arab identity and bolstered the



Arab movement. The disintegration of the political structure within which most Arabs had lived for centuries forced them to reconsider their identity.

Arabism is also intertwined with Islam in many respects. Although many of its early champions were Christian, Arabism's symbols often drew from Islam, and its rapid rise can partially be attributed to its links with an Islamic identity. Over time, however, the religious content of Arabism lost out to its secular and statist tenets. Moreover, once the caliphate disappeared following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, no religious figure could claim allegiance outside his own country's boundaries.

"[T]he ideal Arab monarchy, perfectly legitimized . . . would be an Islamic theocracy governed by the ablest leaders of a tribe tracing its lineage to the Prophet."

Legitimacy in general must be earned by capable leadership, and "there are no strongly legitimized succession procedures — neither inheritance nor election — in Arab culture."⁹

Power in the Arab world is personalized and finds "expression in the coercive and suppressive apparatus of the state and derives its legitimacy not from some formal (constitutional or even traditional) sources but from the reality and possession of power."¹⁰

Since the end of World War II, Arab leaders have attempted to define the norms of Arabism by manipulating and deploying symbols derived from their shared cultural foundations to persuade their audience that their definition of events was appropriate, legitimate, and consistent with Arabism. Many of the symbols of Arabism derived from important historical events that suggested injustice at the hands of the West. Since World War II, Arabism has been defined by three issues: Arab states' relationship to solidarity, the West, and confrontation with Zionism and Israel.

To win international status and domestic prestige, Arab leaders became avid participants in the search for a new source of authority. Power was associated less with accumulating military force than with accumulating the symbols of Arabism—presenting and projecting a particular image. Accordingly, Arab leaders became practiced in the ways of symbolic politics. Authority in Arab states, in other words, is rehearsed, staged, and elaborately organized.

Arab leaders who ignored the tenets of Arabism have had their credentials and character questioned. In Iraq, the popularity of Arabism was closely connected to the problems of governance in an ethnically and religiously divided society whose people had little identification with a British-imposed state. As residents of a



country created by foreigners, they found it difficult to see themselves as Iraqis. Nationalists believed that it was necessary to have a state strongly committed to Arab unification and headed by a powerful leader. In the late 1970s, Saddam Hussein took up the Arabist cause in Iraq's name. The regime gradually abandoned the party's traditional approach that the Arab states were all equally illegitimate entities arbitrarily created by Western imperialism and destined to disappear within an integrative pan-Arab union. Instead, it argued that by virtue of its illustrious history and centrality to the Arab cause, Iraq deserved to lead the Arab world.

The Sunni Arabs, as the ruling elite in Iraq, tried to balance and reconcile "Iraqiness" and a broader pan-Arabism. By its nature, however, a pan-Arab ideology precludes a separate Shia identity. In addition to benefiting from the previous political hierarchy in Iraq, Sunni Arabs tended to support the regime because it represented a bulwark against possible Shia power. Beyond the regime's Tikriti core, there was a broader system of Sunni support based on socioeconomic enticements, patronage, and cliental relationships. It is estimated that the Sunni networks of patronage and association numbered nearly 500,000 Iraqis if dependents are included. With the decline of the Arab nationalist parties, many Sunnis considered the military as their only potential protector against Shia domination. For their part, many Sunnis feared the loss of power and influence that would accompany a more representative regime. Part of the regime's response to the 1991 Shia uprising was to appeal to Sunni loyalty and solidarity, playing on their feelings of vulnerability. In particular, it warned that the uprisings were a prelude to Shia revenge, and could produce civil strife and mass killings.

Sunni Arabs are "the people whom Saddam Hussein has needed to convince both that his leadership was better for their interests than any imaginable alternative and that they would lose everything if he were overthrown and a new dispensation of power established in Baghdad."¹¹

Iraq, like most Arab states, has a history of strong central government. Iraqi Arab culture favors centralization of authority. Iraqi Arabs are generally submissive and obedient to their superiors. Authority is generally related to age and sex. Arabs associate age with experience and wisdom. Thus, the head of the clan is normally the oldest competent male member. When he dies or becomes incapacitated, his place is often taken by his oldest son or one of his own brothers. Projecting a paternal image, leaders securely occupy the top of the pyramid of authority.

Traditionally, political legitimacy and authority was also based on a symbiosis between Islam as a belief system and the tribe as a basic unit of social



organization. This loose arrangement accommodated the segmentary nature of population formations in Iraq.

Authority in Contemporary Iraq

For more than 30 years, Saddam Hussein's regime controlled the pillars of authority in Iraq: the Baath Party, the military and security services, and the tribal and religious leaders. To maintain its power, the regime practiced repression, monopolized wealth, and manipulated religious and tribal values and affiliations. The destruction of those modern institutions that existed outside of state control (political parties, unions, etc.), forced much of the population to seek refuge in their traditional institutions (sect, tribe, family). The regime managed to expand its power and authority by controlling both traditional and modern institutions.

Under Saddam, Iraq developed an intricate type of family rule. After assuming power, Saddam Hussein appointed members of his extended family, clan, and tribe to key posts. Iraq was essentially ruled by members of the Sunni Arab Bejjat clan, which is part of the Albu Nasir tribe, based in Saddam Hussein's hometown of Tikrit. The Bejjat clan is made up of 10 households. Saddam Hussein's extended family descends from three of them: the Majids (his father); the Ibrahims (his step-father); and the Talfhas (his uncle). When Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr assumed the presidency of Iraq in 1968, his al-Bakr segment gained clan leadership. When al-Bakr relinquished control in June 1979 to Saddam Hussein, power shifted to the Talfah and al-Majid households. Allied with Saddam's tribe are neighboring clan and tribal groupings such as the Duris, the Juburis, the Ubaydis, and the larger tribal confederation of the Dulaym. These clans dominated the military under Saddam.

Beneath a façade of modern institutions, therefore, an ever-thickening network of kin and clan relations governed the country. These ties came to replace ideology as the bond that held the regime and the government together. The Baath regime—officially socialist and pan-Arabist—proved to be opportunistic and cynical in the way it treated its own ideology. Whenever a tenet of party faith became a burden, it was jettisoned.

Official Baath doctrine contains no explicit reference to the Sunni-Shia split or to the Shia's inferior position. On an ideological and cultural level, the need to integrate the Shia into the Iraqi political community was reflected by an emphasis on Iraq's Mesopotamian identity in the 1970s. To reinforce his rule, Saddam Hussein drew on the models of past-Mesopotamian and Arab rulers. Specifically, he claimed to be following the path of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylonia who conquered Jerusalem in 586 BC, and Saladin, who regained Jerusalem in 1187 AD by defeating the crusaders. This trend represented the emergence of Iraqi-Babylonian nationalism.



According to one scholar, “[t]he Iraqis are being called upon to revive the ancient heritage of their Babylonian and Assyrian forefathers (whom Iraqi ideologues regard as Arabs), and become, once again, leaders of the region and creators of an advanced civilization.”¹²

Islam

Another key component of Iraqi tribal identity is Islam. Islam is a comprehensive religion. The Quran addresses both spiritual claims and commitments and makes detailed claims about the state and society (including the economy, inheritance, marriage, the status of women, and other specific political and legal commitments). These social rules and obligations were intended to address a very specific historical context in which conversion was paramount. Conversion was more effective because Islam presented itself as offering the nomadic regional populations, starting with the Arabian Peninsula, a hitherto unavailable sense of belonging to a unified and clearly defined community.

Islam is a religion that stresses the collective enforcement of public morals, especially in the areas of sex, women, and the family. In Islamic culture, family life is sacrosanct and raised above everything else. These priorities do not mean Islam is a private, individualistic religion. Rather, Islam’s fusion of matters of belief with matters of conduct makes it difficult to separate religion from public life. From an Islamic perspective, it is illogical to separate belief from life.

Islam and the State

Islam created a religion and a state simultaneously. However, original Islamic sources (the Quran and the *Hadith*) have very little to say on matters of government and the state. Nevertheless, the first issue to confront the Muslim community after the death of Muhammad was the problem of government, and the first disagreements that emerged within the community were concerned with politics.

The fact that Islam had emerged in a stateless, tribal society led Muhammad to establish a politico-religious community that was based on faith as the main criterion for membership. Given the limited nature of political stipulations in the Quran and *Hadith*, Muslims have had to borrow and improvise in developing their state systems. In doing so, they have relied on Arabian tribal traditions and the political heritage of the lands they conquered, especially Persian and Byzantine traditions.



The idea of the nation-state has no historical antecedents in the political culture of Islam. The traditional term for a state in Muslim political culture is *Dawla*. Not a political concept, the term is best described as a wielding of power. Other terms used by Muslims to denote a state are *Saltana* and *Mamlaka*. Like *Dawla*, neither term has a territorial connotation. Because Muslims believe that sovereignty is the exclusive preserve of God, the Islamic notions of the state have no territorial limits. Rather, they are directly related to the concept of rule by a person or dynasty. Overall, nationalism and nation-states are Western concepts. Historically, they have had little relevance to the Islamic concept of *umma* (Islamic community) and its political format of a universal caliphate. In addition, an Islamic state based on the *umma* necessarily would be multiethnic, and theoretically, national differences would be irrelevant. In the 20th Century, there was a shift towards nationalism in the Middle Eastern countries, particularly in Iraq.

Role of Islam in Politics

Islam has influenced political attitudes on matter such as: collective identity, the concept of justice, the legitimacy of a governing system, the rights and obligations of the ruler and ruled, and the kinds of characteristics leaders should possess.

Muhammad was both a religious prophet and a political leader. Accordingly, the Islamic political tradition favors a single ruler who embodies the government. Early Islamic scholars forged a link between politics and religion by giving a religious legitimacy to political power. It was not until the 19th and 20th centuries that, under the influence of western ideas and institutions, Arabic words were coined to express the idea of secular. However, Islam is not by its nature a political religion; there is little in it that is specifically political (e.g. how to form states, run governments, and manage organizations). Even the common interpretation of the term *umma* does not have an unequivocally religious connotation. In the Quran, the term refers variously to ethnic, religious, moral, and ideological communities. In classical Islamic literature, it is frequently used in both the ethnic and the religious sense with no clear differentiation between the two.

Islamic politics were shaped less by Islam as a belief system and more by the economic requirements and cultural traditions of the territories that formed the Islamic dominion. Gradually, and in a piecemeal fashion, an Islamic political theory was elaborated, premised primarily on the principle of obedience to the ruler and the necessity of avoiding civil strife. However, Islamic law never granted absolute power to the sovereign. Even though the sovereign has considerable authority—obedience is both a religious obligation and a political necessity—this authority is subject to significant limitations.



Although it draws on older sources, political Islam is a modern concept. Political Islamists want to reverse the traditional relationship between politics and religion so that politics becomes subservient to religion, and not vice versa, as was the case historically. To achieve this result, political Islamists are often more innovative and selective and less textual in their approach to Islamic history and tradition. Political Islam is not very influential among Sunnis in Iraq, but Political Islam dominates the average Shia's ideology towards government.

Islam and Legitimacy

The consensus of Sunni religious, political, and legal writing is clear on the duty of obedience to legitimate authority. It is a religious obligation defined and imposed by holy law and grounded in revelation. Disobedience is therefore both a crime and a sin. At the same time, the ruler has both religious and practical obligations to his subjects. His prime duty is to respect and enforce the holy law. In order to accomplish this, he must defend the Islamic community and advance its cause. If the ruler fails to do this, he is in breach of his contract with the Muslim community. Thus, obedience is not absolute. Although even a bad and oppressive government is preferable to anarchy, if a ruler commands something that is contrary to God's law, the subject's duty of obedience lapses. This is especially the case if a legitimate alternative is available and the Islamic community is not threatened by long-term disorder and civil strife.

Historically, there were two requirements for a ruler to be viewed as legitimate under Islam. First, the ruler was required to be qualified to rule and to be entitled to the office, acceding to the position by lawful means. Second, the ruler was required to rule with justice, which meant that he ruled in accordance with the holy law of Islam. If he failed to meet the first requirement, he was a usurper. If he failed to meet the second, he was a tyrant. Since early Islamic history, there have been considerable changes in the definitions of legitimacy and justice. Among Sunni Muslims, effective power and the ability to maintain order have largely become the sufficient qualifications for both legitimacy and justice.

However, some Sunni Islamic scholars have asserted a right and, indeed a duty, of disobedience in Islamic law and tradition. (This attitude was more important among the Shia, given their beliefs and persecuted status). These writers argue that Islam was born as a protest movement against Arabian tribalism and the Meccan plutocracy of the 7th century. However, because the Sunni tradition continues to view an existing Muslim regime as legitimate so long as the ruler does not publicly reject Islam, these writers have had to selectively delve into sources to make their argument. Specifically, they have based many of their theories on the 14th century theological texts by Ibn Taymiya. Taymiya, who lived in Syria during the demise of the Abbasid dynasty, incorporated into his writings



strong justifications for disobeying corrupt rulers. However, as far as mainstream Sunni theorists are concerned, even a bad Muslim ruler who tramples on some Islamic principles is preferable to chaos.

Sunni Islam

Muslims in Iraq are divided between two branches of Islam, Sunni and Shia. The Sunni followers in Iraq are a minority compared to the Shia adherents in the country. While a minority in Iraq, the Sunni Arabs of Iraq are members of the wider religious community of Sunni Muslims throughout the world. Sunnis comprise the largest sect in Islam, making up more than 90% of Muslims worldwide.¹³ Sunnism has existed as a separate sect of Islam since 661 A.D., when the Shia departed from the main fold of the Muslim community.¹⁴ Sunni Islam claims to be a continuation of Islam as it was defined through the revelations sent down to Muhammad, and the example that he set in his daily life.

Sunnism emerged as a separate sect of Islam 30 years after Muhammad's death, when the Muslim community was plunged into a civil war over religious and political differences. The Arabic word *Sunna* means "habitual practice sanctioned by tradition" and has come to denote the way Prophet Muhammad lived his life. The *Sunna* is the second source of Islamic jurisprudence, the first being the Quran. Both sources are indispensable; one cannot practice Islam without consulting both of them. The Arabic word *hadith* (pl. *ahadith*) is very similar to *Sunna*, but not identical. A *hadith* is a narration about the life of the Prophet or what he approved – as opposed to his life itself, which is the *Sunna* as already mentioned.

In M. M. Azami's *Studies in Hadith Methodology and Literature*, the following precise definition of a hadith is given,

According to *Muhaddithiin* [scholars of *hadith*] it stands for 'what was transmitted on the authority of the Prophet, his deeds, sayings, tacit approval, or description of his *sifaat* (features) meaning his physical appearance. However, physical appearance of the Prophet is not included in the definition used by the jurists.'

Thus *hadith* literature means the literature which consists of the narrations of the life of the Prophet and the things approved by him. However, the term was used sometimes in much broader sense to cover the narrations about the Companions [of the Prophet] and Successors [to the Companions] as well.



Thus, Sunnis are literally those “who follow the example of the prophet.” Sunni Islam does not encourage a single over-arching interpretation of Islam by a ruler, but is predicated on unity through recognition of differences of opinion on how specific Islamic principles should govern life and be applied to society. There are four orthodox schools of law—interpretations of Islamic principles—within Sunni Islam: Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi’i and Hanbali.

Sunni Islam *Madhabs* (Schools of Law)

Hanafi School

Doctrine. The Hanafi school is the first of the four orthodox Sunni schools of law. It is distinguished from the other schools through its placing less reliance on mass oral traditions as a source of legal knowledge. It developed the exegesis of the Quran through a method of analogical reasoning known as *Qiyas* (see Sunni Islam). It also established the principle that the universal concurrence of the *Umma* (community) of Islam on a point of law, as represented by legal and religious scholars, constituted evidence of the will of God. This process is called *ijma*, which means the consensus of the scholars. Thus, the school definitively established the Quran, the Traditions of the Prophet, *ijma*, and *qiyas* as the basis of Islamic law. In addition to these, Hanafi accepted local customs as a secondary source of the law.

History. The Hanafi school of law was founded by Nu'man Abu Hanifa (d.767) in Kufa in Iraq. It derived from the bulk of the ancient school of Kufa and absorbed the ancient school of Basra. Abu Hanifah belonged to the period of the successors (*tabiin*) of the *Sahaba* (the companions of the Prophet). He was a *Tai'i* since he had the good fortune to have lived during the period when some of the *Sahaba* were still alive. Having originated in Iraq, the Hanafi school was favoured by the first 'Abbasid caliphs in spite of the school's opposition to the power of the caliphs.

The privileged position which the school enjoyed under the Abbasid caliphate was lost with the decline of this caliphate. However, the rise of the Ottoman empire led to the revival of Hanafi fortunes. Under the Ottomans, the judgment-seats were occupied by Hanafis sent from Istanbul, even in countries where the population followed other *madhabs*. Consequently, the Hanafi *madhabs* became the only authoritative code of law in the public life and official administration of justice in all the provinces of the Ottoman Empire. Even today, the Hanafi code prevails in the former Ottoman countries. It is also dominant in Central Asia and India.

Adherence. There are no official figures for the number of followers of the Hanafi school of law. It is followed by the vast majority of people in the Muslim



world. In particular, it is followed by the majority of the Muslim population of Turkey, Albania, the Balkans, Central Asia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, China, India, and Iraq.

Maliki School

Doctrine. *Malikiyya* or the Maliki School is the second of the Islamic schools of jurisprudence. The sources of Maliki doctrine are the Quran, the Prophet's traditions (*hadith*), consensus (*ijma'*), and analogy (*qiyas*). The Malikis' concept of *ijma'* differed from that of the Hanafis in that they understood it to mean the consensus of the community represented by the people of Medina. (Over time, however, the school came to understand consensus to be that of the doctors of law, known as '*ulama*'.)

Imam Malik's major contribution to Islamic law is his book *al-Muwatta* (The Beaten Path). The *Muwatta* is a code of law based on the legal practices that were operating in Medina during the early years of Islam. It covers various areas ranging from prescribed rituals of prayer and fasting to the correct conduct of business relations. The legal code is supported by some 2,000 *hadiths* (traditions) attributed to the Prophet.

History. The Maliki School was founded by Malik ibn Anas (c.713-c.795), a legal expert in the city of Medina. Such was his stature that it is said that three 'Abbasid caliphs visited him while they were on Pilgrimage to Medina. The second 'Abbasid caliph, al-Mansur (d.775), approached the Medinan jurist with the proposal to establish a judicial system that would unite the different judicial methods that were operating at that time throughout the Islamic world.

The school spread westwards through Malik's disciples, becoming dominant in North Africa and Spain. In North Africa, *Malikiyya* gave rise to an important Sufi order, *Shadhiliyya*, which was founded by Abu al-Hasan, a jurist of the Maliki School in Tunisia in the thirteenth century.

During the Ottoman period, Hanafi Turks implemented the Hanafi School as the most important judicial system in the Ottoman Empire. However, North Africa remained faithful to its Maliki heritage. Such was the strength of the local tradition that *qadis* (judges) from both the Hanafi and Maliki traditions worked with the local rulers North Africa to implement Islamic law. Following the fall of the Ottoman Empire, *Malikiyya* regained its position of ascendancy in the region. Today Maliki doctrine and practice remains widespread throughout North Africa, the Sudan, and regions of West and Central Africa.

Adherence. There are no figures indicating the size of the school.



Shafii School

Doctrine. *Shafiyya* was the third school of Islamic jurisprudence. According to the Shafi'i school, the paramount sources of legal authority are the Quran and the Sunna. Of less authority are the *Ijma'* of the community and thought of scholars (*Ijtihad*) exercised through *qiyas*. The scholar must interpret the ambiguous passages of the Quran according to the consensus of the Muslims, and if there is no consensus, then according to *qiyas*.

History. The Shafiyya School of Islamic law was named after Muhammad ibn Idris al-Shafi'i (767-819). He belonged originally to the school of Medina and was also a pupil of Malik ibn Anas (d.795), the founder of the Maliki School. However, he came to believe in the overriding authority of the traditions from the Prophet, rather than from interpretations, and identified the traditions with the Sunna.

Baghdad and Cairo were the chief centres of the Shafii School. From these two cities, Shafii teaching spread into various parts of the Islamic world. In the tenth century, Mecca and Medina came to be regarded as the school's chief centres outside of Egypt. In the centuries preceding the emergence of the Ottoman Empire, the Shafiis had acquired supremacy in the central lands of Islam. It was only under the Ottoman sultans at the beginning of the sixteenth century that the Shafi'i were replaced by the Hanafi, who were given judicial authority in the Ottoman capital of Istanbul, while Central Asia passed to the Shia as a result of the rise of the Safavids in 1501. In spite of these developments, the people in Egypt, Syria, and the Hijaz of Saudi Arabia continued to follow the Shafi'i *madhab* (school). Today the Shafii School remains predominant in Southern Arabia, Bahrain, the Malay Archipelago, East Africa, and several parts of Central Asia.

Adherence. There are no figures for the number of followers of the school. It has some adherents in the following countries: Jordan, Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen. It has a large following: Egypt, Indonesia, the Philippines, Brunei, Singapore, Thailand, Sri Lanka, the Maldives, and among the Kurdish people.

Hanbali School

Doctrine. The Hanbali School is the fourth orthodox school of law within Sunni Islam. It derives its decrees from the Quran and the Sunna, which it places above all forms of consensus, opinion, or inference. The school accepts as authoritative an opinion given by a Companion of the Prophet, providing there is no disagreement with another Companion. In the case of such disagreement, the opinion of the Companion nearest to that of the Quran or the Sunna will prevail.



History. The Hanbali School of law was established by Ahmad b. Hanbal (d.855). He studied law under different masters, including Imam Shafi'i (the founder of the Shafii School). Hanbal is regarded as more learned in the traditions than in jurisprudence. His status also derives from his collection and exposition of the *hadiths* (traditions) of the Prophet. His major contribution to Islamic scholarship is a collection of fifty thousand *hadiths* (traditions) known as "*Musnadul-Imam Hanbal*".

In spite of the importance of Hanbal's work, his school did not enjoy the popularity of the three preceding Sunni schools of law. Hanbal's followers were regarded as reactionary and troublesome on account of their reluctance to give personal opinion on matters of law, their rejection of analogy, their fanatic intolerance of views other than their own, and their exclusion of opponents from power and judicial office. Their unpopularity led to periodic episodes of persecution against them.

The later history of the school has been characterized by fluctuations in their fortunes. Hanbali scholars such as Ibn Taymiyya (d.1328) and Ibn Qayyim al-Jouzia (d.1350) did display more tolerance to other views than their predecessors and were instrumental in making the teachings of Hanbal more generally accessible.

From time to time, the Hanbali School became an active and numerically strong school in certain areas under the jurisdiction of the 'Abbasid Caliphate. But its importance gradually declined under the Ottoman Turks. The emergence of the Wahhabis in the nineteenth century and its challenge to Ottoman authority enabled the Hanbali School to enjoy a period of revival.

Adherence. There are no official figures identifying the number of people associated with the school. Today the school is officially recognized as authoritative in Saudi Arabia and areas within the Persian Gulf.

Sunni Islam in Iraq

Most Sunni Arabs in Iraq have traditionally followed the Hanafi School of Islamic law. Founded by Abu Hanifa, one of the earliest Muslim scholars to seek new ways of applying Islamic tenets to everyday life, it is the oldest school (Hanifa died in Iraq in 767). Hanifa's interpretation of Muslim law was very tolerant of differences within Muslim communities and elevated belief over practice. As a result, this school is known for its liberal religious orientation. It is the least conservative and dogmatic of the four schools of Sunni Islam. However, Iraq has been exposed to extremist forms of Islam that derive their tenets from the Shafii and Hanbali Schools of Islamic Law. These extremist forms of Islam are Wahhabism, which has posed a threat to Iraq's more moderate version of Islam



since the eighteenth century; and Salafism, which has become more prevalent in Iraq since the resurgence of Islam in the country following the 1991 Gulf War.

Extremist Forms of Sunni Islam

Wahhabism

Background. Wahhabism is a Sunni fundamentalist Islamic movement. It is the dominant form of Islam in Saudi Arabia and Qatar. The term "Wahhabi" (*Wahhābīya*) refers to the movement's founder Muhammad ibn Abd al Wahhab (1703-1792). The term "Wahhabi" is rarely used by members of this group today, although the Saudis did use it in the past. In fact, many members of the movement object to the term 'Wahhabism'; they preferred to be called the *Ikhwan*, the Brotherhood. Other Wahhabi members call themselves *al-Muwahhidun* (the monotheists).

Doctrine. The Wahhabis claim to follow the way of the "Salaf as-Salih", the 'pious predecessors'. As a result, many Wahhabis prefer to call their movement *Salafism*. However, not all Salafis accept the beliefs and practices characteristic of Wahhabism or share the same history.

Wahhabism accepts the Quran and *hadith* as fundamental texts. It also accepts various commentaries including Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's *Kitab al-Tawhid* ("Book of Monotheism"), and the works of the earlier scholar Ibn Taymiyya (1263–1328). Wahhabis do not follow any specific *madhab* (method or school of jurisprudence), but claim to interpret the words of the prophet Muhammad directly, using the four *madhab* for reference. However, they are often associated with the Hanbali *madhab* sometimes associated with the Shafi'i *madhab*. Wahhabi theology advocates a puritanical and legalistic stance in matters of faith and religious practice.

Wahhabists see their role as a movement to restore Islam from what they perceive to be innovations, superstitions, deviances, heresies, and idolatries. There are many practices that they believe are contrary to Islam, such as:

- Invoking of any prophet, Sufi saint, or angel in prayer, other than God alone (Wahhabists believe these practices are polytheistic in nature);
- Visiting the graves of Sufi saints or prophets and asking the dead for help;
- Celebrating annual feasts for Sufi saints;
- Wearing of charms, and believing in their healing power;
- Practicing magic, or going to sorcerers or witches seeking healing; and,
- Innovation in matters of religion (e.g. new methods of worship).



History. Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia was founded by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, an Arabian cleric who had come to believe that Sunni Islam was being gradually corrupted by innovations (*bida*), many of which were countenanced by the Islamic mystical movement called Sufism. Abd al-Wahhab discovered the works of the early Muslim thinker Ibn Taymiyya and started preaching a reformation of Islam based on Ibn Taymiyya's ideas. He was repudiated by his father and brother, who were both clerics, and expelled from his home village in Najd, in central Arabia.

Al-Wahhab then moved to the Najd town of Diriya and formed an alliance with the Saudi chieftain Muhammad ibn Saud. Ibn Saud made Wahhabism the official interpretation of Islam in the First Saudi State. Al-Wahhab gave religious legitimacy to Ibn Saud's career of conquest. Ibn Taymiyya had been controversial in his time because he held that some self-declared Muslims (such as the Mongol conquerors of the Abbasid caliphate) were in fact unbelievers and that orthodox Muslims could conduct violent *jihad* against them. Ibn Saud believed that his campaign to restore a pristine Islam justified the conquest of the rest of Arabia.

In 1801, the Saudis attacked the Iraqi city of Karbala and sacked the shrine of Imam Hussain. In 1803, the Saudis conquered Mecca and Medina and destroyed various shrines, such as the shrine built over the tomb of Fatima Zahra, the daughter of Muhammad. They also wanted to dismantle Muhammad's shrine as well, but subsequently abandoned their plan. The Saudis held the two cities until 1817, when they were retaken by Mohammed Ali Pasha, acting on behalf of the Ottoman Empire. In 1818, the Ottoman forces invaded Najd, captured the Saudi capital of Diriya and the Saudi emir Abdullah bin Saud. He and his chief lieutenants were reportedly taken to Istanbul and beheaded. However, this did not end Wahhabism in the region.

The House of Saud returned to power in the Second Saudi State in 1824. The state lasted until 1899, when it was overthrown by the Emir of Hayel, Muhammad Ibn Rashid. However, Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud reconquered Riyadh in 1902 and after a number of other conquests before, during and after WW I, founded the modern Saudi state, Saudi Arabia in 1932.

In 1924 the Wahhabi al-Saud dynasty conquered Mecca and Medina, the Muslim holy cities. This gave them control of the Hajj, the annual pilgrimage, and the opportunity to preach their version of Islam to the assembled pilgrims. However, Wahhabism was a minor current within Islam until the discovery of oil in Arabia, in 1938. Vast oil revenues gave an immense impetus to the spread of Wahhabism. Saudi laypeople, government officials, and clerics have donated many tens of millions of dollars to create Wahhabi-oriented religious schools, newspapers, and outreach organizations.



Some Muslims believe that Saudi funding and Wahhabi proselytization have had a strong effect on world-wide Sunni Islam (they may differ as to whether this is a good or a bad thing). Other Muslims say that while the Wahhabis have bought publicity and visibility, it is not clear that they have convinced even a sizable minority of Muslims outside Saudi Arabia to adopt Wahhabi norms.

From the beginning of the Wahhabi movement, the Bedouin tribes adhering to Wahhabism have posed a major threat to Iraq through raiding, looting, and widespread murder of Iraq's population. In addition, Wahhabi attacks and harassment on behalf of the Saudis resulted in the migration of many non-Wahhabi tribes from Yemen and Arabia to Iraq and the border regions with modern day Jordan and Syria.

Salafism

Background. A Salafi (referring to an early Muslim), from the Arabic word *Salaf*, is an adherent of a contemporary movement in Sunni Islam that is called Salafism and sometimes identified with Wahhabism. Salafis themselves insist that their beliefs are simply pure Islam as practiced by the first three generations of Muslims and that they should not be regarded as a sect. Saudi Arabian Salafis do not like to be called Wahhabis, although this name was acceptable in the past.

The word *Salaf* means predecessors (or ancestors) and refers to the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad (the *Sahaba*), the early Muslims who followed them, and the scholars of the first three generations of Muslims. They are also called *al-Salaf al-Salih* or "the Righteous Predecessors".

The Salafis view the first three generations of Muslims, who are the prophet Muhammad's companions, and the two succeeding generations after them, the *Tabaiin* and the *taba Tabaiin* as perfect examples of how Islam should be practiced in everyday life. These three generations are often referred to as the *pious generations*. This principle of law is derived from the following *hadith* (tradition) said to have been spoken by Muhammad: "*The best of people is my generation, then those who come after them, then those who come after them (i.e. the first three generations of Muslims).*" (Bukhari 3:48:819 and 820 and Muslim 31:6150 and 6151.)

One tenet of Salafism is that Islam was perfect and complete at the days of Muhammad and his companions, but that much undesirable "innovation" (*bid'a*) was added to Islam afterwards. Since Islam was perfect before, such innovations are unnecessary, Salafism seeks to revive the original practice of Islam.



Doctrine. Salafis claim to preach a purified Islamic monotheism, or *tawhid* (unity). Salafis believe that widespread Muslim practices such as venerating the graves of Islamic prophets and saints are wrong. Photographs of any living being that possesses a soul are forbidden. Celebration of Muhammad's birthday is discouraged. All these practices are considered *shirk* (a comprehensive term which is commonly translated as polytheism), or as *bida* (innovation). In addition, Salafis in general are opposed to both Sufism and Shia Islam, which they regard as deviations from true Islam and violate the condemnation of sects in Islam by the Quran.

Salafis also reject mainstream dogmatic theology (*kalam*). They consider this to be based on the classical Greek philosophy of Plato and Aristotle and an import foreign to the original practice of Islam.

Salafis are divided on the question of adherence to the four recognized schools of traditional legal interpretation (*madhabs*).

- Some Salafis base their jurisprudence directly on the Quran and Sunna. They believe that literal readings of the Quran and the *hadith* (or oral traditions), are sufficient guidance for the believing Muslim. They thus reject the *madhabs* (Schools of Islamic Law).
- Other Salafis rely on the jurisprudence of one of the four *madhabs*. For example, Ibn Taymiyya follows the Hanbali School, while two of his prominent students, Ibn Kathir and Al-Dhahabi, follow the Shafi'i School. Other Salafis, such as Ibn Abu al-Iz, follow the Hanafi School; however, tenets of the Hanbali and Shafi'i Schools seems to predominate Salafi thinking.

History. From the perspective of the Salafis themselves, their history starts with the Prophet himself. They consider themselves direct followers of his teachings, and wish to emulate the piety of the earliest followers of Islam (the *salaf al-salih*). The term Salafi was first used for an Islamic modernist movement of the 19th century, a movement associated with the writers Muhammad Abduh and Jamal al-Din al-Afghani. Both men believed that Muslim communities could resist the incursions of Western colonialism and the corroding influence of Western civilization if they returned to the pure Islamic values believed to be best displayed by the earliest Muslims. This involved rejection of centuries of tradition (including innovations like Sufism and saint worship) and a rethinking of how Islam should function in a modern world. Abduh in particular believed that a purified Islam would be democratic and progressive.

Abduh, an Egyptian, had a great deal of influence on thinkers in Egypt and North Africa. His student Rashid Rida published an influential journal *al-Manar*. Hasan al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood movement, is said to have



been influenced by the ideas of Abduh and Rida. Al-Banna was also influenced by the Wahhabism of Saudi Arabia.

The Wahhabis, or, as they called themselves, the *Ikhwan*, (brethren or brotherhood), followed the 18th-century teacher Muhammad ibn Abd al Wahhab, of the Najd region of what is now Saudi Arabia. Al-Wahhab himself professed to be simply reviving the teachings of the 14th century Syrian scholar Ibn Taymiya. The Wahhabis were integral to the rise of the House of Saud to power in Arabia. Both Abduh and al-Wahhab had advised Muslims to return to the source of Islam directly, and to jettison centuries of popular Islamic practices. Abduh, however, limited his activities to writing and speaking, while al-Wahhab participated in the formation of a state that enforced his principles. Al-Banna combined these two approaches by creating an organization, the Muslim Brotherhood, that organized within an existing state with the hope of eventually capturing the state, as in Saudi Arabia, and recreating the Muslim utopia of 7th century Medina.

The members of the Muslim Brotherhood initially devoted themselves to missionary and social service activities, building clinics and schools to serve poor Muslims. They were quite successful at first, and spread to many other countries in the Middle East. They also inspired Muslim student groups throughout the world. However, the involvement of the Brotherhood in an attempt to overthrow the Egyptian government resulted in the suppression of the Brotherhood in Egypt and other countries.

Saudi Arabia gave sanctuary to many members of the Brotherhood who had been exiled or fled persecution, resulting in a further mingling of Wahhabi and Salafi ideas and practices. Over time, Saudi Arabian Muslims who were unhappy with Saudi government policies (seen as being increasingly worldly and non-Muslim) tended to explicitly define themselves as Salafis rather than Wahhabis. However, even pro-government clerics and laity started to adopt the term Salafi, when pressed to describe themselves, in preference to the terms Ikhwan or Wahhabi. A watershed moment in usage was a 1980 speech by King Fahd: "We are not Wahhabis; we are Salafis."¹⁵ The mingling of the Wahhabi and Salafi strains of Sunni Islam has been further accelerated by Saudi attempts to "Wahhabize" or "Salafize" the rest of the Islamic world. Saudi money funds religious training, mosques, and cultural centers in many parts of the world; as well as publications, websites, and other missionary activities. The presence of "Saudi money" in al-Anbar, specifically Falluja, was evident and mosques in Falluja were advocating the "Salafi" ideology in late 2003.

Contemporary Salafis do not acknowledge any indebtedness to Abduh and al-Afghani. If they are willing to concede any historicity at all to their movement (and many do not believe that it has a history, being merely "pure" Islam), they would



trace the Salafi revival to the Muslim Brotherhood or the Wahhabis -- or to some teachers in those movements, but not all. Today, Salafism forms the basis of the ideology for al-Qaida and affiliated terrorist organizations, to include the al-Zarqawi terrorists operating in Iraq.

Takfirism

Background. *Takfiris* are Islamist extremists who follow a violent exclusivist ideology. *Takfiri* ideology demands the murder of any non-Muslim, and any Muslim opposing the takfiris' goals - such Muslims are viewed by takfiris as being "no longer Muslim" and thus legitimate targets for attack. Muslim opponents of the *takfiris* often view them as modern-day analogues of the Khawarij, a seventh-century terrorist movement which waged war against the Caliphate.

Takfiris are those who carry out the excommunication of the *Takfir*, often using violent methods under the guise of *Jihad* (Holy War). *Takfiris* believe that true Muslims must depose, or excommunicate unnatural or false rulers, and can do so only through active struggle. *Takfiris* take their beliefs out of the realm of contemplation and into the realm of action. *Takfiri* cells are trained to blend into Western societies, which they view as "kufar" (atheist, corrupt, or infidel) in order to plot terrorist attacks against those "corrupt" societies. Members of *Takfiri* cells may live together, not pray or attend Mosque, partake in alcohol and narcotics, and dress to assimilate and integrate into the communities they live, in an attempt to avoid suspicion and/or detection – many experts believe that most of the 9/11 terrorists were *Takfiri*.

Doctrine. In Islamic law, the term *takfir* or *takfeer* refers to the practice of declaring that an individual or a group previously considered Muslims are in fact *kafir(s)* (non-believers in God). The act which precipitates *takfir* is termed the *mukaffir*.

This declaration may be made if the alleged Muslim in question declares himself a *kafir*. However, more usually it applies to the judgement that an action has been taken that clearly indicate knowing abandonment of Islam. Which actions constitute sufficient justification for *takfir* is disputed between different schools of religious thought. The orthodox Sunni position is that sins do not in general prove that someone is not a Muslim, but that denials of fundamental religious principles do; thus a murderer, for instance, may still be a Muslim, but someone who denies that murder is a sin must be a *kafir*, as long as he is aware that murder is a sin in Islam. An extreme case is exemplified by the early Kharijites, some of whom concluded that any Muslim who sinned ceased to be a Muslim, while others concluded that only major sin could cause that.



The sentence for apostasy (*irtidad*), under Sharia law, as traditionally interpreted, is execution. For this reason, orthodox Islamic law normally requires extremely stringent evidence for such accusations, in many cases requiring an Islamic court or religious leader to pronounce a *fatwa* (legal judgement) of *takfir* on an individual or group; however, certain extremist movements have been much readier to practice *takfir*, for which they have been condemned by more mainstream Muslims. This practice is taken to its logical extreme by the earliest medieval Kharijites and by modern Islamist extremist/terrorist groups such as *Takfir wal-Hijra* and the Armed Islamic Group (GIA, from French *Groupe Islamique Armé*; Arabic *al-Jam'ah al-Islamiyah al-Musallah*), who regard virtually all self-styled Muslims as *kafirs* whose blood may legitimately be shed.

History. One of the earliest examples of *takfir* was practiced by the first Caliph, Abu Bakr. In response to the refusal of certain Arab tribes to pay the alms-tax (*zakat*), he declared that "By Allah, I will fight anyone who differentiates between the prayer and the *zakat*." In the wars between the Umayyad Caliphate and the Kharijites, the latter's practice of *takfir* became the justification for their indiscriminate attacks on civilian Muslims; the more moderate Sunni view of *takfir* developed partly in response to this conflict.

In more recent times, *takfir* has sometimes been used against small sects, such as the Ahmadiyya or Ismailis, which describe themselves as Muslim, and sometimes even against larger groups such as the Shia. This has sometimes been used to legitimize physical attacks on such groups. In the case of groups such as the GIA (as mentioned above), it has been used to legitimize attacks on any Muslim not actively fighting their governments.

Many moderate Muslims, even the majority of Salafists, view today's Islamic extremist/terrorist groups such as al-Qaida as *Takfiris*. When Iraqis use *Takfiris* to describe AQIZ and its allies, it is meant in an extremely derogatory manner.

Adherence. Modern Islamist extremist/terrorist groups such as *al-Qaida*, *Takfir wal-Hijra* and the Armed Islamic Group (GIA, from French *Groupe Islamique Armé*; Arabic *al-Jam'ah al-Islamiyah al-Musallah*),

Sunni and Shia Differences

Of the several areas of controversy between Sunnis and Shia beliefs, the two most significant are historical memory and political theory. In terms of historical memory, Shia and Sunni view Islam's formative period very differently. The source of the Sunni-Shia breach is the struggle for power between the followers of Ali (Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law) and the supporters of the first three caliphs. At first the struggle was mainly political, but over the years, it gradually became focused on religious differences. The events in the years between



Muhammad's death in 632 A.D. and the death of Ali's son Husayn in 680 A.D. have developed into a foundational myth of the Shia. The central feeling of Shia since then has been that they suffered a historic injustice when Ali's right to the caliphate was usurped. In particular, Shia see the 3rd caliph, Uthman, a member of the Umayyad clan, as a mortal enemy of Ali. In addition to the Ali-Uthman struggle, the martyrdom of Ali's son Husayn in 680 A.D. forms the core of the Shia historical vision. The anniversary of this event has become a central Shia holiday. During the nine days preceding it, the story of the assassination is related at public and private gatherings. On the anniversary itself, (*Ashura*) performances re-enacting the events are followed by mournful marches. *Ashura* provides annual reinforcement for the Shia feeling of injustice. It heightens their sense of being the oppressed, persecuted, and stigmatized part of the Muslim community. It has also become a symbol of the right to rise up against tyrannical rule.

Sunni and Shia also differ significantly in terms of political theory. According to Shia teachings, a state not ruled by the descendants of Ali is illegitimate. In contrast, Sunnis believe that not only members of the Prophet Muhammad's family, but also all descendants of the Arabian Quraysh tribe, had the right to be chosen as caliphs. Sunni tradition views a Muslim regime as legitimate as long as it does not publicly reject Islam. Significantly, for Sunnis, even a bad Muslim ruler is preferable to chaos and anarchy. Sunnis, therefore, in contrast to Shia, have a very limited right to rebel within their religious tradition. In addition, Sunni religious leaders (*ulama*)—who have never enjoyed the spiritual status of their Shia counterparts—generally have been subservient to the state.

The Sunni Arabs of Iraq have long enjoyed a sense of intellectual and theological superiority as members of the most populous and most powerful sect of Islam. That sense is reinforced by Sunni rule over holy sites in Mecca and Medina, the Sunni identity of the rulers and the ruling class in Iraq and throughout the region, and the Sunni character of distinguished centers of Islamic learning, such as Al-Azhar Mosque and University in Egypt.¹⁶

The modern Sunni Arabs of Iraq take a great deal of pride in their religious and political history. They tend to regard themselves as the descendants and heirs to a long history of intellectual development, wealth, and political rule over the massive Islamic empire. They regard other ethnic and religious groups throughout the history of Iraq as less worthy of political power and influence.¹⁷

Islam and Arabism

Islam, as it is practiced in Iraq, is closely tied to Arab culture. Islam and Arabism have functioned in Iraq as the preeminent political paradigms for more than 1,300 years. Despite Islam's emphasis on community, an Arab versus non-Arab



distinction insinuated itself soon after Islam's founding. Arabs assert special rights and privileges in Islam for several reasons: 1) the birthplace of Islam and its holiest sites are in the Arab countries; 2) Arabic is the language in which God's message was revealed and transmitted; and 3) Arabs were the first to receive this message and entrusted to carry it to other populations.

In the years after Muhammad's death, a "successorship" or caliphate—the earthly embodiment of a united political and religious realm—was established to guide the Islamic community. The reign of the first four caliphs—known as the righteous caliphs—is revered by Sunni Muslims. Notably, each of the first four caliphs was a member of Muhammad's tribe and therefore Arab. When the last of the righteous caliphs died—only 28 years after the tenure of the first began—the Islamic Empire had spread to Egypt, Palestine, and Syria, and had moved east into Iraq and central Iran.

By 850, the Empire had spread across North Africa and north into Europe. It was then under control of the Abbasid caliphate based in Baghdad, and significantly, the last Arab caliphate. Thereafter, non-Arabs (principally Persians and Turks) assumed control of subsequent Islamic empires, to the indignation of the Arabs. By World War I, the Islamic Empire had been controlled by non-Arabs for centuries. Since the end of the Ottoman caliphate in 1924, most Arabs have abstained from discussion about reconstitution of the caliphate. Those who do are the radical Sunni Islamists.

There is a close association between Arab nationalism and Sunni Islam. Islamic heritage and achievement serve as an essential component of pan-Arabism. In addition, Arab Sunni Islam's reliance on genealogy tends to affirm the Sunni community's perception of primacy. Sunnis regard themselves as descendants of and heirs to the Arab Muslim rule of the 7th to 12th centuries.

Role of Islam in Government and Politics in Iraq

Because Muslims believe that sovereignty is the exclusive preserve of God, the Islamic notions of the caliphate have no territorial limits. Rather, they are directly related to the concept of rule by a person or dynasty. Since World War II, the religious bond among members of the Islamic community—the *Umma*—has been often overshadowed by nationalist affiliation, but it has not been completely abandoned or replaced. Groups of fundamentalist Muslims still seek the fusion of religion and state to attain the Islamic ideal of a just and righteous society where the word of God is law.

Islam therefore has the potential to serve as a source of legitimacy for Iraqi rulers. However, from 1920 to the late 1970s, Iraqi governments—dominated by the Sunni Arab minority—were more or less secular. From the mid-1940s to the



mid-1950s, some Islamic movements began to take shape in Iraq. The Iraqi branch of the Muslim Brotherhood was organized in 1945 in Baghdad and Mosul. Similarly, *Hizb al-Tahrir al-Islami* appeared in 1952 in Baghdad. The members of both groups were predominantly Sunni Arabs from Sunni areas and towns in central Iraq. However, *Hizb al-Tahrir al-Islami* included in its ranks a number of Shia.

Despite the over arching secular nature of the Baath Party, Saddam Hussein often took great pains to be viewed as religiously correct and therefore legitimate. While always emphasizing the Arab character of Iraq rather than the regime's Islamic zeal, the Iraqi leadership nevertheless increasingly alluded to the religious nature of the state (especially after the eruption of hostilities between Iran and Iraq). By the end of the 1980s, largely in response to the pressures generated by the Iran-Iraq War, the Iraqi government infused much of its rhetoric with Islamic terms and values, and introduced Islamic principles into its legal system. In January 1991, just before the Gulf War, Iraq's flag was changed to include the Islamic slogan "Allahu Akbar" (God is Great).

During the 1991 Persian Gulf War when Iraq invaded Kuwait, the regime initially attempted to appeal to trans-national Arab unity in order to generate support for Iraq. However, Iraq's invasion of an Arab country, and the hostile response of a substantial segment of the Arab populations, undermined the effectiveness of Arab unity against the West as a motivational symbol. The American presence in Saudi Arabia—the home of Islam's holiest cities and shrines—afforded the regime the opportunity also to invoke Islamic symbolism in its effort to enlist popular support. As the crisis deepened, Iraqi rhetoric relied heavily on Islam to enlist popular support, and the resort to unabashedly Islamic appeals and symbols increased. References to the United States as infidels became more frequent at the expense of old epithets such as imperialists and colonialists.

Over the past decade, there has been little indication of a return to secularism. Rather, the Iraqi regime continued to expand Islamic law within the country's legal system and introduced compulsory study of the Quran at all educational levels. In an apparent appeal to Muslim sensibilities, Saddam Hussein attempted to cultivate his image as a pious Muslim ruler. It is not clear to what extent these steps helped legitimize the government and strengthen its popularity. However, the regime remained secular in nearly all other respects. As for the population, there are indications that many people turned to religion over the past decade in response to the hardship resulting from the economic sanctions against Iraq.

Women in Islam

The subordinate status of women in many Arab and Muslim countries is often attributed to Islam. In fact, this phenomenon has little to do with Islam and is



instead a product of cultural norms, tribal customs and an entrenched patriarchal structure.

The monogamy of the woman is the lynchpin of Arab tribal patrilineal society. If there is any hint or possibility that the mother could have conceived a child with a man other than her husband, then the loyalty of all of the children to the father is in question. In the resource poor environment of pre-1950's Iraq, questionably loyal sons exposed a family to attacks from neighboring families who might try to seize the family's meager resources (such as goats, sheep, camels and grazing rights). This attempt to prove the legitimacy of the family's children resulted in an attempt to keep women in the home as much as possible and to cover them when they went out. Women were a source of sons and therefore an important resource that other families might try to steal.

Although Islam opposed many of the measures described above, its spread in the Arab world did little to disrupt these deep-rooted traditions. Tribal leaders adopted Islam and used their new faith to legitimize the existing forms of social organization they presided over. Islamic tenets soon became synonymous with tribalism. Islamic and tribal traditions have become so intertwined over the years that they are often confused as being one and the same. This is the case even when Islamic doctrine clearly contradicts tribal practice and customs, such as honor killings and infanticide.

The Quran emphasizes the important role of women, especially mothers, and the essential role they play in raising children and the family—the most important social institution in the Arab world. Christian and Jewish mothers are afforded the same respect. The Quran specifies that women have rights and that they should not be treated as private property or sold as slaves, and that men are obligated to respect them. In fact, the coming of Islam brought an end to female infanticide in pre-Islamic Arabia. Killing infant girls was a common practice amongst the desert tribes, who preferred boys. The Quran deemed the birth of a girl a blessing.

Mothers in the Quran

"A man asked the Prophet:
'Whom should I honor most?'
The Prophet replied: 'Your
mother'.

'And who comes next?' asked
the man. The Prophet replied:
'Your mother'.

'And who comes next?' asked
the man. The Prophet replied:
'Your mother!'.²

'And who comes next?' asked
the man. The Prophet replied:
'Your father'".²

The traditional practice of arranging marriages is rooted in tribal custom, not Islamic scripture. The Quran does allow polygamy in theory, in that a pious Muslim male can marry up to four women. During the Prophet's time, Muhammad married widows with children, older divorced women, and others in danger of being sold as slaves. The Quran forbids men to marry out of lust or other ignoble reasons.



During the 1950s, Iraq began exporting oil, and wealth grew in the cities. During the 1960s, that wealth began to spread to the countryside. The increased wealth led to changes in the brutal competition for scarce resources, which had driven the structure of society in Iraq's Arab communities. The increase in resources led to moderately increased freedom for Iraqi women.

These freedoms grew once the Baath Party took over in 1968. The Baath Party advocated modernization and an end to what it considered the outdated social practices of Arab tribes. The Baath Party felt that women needed to be educated and contribute professionally to the success of Iraq. Women were offered educational and professional opportunities, which enhanced their lives outside of the home and allowed them to become more equal partners in providing for the family. Particularly in the cities, women began attending university, working outside the home, and wearing Western clothing. The economic boom continued through the 1970s, until the economy began to fail with the beginning of the Iran-Iraq War in 1980.

The economy declined throughout the 1980s and finally entered a state of sanctions-based depression from 1991 until 2003. Throughout this period of decline, Iraq's society began to experience competition for scarce resources, and many families fell back into their traditional attitudes and behaviors towards women.

The collapse of law and order and the continued economic dislocation, which have characterized the period of Coalition occupation, have only reinforced these behaviors. Women are under physical threat from criminals seeking to kidnap or rape them, and there are no effective legal repercussions for attacks. Families increasingly keep their women and girls at home to protect them. Additionally, the collapse of the Baath regime and rising anti-American sentiments have been



In Iraq, some women wear the *hijab* while others choose not to.

accompanied by a resurgence of Islam. In many areas, this resurgence has manifested itself through militias of young, anti-American men with machine guns who have taken it upon themselves to enforce their perception of Islamic values by attacking women who they see dressed in what they perceive to be an un-Islamic way. These issues have pushed women back toward traditional roles, but not in a uniform way. The application of Arab norms remains based on individual and family decisions.



The Quran calls for both men and women to dress modestly, rather than admonishing only women. Many women are required by their husbands and families to cover their hair by wearing a hijab, or headscarf, and long dresses. This practice varies widely in Iraq. The Baath Party's secular legacy continues to influence how Iraqis dress. For example, many educated women from urban families dress like their counterparts in the West. Others may choose to wear a hijab, along with Western-style jeans and sneakers. Women traditionally wear black gowns known as *abayas* in conservative Shia cities like Najaf, Kufa, and Karbala.

While many Westerners see women's clothing in the Middle East as an oppressive measure imposed by men, many Iraqi women see their clothing as protective and even liberating. The clothes cover them and keep men from viewing them as sexual objects. Many educated Iraqi women cover their hair, arms, and legs, and feel this makes men take what they say more seriously. Many Iraqi women view the way they dress as a way of protecting their family's honor in the eyes of the community. Others view it as complying with the Quranic admonition that good Muslims dress modestly. The variety of styles of women's dress reflects the wide range of personal, family, and community views about modesty and the role of women in society.

At this point, women are remaining in the home more and more. The security environment is poor and employment is scarce. Women stay at home because it is safe. At the same time, many women continue to pursue education and participation in leadership roles as much as possible. The application of Islamic and Arab norms to women's behavior remains an individual and family issue, and it is affected by the extent of the rule of law and the availability of resources.

Piety

Religious identification is very important for Iraqi Muslims and Arabs in general, including Christians. This holds true even in Arab countries with strong secular traditions, such as Iraq. In most respects, Arab society is conservative and traditional. Religion plays a central role in everyday life. Being an atheist or an agnostic is unheard of in this environment. There are atheists in the Arab world, but an Iraqi atheist would not speak openly about his or her views out of fear of dishonoring his family or being alienated from his community.

Iraqis observe their religion in a variety of ways. Some carry a copy of the Quran with them. Some pray regularly. Some give to charity. Some observe rules about modesty, sexuality, food and drink. Some go to the mosque or listen to the instructions of an imam. At the same time, many Iraqis who fail to do these things would not hesitate to consider themselves good or devout Muslims.



In addition to personal religious observances and belief, the outward display of religious piety is important in maintaining one's honor and standing in the community. For example, secular Iraqis may attend Friday prayer services at the local mosque in order to safeguard their image as a pious Muslim within the community. Political leaders and other influential figures tap into these popular sentiments by frequently attending Friday prayers at mosques in order to assert their religious credentials.

Leaders with great piety have been very successful in the post-Saddam era because people perceive their piety as a manifestation of their honesty, civic-mindedness, and overall good character. Particularly in the Shia community, learned scholars of Islam are seen as wise embodiments of the Islamic spirit, as individuals who are always working for the good of the community at large. Their judgments are revered because their piety shows them the correct path for the community to take.

Religious observance and open displays of piety in the Arab world experienced a marked resurgence in the late 1960s and 1970s. This trend corresponded with Israel's invasion and subsequent defeat of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan in the 1967 war. The humiliating defeat at the hands of Israel led many Arabs to question whether the secular socialist and pan-Arab nationalist model advocated by Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser was ideal, especially considering its suppression of Islam. Many Arabs attributed their humiliation to the secular Western ideologies that they had adopted, namely, nationalism and socialism. The 1979 Iranian Islamic Revolution and the defeat of the Soviet Union to Islamic resistance fighters in Afghanistan in the 1980s also contributed to the Islamic resurgence in the Arab world. Islamists charged that the Arab and Muslim world had deviated from the right path. Only a return to Islam would hasten a spiritual, cultural, and political revival.

In Iraq, the oppressive policies of the secular Baath regime prompted an upsurge in piety in some portions of Iraqi society. Many Iraqis viewed a return to Islamic practices as a means of defying the regime and undermining Baath authority. In the wake of the Baath collapse, many Iraqis, for years prohibited from enforcing Islamic guidelines, have begun enthusiastically imposing Sharia rule throughout their communities. This is especially true of the Shia, who were relentlessly victimized by Saddam, and are now reveling in new-found religious freedom. Many Islamic-driven militias, such as Muqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army, have emerged in an effort to impose Quranic order.

While many Iraqis embrace the freedom to worship and live according to strict Islamic doctrine, while many others, having grown accustomed to the liberal interpretations of Islam under the Baath, resent the imposition of what they consider confining practices. Some urban dwellers associate strict, traditional



Islam with rural, tribal, and therefore “backwards,” culture. This struggle between the spiritual and secular aspects of Iraqi society is another bi-product of Baath policy, and contributes to the current social unrest.

Fatalism

Most Iraqis, and Arabs in general, believe that God determines the events around them. The notion of fatalism is based on the idea that God has direct control of everything that happens in the world, whether good or bad. In other words, everything that happens does so for a reason. Many Iraqis will attribute their misfortune or bad luck to the will of God when something goes wrong. This outlook is more prevalent amongst uneducated rural dwellers than educated urban classes. The routine proclamation of “Inshallah” (“If God wills”) exemplifies this facet of Islamic culture in Iraq.⁴

On the other hand, Islamic scholars characterize Islam as a religion of “action.” The Quran requires regular prayer, fasting, distribution of charity, etc. The Quran states that faith is not complete when it is followed blindly or accepted unquestionably, and that Muslims should base their beliefs on well-grounded convictions rather than blind obedience. Each Muslim must choose if and how to follow his or her faith. This argument contradicts the notion that fatalism drives the actions of most Muslim Arabs.

The fatalist outlook that pervades Iraqi and Arab society is also a product of the enduring authoritarianism that characterizes the region. In most respects, Saddam’s totalitarian order left Iraqis powerless to control the events around them. Although the vast majority of Iraqis want to live in a democracy where they can, among other things, work to influence government and politics, some remain skeptical about their ability to do so. Growing popular frustration with the occupation and the increasingly volatile security situation further reinforces fatalism.

For Iraqis facing great uncertainty about their personal security or the shape of Iraq’s future political, economic, and social system, a feeling of powerlessness and fatalism is common. At the same time, the fact that Arab Muslim immigrants have for the most part assimilated and succeeded in American and Western societies demonstrates that a fatalistic outlook is as much a product of one’s environment as it is of one’s religious and/or cultural convictions.

Social Justice

Like Christianity, the Quran calls on Muslims to extend kindness, help, and goodwill towards their fellow man, especially the less fortunate, including non-Muslims. In theory, one’s standing in Islam is not derived from his or her class,



ethnic, racial, national, or tribal affiliation, but from piety and good deeds. One of the reasons why Muslims fast during the holy month of Ramadan is to gain an appreciation for everything that God has provided them, and to experience hunger and develop sympathy for the sick and poor.

The Quran outlines a framework for economic life and charity that reflects Islam's emphasis on social justice. Earning one's livelihood through honest labor is seen as a virtue and a right in Islam. The Quran does not forbid trade, business, and capitalism. At the same time, it reminds Muslims of their responsibility to share their wealth with those who are less fortunate. The concept of *zakah*, which means blessing or purification in Arabic, requires that Muslims donate a portion of their wealth to the sick and poor.

Although many Iraqis contribute to charities, there is a strong social divide between the rich and the poor. This divide is clear in post-Baath Iraqi society where looting, theft, and other activities carried out by the poor are feared by the wealthy. There is a general feeling that the poor are uneducated, unlawful, and unclean. Poverty is often viewed as an indicator of being from a "bad family." A family's poverty is seen as an indicator of its lack of honor.

Zakah in the Quran

"Tell him that Allah has made Zakah obligatory for them, that it should be collected from the rich and distributed to the poor."⁵

Islam also provides a framework to guide commercial transactions to ensure that all parties are treated fairly. The Quran states that money should be earned only through the investment of real resources, work, or intellect. For example, Islam forbids the earning of interest on loans. Instead, the Quran encourages joint business ventures, partnerships, and profit-sharing instead of fixed interest loans provided by parties with little or no stake in a particular project.

Quranic Treatment of Warfare versus Actual Practice

Muslims reside either in the House of Peace (territory under Islamic leadership) or the House of War (its converse). Emerging Islamic doctrine sanctioned the use of force to achieve a "righteous society." Islam possesses an elaborate body of rules about the collective duty of the believers to wage holy war (*jihad*) for the sake of Allah against infidels or those who refuse to accept Islam. From this concept of *jihad*, Muslims have created volumes on topics as diverse as types of defensive and offensive war, conduct of diplomatic relations, conditions of and parameters for peace, division of spoils, treatment of prisoners, and martyrdom. Islamic scholars have differentiated three situations: war against non-Muslims (*jihad*), war between Muslims (*fitna*), and war as a condition of the human experience (*harb*). *Jihad* was permissible, if not obligatory; *fitna* was objectionable. Nevertheless, Muslim Arabs often engaged in conflict with one



another. In these cases, one side usually declared the other to be apostates from true Islam.

The Quran also deals with the concept of *shahada* (martyrdom). Some verses imply that those who become *shahid* do not really die and receive rewards in the afterlife. The most revered of *shahid* was Husayn. He was killed when he refused to accept the authority of the Umayyad dynasty. Husayn's example, which only involved injury and death to combatants, has been used to legitimate martyrdom that has inflicted death and injury on noncombatants. At the same time there is also in the interpretation of *jihad* concepts of proportionality, redress, limitations on combat, and the need to exhaust other methods before resorting to violence. In this way, it is similar to the Western concept of just war.

Injunctions regarding *jihad* and the House of War have been tempered over the centuries since it is impractical to be constantly waging war. Nevertheless, it remains a potent force, whether fighting other Muslims or against foreign powers. It assures Muslims that God stands by them. Overall, the use of the term *jihad* has served to validate the political conduct of hostilities, since the resurrection of the Islamic state cannot occur without *jihad*. The ultimate aim of *jihad* is the establishment of the Islamic state, for short of that, Muslims will always be oppressed by the infidel.

Jihad

The Islamic concept of jihad is often misunderstood as meaning "holy war." Jihad actually means "struggle" in Arabic. The Quran describes jihad as a Muslim's struggle to further a just cause.

According to the Quran, a Muslim can perform jihad in many ways. A personal jihad can mean a Muslim's determination to purify his or self of negative influences. Pious Muslims often perform jihad as a right of passage during times of personal crises.

A physical jihad refers to a defensive battle waged to protect Muslims against oppression and attack.

Islamist radicals frequently distort the true meaning of jihad to justify acts of violence and terrorism. Terrorism is not condoned in the Quran.

Islam and Tribalism

Islam has a profound influence on everyday life in Iraq. Islamic customs and traditions impact the outlook and behavior of ordinary Iraqis because Islam serves as more than just a religion in the Western sense. Aside from prescribing a set of beliefs and principles, Islam provides Muslims with a set of proper behavior patterns as part of their daily routine. The Quran provides Muslims with detailed instructions on, among other things, when and how to pray and what to eat and wear. Many Islamic customs differ markedly from Western customs.



In theory, there is no separation between the mosque and the state in Islam. Religion is taught in schools in the Arab world. Islam also influences how Arabs and Muslims speak. Most native Arabic speakers feel that Arabic is more than just a medium for communication. Instead, Arabic is the language of Islam—the language used by God to convey his message to mankind. The Arabic language is rich in religious references that are routinely used, even by more secular Muslims.

Unlike many Gulf countries, Iraq has never been a theocracy (a country governed by religious leaders or religious law). Iraqi families have always been relatively free to practice Islam and express their beliefs in whatever manner they choose. As a result, there is a tremendous variation in the impact of Islam on the lives of Iraqis, as well as in the way in which they express their beliefs.

Iraqi culture is heavily influenced by ancient tribal customs that pre-date the arrival of Islam. Consequently, behaviors that many Westerners believe are rooted in Islam actually have nothing to do with the Quran and are instead a product of traditional tribalism, namely the patriarchal nature of Iraqi society and the subordinate position of women in much of the Arab world.

Arab tribes pride themselves on their independent lifestyle, where traditional patriarchal values rooted in ancient customs shape everyday life. The arrival of Islam legitimized and reinforced many tribal values because of the ability of early Islamic leaders and elites to both ally with and bring the tribes under control. This was the case even when Islam contradicted certain tribal practices.

The appearance of Islam as a unifying ideology in the area of Mecca and Medina, combined with the skillful efforts of both Muhammad and Abu Bakr, resulted in the emergence of a new Islamic state that was able to effectively organize and dominate the different tribal groups of the Arabian Peninsula. The state emerged as a relatively centralized, unified, and unifying polity that integrated most of these tribes and made them functioning parts of the growing empire, replacing the extreme political fragmentation that had formerly existed in Arabia, with various tribal groups vying with one another for local dominance. It was this integration of the Arabian tribes into a single new Islamic state that set the stage for the Arab Islamic conquests, which in fact represented the fruit of that integration. This process of state consolidation that began with Muhammad continued unabated throughout the period of the early Islamic conquests.

Despite the early successes of the Islamic state, however, the real guarantee of the state's continuing ascendancy rested in its ability to keep the nomadic tribesmen under control. This was not an easy task because the early Islamic state and its leaders were quite hostile to the nomadic way of life. Early Islam itself appears to have expressed, along with the more strictly religious and ethical



notions of God's unity and power and mankind's duty to be faithful and just, the social ideals of the settled life. To a certain extent, this bias in favor of settled life may reflect simple cultural preference, since Muhammad himself and the Islamic ruling elite were sedentary townsmen from the Hijaz. During the conquest period, this bias continued to be characteristic of the early leaders, despite the great numbers of nomadic tribesmen who eventually came to be associated with the state as employees of the army.

Furthermore, the ruling elite's bias against the nomad was rooted in more than mere disapproval of the nomadic way of life; it was ultimately founded in the keen awareness that the nomads, above all others, were a potential danger to the integration of the state and the political ascendancy of the elite. For it was the nomadic groups of the Arabian peninsula that were traditionally the ultimate source of power there; even in cases of conflict between two rival centers of settlement (as between Mecca and Medina during Muhammad's rise to prominence), the outcome depended largely on which side could most successfully mobilize a coalition of nomadic allies. The new Islamic state's survival, then, depended directly on its continued domination of the nomadic elements in Arabian society.

Due to a wide range of factors, the firm integration of the tribes of Arabia by the state was not long lived. The key underlying factor was the shift of the center of the Islamic state from the Arabian peninsula to Iraq, then Syria, and back to Iraq until the end of the Abbasid Period which resulted in the shift of the focus of the leaders from the Arab Bedouin and peripherally located tribes to other increasingly non-nomadic populations for regime support. As a result, Arabian society and other areas on the periphery of the Empire, historically politically fragmented and outside state control, easily reverted to their original independence. The Islamic state's victory over the tribes was thus to be a phenomenon unique in the history of the peninsula until modern times. This pattern of loss of control of the nomadic and other tribes repeated itself throughout the Islamic lands, particularly in Iraq.¹⁸

Thus, Islam and tribalism, particularly Arab Bedouin or nomadic tribalism, have experienced both cooperation and conflict in many critical aspects throughout the history of the region. Out of this came an "Islamic" brand of tribalism that continues to influence how Iraqis think and act today. As a result, in most Arab countries, Islamic values remain secondary to Arab tribal norms, but it is very difficult to distinguish which norms are Islamic and which are Arab, because they are closely linked.



Tribalism and the Bedouin Tribal Ideal

Bedouin tribalism is a crucial element of Sunni Arab identity in Iraq. A tribe is a social structure consisting of a number of families, clans, or other groups who share a common ancestry (real or perceived) and culture. Many of the Sunni Arabs of Iraq are descended from the Bedouin population of the Arabian Peninsula, and even those who are not actually descended from the Bedouins seek to emulate the Bedouin Tribal ideal as the best representation of Arabness and Islam.

Although today the Bedouins constitute probably not more than 10 per cent of the population of the Arab world, many Arabs, in both the villages and the cities, claim Bedouin origin. What is more important than mere numbers is that a very large sector of the settled population still considers the Bedouin ethos as an ideal to which, in theory at least, it would like to measure up. As Jacques Berque, one of the few westerners who have written about the Arab World with true sensitivity and empathy, put it: "...The emotional intensity of the desert dweller has imposed its ideal on the opulent cities." The fact is that the Bedouins are looked upon, not only by the Arab cities, but by the entire Arab world with the exception of its westernized elements, as images and figures from the past, as living ancestors, as latter-day heirs and witnesses to the ancient glory of the heroic age. Hence, the importance of the Bedouin ethos, and of the Bedouins' aristocratic moral code, for the Arab world in general.¹⁹

The Bedouins were nomads who lived together in tribes to survive in the harsh desert environment. The tribe was the primary social unit for the Bedouins because of the harshness and lack resources of the desert environment could not sustain larger, more complex political/social organizations. Given this limitation, the tribe's first and foremost critical function was to providing protection from attacks from other competing tribes and their members. The tribe also allowed its members to pool resources to improve their chances of survival.

The need for group solidarity in the desert environment led to a set of strict social values to guide tribal members' behavior. In the traditional Bedouin tribe, tribesmen were expected to show unquestioning loyalty and obedience to the tribal leaders. In a desert environment, where disobedience could cause the tribe to lose its source of water, strategic position, and food supply, intense group loyalty was necessary for survival. According to tradition, the tribe member who disobeyed the leadership or chose to serve his own interests over those of the tribe would be cast out from the protective influence of the tribe.²⁰ The tribesman would have to survive against the desert elements and defend himself against



hostile parties. In such an environment, tribal banishment was most often a death sentence.

The idea of honor was a central component of the Bedouins' strict social values. Honor, and the shame that comes when honor is lost, requires always acting in the best interests of the tribe in a manner that brings dignity to all tribesmen.²¹ For men, honor meant acting bravely in the face of danger, particularly in battle, and sacrificing for the sake of the tribe. For women, honor meant acting modestly, protecting her sexuality from all but her husband, and defending that which belongs to her family against all who wish to take it.²² The importance of honor was paramount in an environment where the loss of honor could mean the difference between prosperity and starvation.

Nomads, and their settled descendents, are divided into two groups, the noble and the ignoble tribes. Nomadic tribes trace their ancestry back for centuries, and form the aristocracy of the desert, who look down on all settled people and non-noble tribes. Only the noble tribes qualify to be called Bedouin. Bedouins tend to raise camels, rather than other livestock. Descendents of the Bedouin who have taken up a settled lifestyle retain the prestige of their Bedouin status and are socially superior to non-Bedouin town dwellers. The noble tribes (called *asilin*) are further subdivided into "original" and "Arabized" Arabs. Noble tribes trace their descent to two individuals, Qahtan and Adnan. Original Arabs are believed to be from the south of the Arabian Peninsula and claim descent from Qahtan. Arabized Arabs are said to be descendents of Adnan from the north of the Arabian Peninsula and became Arabs through adoption of the language and customs and through marriage. Original Arabs are considered superior to Arabized Arabs in the status conscious nomadic community. Members of noble tribes only marry others of noble lineage. Bedouins traditionally lived in black sheep and goat hair tents. Their wealth was acquired through raiding weaker tribes living in the same area or demanding tribute for protection against raids by other Bedouin tribes.

Below the Bedouin in status are the semi-nomads called *arab ad-dar* ("Arabs of the house"). This group lives in black tents, but raise sheep and goats rather than camels. Semi-nomads who can trace their ancestry are considered by the Bedouin to be a lesser nobility, while those who cannot trace their ancestry are classified as ignoble and unable to marry into the Bedouin ranks.

Semi-sedentary desert people occupy a rank below the semi-nomads. They are called *raiyya* or people who pasture their animals and are related to the camel raising nomads, but their noble status is not recognized by the Bedouin.

A large gap in status separates the Bedouin, semi-nomadic and semi-sedentary people from the ignoble tribes. Ignoble tribes or groups are the shepherds



(*shwaya*), blacksmiths (*sunnaa*) and tinkers (*suluba*). Within the ignoble tribes, the *suluba* are considered to be far beneath the *shwaya* in terms of status because their occupation is seen as far less dignified. The *suluba* also lack a tribal organization of their own, and are rumored to be descendents of the Crusaders because of their physical appearance.

An individual's lineage is important throughout Arab society. This interest in lineage is especially strong among the noble nomadic tribes. Although most of the population has adopted a settled lifestyle, the status of one's ancestors remains relevant in modern Iraqi society. As a result, many Iraqis take great pride in tracing their descent to the noble tribes of nomads, and proof of descent from the Bedouin gives an individual prestige and standing in modern Iraqi society.

Role of Tribes in Society

In Iraq today, the legacy of the Bedouin tribes shapes the social values of the Sunni Arabs. At least three-quarters of the Iraqi people are members of one of the country's many tribes. The traditional tribal values of the Bedouin survive, just as the ties of tribe and family remain the most important social relationships. Social relationships in Iraqi Arab culture require a melting of the individuals' identity and personality within the framework of the communal group. Even though tribesmen in a modern urban environment no longer face the prospect of death at the face of the desert elements, the importance of personal honor and tribal loyalty is great. Instead of asserting their separateness and privacy as independent individuals, Iraqi Arabs tend to interact as members of a group—family, clan, village, neighborhood, tribe, etc. Group norms guide individual behavior, and Iraqi Arabs display a high need for social approval.

Within Arab culture, therefore, the group takes precedence over the individual. Loyalty to the group is highly valued, and responsibility is generally considered to fall upon the group in its entirety rather than on any particular individual. Distant cousins, neighbors, and friends can develop bonds as strong as any between close family members. Kinship ties are sometimes fabricated, denied, and manipulated to accommodate these social realities. Because of the primacy of the group, obligations of group members to one another are wide, varied, and powerful. The extended family (or kin group) is the fundamental unit of political and social action.

Related kin groups may be allies or enemies, depending upon the existing economic and political conditions. Iraqi tribes are characterized by solidarity, hospitality, and independence. Tribal values also include loyalty, courage, gallantry, manliness, and attachment to and mastery of arms. In general, the degree of hierarchy and centralization in a tribe correlates with the length of time it has been sedentary. Tribal membership does not impose a rigid structure on



behavior. Rather, the tribe provides its members with an identity, a sense of security, and a blueprint for the resolution of conflicts, but everyday behavior is pragmatic and adaptive to specific situations.

Collectivism

Iraq is a collectivist society where an individual is associated with the larger group (family, clan, and tribe) to which he or she belongs. In this framework, the family constitutes the primary unit of social organization. This differs from the individualist culture that characterizes the United States, where independent people serve as the basic units of social organization separate from the larger group (family, neighborhood, and community) to which they belong.

The notion of collectivism in Iraqi culture is rooted in pre-Islamic nomadic Bedouin tribal traditions. The Bedouins migrated throughout the harsh desert in search of food, water, and grazing land for their livestock. The scarcity of food and water required families and extended clans and tribes to depend on one another for survival. Surviving in such a harsh environment often meant competing with neighboring families and tribes for the desert's limited resources. Strong group cohesion and loyalty were required for survival. This competition sometimes led to violence. A group's power and prestige depended on the number of men it could mobilize to fight. Acting as an honorable and brave tribesman became synonymous with being a good Muslim.

Collectivist links between families, clans, and tribes are stronger than ethnic, sectarian, and nationalist feelings for the majority of Iraqis. These links were strengthened under Saddam's repressive rule, as most Iraqis had no one to turn to or trust other than family. The sanctity of family and tribal links was reinforced by Islamic principles: a good Muslim cares for and protects his family and tribe. In this framework, an individual's honor, dignity, and loyalty are of paramount importance and should override personal needs and aspirations. Deviating from this norm is akin to dishonoring the family, tribe, and even God.

Honor and Shame

Shaming is the primary instrument with which Iraqi Arab society enforces conformity. The group often determines a person's identity, status, and prospects for success in life. As a result, Iraqi Arabs are subjected to immense family and community pressures. The importance of conformity is related to and reinforced by a reverence for tradition. An example of this phenomenon is the Iran-Iraq War, during which thousands of Sunnis went to fight for the state by order of their tribal leaders. The tribesmen who returned with medals for bravery quickly found themselves in positions of influence and power within the tribe. Those who returned under a cloud of cowardice were shunned. Some moved from their



tribal towns to Baghdad. A few were killed by relatives or by their fellow tribesmen for bringing shame to the group.²³

The tribe limited an individual's freedom because his or her actions could affect the standing of the entire group. Protecting the honor of the family and the tribe was essential to self-preservation. Shaming one's family or tribe meant disrupting internal cohesion, making the group susceptible to outside threats. The notions of honor and shame in Iraqi and Arab society pre-date Islam. At the same time, living as a pious Muslim has become synonymous with acting honorably in the tribal sense of being loyal and brave.

Men and women are held to different standards where their honor is considered. Men are judged by their honesty, bravery, and sense of duty. An honorable woman is expected to uphold a code of modesty requiring that she refrain from any public expressions of sexuality. She is also expected to serve her husband and take care of the children and household. Islam has attached itself to this norm, in that an honorable woman represents a pious Muslim.

Family members like fathers and brothers often watch over the behavior of their unmarried sisters and daughters to ensure that they uphold the family honor. Women who bring dishonor to their families because of sexual indiscretions are ostracized or abandoned. Even rumors about a woman's sexual indiscretions can bring shame to a family. Victims of rape and sexual abuse are also often condemned. In extreme but rare instances, they are severely punished, such as the case with "honor killings." Killing in the name of honor is designed to restore a family or tribe's tarnished reputation.

Like Christianity, Islam forbids pre-marital sex and adultery. Punishment for illicit sexual activity is to be rendered by Allah alone, and honor killings are considered criminal acts under Islamic law. Ironically, Islam presents a framework for dealing with sexual indiscretions by both men and women in a balanced way, unlike honor killings, which only target women. Nevertheless, perpetrators of honor killings often refer to the Quran when "restoring" their family's honor. The phenomenon of honor killings is therefore perceived to be Islamic, but is in reality a characteristic of tribal culture not promoted by the Quran. It is important to note that honor killings in the name of protecting and/or restoring the honor of the family and tribe also occur in predominantly Christian societies all over the world, including in Latin America, Europe, and Central and East Asia.³

While the Quran calls on both men and women to act and dress modestly and to protect their chastity, it specifically regulates only women's dress. For example, the Quran states that women should dress modestly by covering themselves in order to not display their beauty to men other than their husbands and immediate family members.



Tribal Structure and Organization

Bedouin tribes, as distinct from traditional village and town dwellers, have established patterns of behavior, defined by geography and the annual seasons. As desert camel and sheepherders, the Bedouin tribes established traditions of territory, which center on the distinct survival requirements of the four main seasons of the year. As late as the 1930s, little had changed in the Bedouin lifestyle or the geographic boundaries of the tribes in the Arabian Peninsula.

The basic territory of a Bedouin tribe is called the "*dira*". It traditionally encompassed an area that averaged 120 miles by 180 miles. Over the course of a year, Bedouin tribes would migrate along a "grand circular tour," encompassing the entire *dira*. Over a long span of time, tribes have established trading ties to specific towns and villages, where they visit to trade their herds for needed commodities, including coffee, rice, and other staples. The system of ties between Bedouin tribes and these trading towns and villages is called the "*musabila*" system. Given that most of the borders of Iraq, Jordan, Syria, and the Arabian Peninsula were established, arbitrarily, by external conquering powers, those borders have nothing to do with the traditional *musabila* system, and often, Bedouin tribes cross these "artificial" borders to conduct their business. Efforts by occupation and national governments to alter these traditions have usually failed. It must be remembered that in the present era many Bedouin tribes include both sedentarized farming and herding clans and those more purely devoted to the transhumant way of life. The most "*asil*" (noble) of the Arabian Bedouin tribes such as the al-Murra or the al-Rwala have disdained to accept any "taint" of village life to invade their ways.

The basic units of Arab tribal social structure are a series of concentric circles, from the innermost (the extended family) to the outermost (the tribe). According to the Prophet Muhammad, God divided the world into nations and tribes. Medieval Muslim genealogists used Muhammad's genealogy as the primary model in defining Arab tribal structure. Historically, the extended family had its own herd and was the center of daily activities. The sub-tribe is composed of a number of extended families (or clans) tracing themselves back to one patrilineal father. The sub-tribe traditionally comprised the main defense unit. The tribe consists of four to six sub-tribes tracing itself to a real or fictional ancestor. The tribe's activities are mainly political, consisting of managing relations with other tribes and governments. At this level, the tribe is led by a shaikh and advised by a council. Some tribes join together for defensive purposes to form confederations under a paramount shaikh.

Traditionally, the shaikh of each tribe is selected from among the leading families on the basis of three core criteria: courage, leadership and luck (*hadn*). There



are no automatic criteria for selecting successive shaikhs. In Bedouin practice, this is not a title handed down automatically to the eldest son of the previous shaikh, however, the practice of passing tribal leadership from father to son has become prevalent in many tribes – if the son is worthy. The issue of whether or not a candidate for shaikhly status is lucky is important given the extent to which Bedouin tribes were vulnerable to factors outside of their control, especially extremes in weather, plagues of locust, outbreaks of disease, and other natural disasters.

It is important to note that, while the shaikh is the tribal ruler, he does not have absolute authority. Before any significant tribal decision is made, particularly a decision about war or peace, the shaikh must confer with the tribal council normally composed of the tribal elders. Only after such consultations can the shaikh announce decisions to the members of the tribe. Traditionally among the Bedouin tribes, once such a decision was made, tribal obedience was without question. However, in Iraq today Shaikhs do not necessarily have such power. The smaller and more tight knit the tribal element, the more likely the Shaikh is able to control the actions of most of his tribal members; However, any degree of real control is usually unobtainable for large tribes and tribal confederations. As a result, today Shaikhs can influence their tribes, but cannot exert absolute control.

Despite this consultative requirement, the shaikh is truly the "father of his people," responsible for the well-being of members of his tribe to include the weakest and poorest among his people. He must know the state of affairs among his people in times of peace and prosperity, as well as in times of grave danger. Among his many responsibilities is to host occasional feasts, either when special visitors arrive, or when weddings occur. It is at these times that camels or sheep are slaughtered as part of the celebrations. Historically, in poorer Bedouin tribes, these feasts may have been the only occasions when tribal members ate meat other than wild game or locusts hunted and killed in the desert.

The concept underlying tribal society is the extended family or *khams*. The *khams* consists of all male-born children who share the same great-great grandfather – in other words, five generations of men in a single family. Of all the levels of tribal organization, the *khams* remains the most vital. "Once the *khams* structure is broken, there's no longer a tribal society in place."

Within each *khams*, every man owes allegiance to the other. The most dramatic display of this loyalty is found in the tradition of blood feuds, or *al-thar*. If one member of a *khams* is killed, other members are obligated to avenge the death. This could take the form of killing someone from the *khams* that murdered the family member or, more commonly, working out a blood price – a financial repayment – from one *khams* to another.



Arab tribal nomenclature varies historically and geographically. For example, for the Arab tribes of northwest Iraq, *fakhd* means patrilineal clan (in Arabic it literally translates to “thigh”), while for the southern tribes of Iraq it refers to a lineage. In Iraq only *qabila*, *ashira*, *fakhd*, *hamula*, and *bayt* remain in current use. These terms describe the fundamental relations constituting Iraqi social tribal organization. They each denote a particular order of relations, enabling an individual to situate himself in the social system. Tribal names often refer to an ancestor, region, or occupation.

The lowest level of tribal organization is the *bayt*, or “house,” which is similar to a *khams*. It can resemble a single, vast extended family with hundreds of members.

A number of *bayts* or houses form small patrilinear groups of extended families called a *hamula*, which can also represent a village of a certain tribe, and constitute the real kinship group. The size of the *hamula* is variable, numbering dozens or hundreds of individuals. It is directly related to its power and wealth. The word means “carry away” in Arabic and evokes the mutual aid that men of the same *hamula* are supposed to bring one another.

A number of *hamulas*, in turn, form a clan, or *fakhd* (pl. *afkhdh*). The *fakhd* is the third level of tribal structure. Each of which has its own chief and its own name and specific territory generally corresponding to a village and serves as the basic units in productive terms; they organize pastures, own sources of water and have a strong sense of territoriality.

A group of clans forms an *ashira*, or tribal organization. The *ashira* is the second level of tribal structure and can vary widely in size – they can have a few thousand or over a hundred thousand members. This level of tribal structure has more unity because of the power of its paramount shaikh (or his house) and the territorial proximity of the various clans (*fakhd*) of which it is composed.

A group of tribes (*ashira*) forms a confederation, or *qabila*, which is the highest level of tribal structure. Although a group of tribes, a *qabila* is still referred to as a tribe. A *qabila* (tribe) is a larger unit, whose affiliated clans claim to have a common lineage or descent. This descent is more often claimed than literally true. As these sub-tribes lived apart, the unity of the tribe was very loose and informal in military or political terms. Today, most tribes in Iraq can be traced to one of three tribal confederations, the Tayy, Zubayd, and Rubia. Each of these tribal confederations has major subtribes. For example, the subtribes of the Zubayd Tribal Confederation are the Ubayd, Janabi, Azza, Jubur, and Dulaim tribes. Over time, these subtribes have also come to be referred to as tribal confederations in their own right.



Tribes claim territory as their own through inheritance, conquest, right of customary use, or delegated from state authority, and are prepared to defend it by force. Politically, the tribal units are grouped into hierarchies of chiefs and notables. The authority of the leaders stems from both personal influence and largesse, as well as from nobility of lineage. In theory, especially among the Shia tribes, leadership is confined to one lineage. In practice, though, leadership is a function of the success of the leader in defending the tribal lands and managing and resolving intra-tribal conflicts. The tribal system in most of the Shia Arab south is different from that of the Sunni Arab center-north in that the Shia shaikhs often had to share power with the *sada*—holy men—and the *ulama* (religious scholars).

Tribes and the Iraqi State

Until the mid-19th century, tribes retained much of their ancient structures. Each strong tribe was a miniature mobile state, with its patriarchal leadership usually held by a warrior household; its own military force; its customary law; its non-literate culture; its territoriality; and its mode of subsistence economy (i.e. pastoralism, commerce, and conquest). Exacting tribute was as important for tribes' livelihood as animal breeding or the spoils of war. Tribes controlled 90 percent of Iraq's territory in various formidable tribal confederations that controlled communications and trade routes. The numerical superiority of the tribes was augmented by the fact that adult tribesmen were generally armed, whereas urban centers had only thinly manned Ottoman garrisons for protection.

Iraq, like most Arab states, has a recent history of strong central government. Iraqi Arab culture favors centralization of authority. Iraqi Arabs are generally submissive and obedient to their superiors. Authority is generally related to age and sex. Arabs associate age with experience and wisdom. Thus, the head of the clan is normally the oldest competent male member. When he dies or becomes incapacitated, his place will likely be taken by his oldest son or one of his own brothers. Projecting a paternal image, leaders occupy securely the top of the pyramid of authority.

Traditionally, political legitimacy and authority was also based on a symbiosis between Islam as a belief system and the tribe as a basic unit of social organization. This loose arrangement accommodated the segmentary nature of population formations in Iraq.

Urban vs. Rural Culture

The disappearance of the nomadic population and the division of Iraqi Arab society between urban and rural are relatively recent occurrences. Previously,



Iraqi Arab society was divided into three interdependent yet antagonistic groups: nomads, agriculturalists, and town dwellers. Despite the decline of the nomadic population, the Bedouin tribal mode still profoundly influences the rural population and the newly settled sections of small and medium-sized towns, especially in western and southern Iraq. Generally speaking, the tribes of the west and the mid-Euphrates region, because of their direct contact with the desert, have maintained (or recreated) their traditions far more fully than those of eastern Iraq.

Historically, a wide gap separated Iraqi cities and the tribe-dominated countryside. Some of the urban Arabs, in particular the educated ones, had come under the influence of Turkish and Persian culture. Tribal Arabs, in contrast, had escaped that influence. The Ottoman Empire championed the towns at the expense of the tribes. The British, in contrast, tried to balance the tribes against the towns, and excluded the countryside from national law. Until the fall of the monarchy in 1958, Iraq was legally subject to two norms: one for the city and one for the tribal areas.

Until well into the 20th century, many urban residents were of relatively recent tribal origin. These tribal immigrants were therefore a link between the two disparate societies. Those who moved into Baghdad and other urban centers from the same village tended to relocate in clusters to ease the difficulties of transition and maintain traditional patterns of mutual assistance. Neighborhoods formed on the basis of rural or even tribal origin. Over the last 20 years, the sharp cleavage between the rural and urban communities has further deteriorated. Large areas of the rural south especially have been devastated by continuous fighting, triggering a massive migration to the cities. The general outline and history of Iraqi population dynamics over the last 50 years is characterized chiefly by urbanization, with a steady and growing movement of people from the rural (especially southern) region to the urban (especially central) region. Rural-to-urban migration is fueled by the push of population pressures on natural resources and the lack of economic opportunity in rural areas, and the pull of perceived economic opportunity and a better lifestyle in the cities.

The Arabic word for city, *medina*, connotes the center of political or economic power. Iraqi cities and towns are a mosaic of neighborhoods based mainly on religious or ethnic composition. In general, Islamic cities—Shia and Sunni alike—are marked by a series of specific buildings and institutions such as the Friday mosque and public bath. There is a strict separation between markets and places of production and residential areas. Rural Iraq retains aspects of the largely traditional mode of social organization, particularly in the more isolated areas, such as the marshes in the south. Each household typically consists of one nuclear family, although some may include an extended family. The division of



labor within the house is very clear-cut and follows the traditional rural pattern of men working the fields and women attending to the household chores.

Cultural Style of Warfare

Arab warfare stems directly from nomadic traditions and experiences. Historically, nomadic tribes alternated between accommodating central authority and defying it. In the first case, they were employed as frontier defense forces or as auxiliary light cavalry. In the second case, they posed a threat to settled populations by attacking small isolated garrisons and raiding poorly defended towns. Although the nomadic population of Iraq has dramatically decreased in the 20th century, the image of the nomadic warrior has remained powerful. Because the extended family is the fundamental unit of political and social action, a kin group traditionally has looked first to its own fighting men, not to the state's armed forces, to ensure its protection and promotion of its interests. The resort to arms for the sake of tribe and clan remains a higher ideal than military service to the state.

Unconventional/Tribal Warfare

Historically, sedentary and nomadic units were traditionally skeptical of outside groups, fearing competition for scarce resources. Protection of territory and allegiance to the social unit were primary reactions against intrusion. It was common to engage in military forays to usurp and plunder resources belonging to a weaker tribe or neighbor.

The glory of the raid — whether against another nomadic tribe, settled enemy, or caravan — is a key aspect of Bedouin tribal warfare. In many cases, the raids were carried out with minimal violence. Tribes commemorated their raids through poetry and song. Although it varied greatly as to numbers involved and distances traveled, raiding followed certain norms. Raiding tribes traveled light, avoided detection, moved quickly, minimized bloodshed, and took camels only—no captives or other spoils. However, they could become a flash point for a larger tribal conflict. Because of the law of blood revenge, the raid (*ghawz* or *razzia*) was carried out very carefully to ensure that no member of either side was killed. The purpose of the raid was to rob another group of as many of its animals as possible, without actually clashing with the men tending them. Therefore, a successful raid served two purposes – it strengthened one's tribe by adding to its livestock and weakened an enemy because livelihood in the desert depended upon herds and flocks of animal. However, tribes were required to adhere to strict rules when raiding. A key rule was that tribes had to be of equal or near equal status and size in order to raid each other. As a result, noble tribes could not raid inferior tribes and large tribes could not raid smaller tribes without an incredible loss of honor. For Iraqi Arab tribes, honor is the dominant value. In the



collective sense, honor means defense of the tribe, the group, or the society as a whole against its challengers. Lost honor, according to tribal tradition, must be retrieved by violence.

Participation in a raid was considered a dramatic test of courage, skill, and dedication to the goals of the tribal group. The resort to combat usually bestowed honor on both sides. A man's failure to fulfill his duty as a fighter results in shame. When raiding led to a larger conflict, the objective usually was not to force submission, but to restore the balance of honor or the balance of livestock. Tribal warfare tended to become more intense and bloody when central authorities tried to impose political control on a rural population.

Greetings, Hospitality, and Privacy

Iraqi Arabs often greet each other with a number of ritual phrases and fixed responses. Elaborate greetings and inquiries about health and well-being often take up large amounts of time, but are important in establishing friendly relations. Asking about the female member of a person's family, however, is considered offensive. These elaborate greetings originate from Bedouin tradition where the nomadic lifestyle led to frequent encounters with strangers. The Bedouins, among the original inhabitants of Iraq, made their living as nomadic camel breeders and traders who roamed the deserts surrounding the Tigris and Euphrates. There were several groups of Bedouins and they relied on the hospitality and protection of other Bedouins to protect them from enemy tribes. Iraqis will often shake hands every time they meet and every time they depart. Iraqi Arabs will rise when shaking hands as well as when an esteemed person enters a room. Handshakes are generally long in length and may involve grasping the elbow. Handshakes, though regarded as important, usually do not possess the same firmness as those of Americans.

Iraqi Arabs are, in general, hospitable and generous. Their hospitality is often expressed with food. Giving a warm reception to strangers stems from the culture of the desert, where traveling nomads depended on the graciousness and generosity of others to survive. Iraqis continue this custom of showing courtesy and consideration to strangers. Demonstrating friendliness, generosity, and hospitality are considered expressions of personal honor. When Arabs are visiting your installation or office, they will expect the same level of generosity and attention.

Privacy is important in Arab and Iraqi culture. It is considered rude to look into someone's house and can be equated with trespassing. When visiting a house, it is customary to take a position next to the door to prevent being able to see inside the home. Do not enter the home unless invited by the host. It is expected that guests will remove their shoes before entering the home; this shows respect



for the host. Arabs in villages or the countryside are less likely to have couches or chairs; instead they will have pillows on the floor or ground to sit against. When sitting, it is considered insulting to point the soles of one's feet in the direction of anyone; sit cross-legged if possible. It is also considered to be offensive to put one's feet on any furniture. In an Arabian house, the typical gathering place is called a *Dewaniah*, which is for male visitors only. Females generally have separate rooms to meet; meetings involving the opposite sex are generally forbidden.

Negotiations

Arab culture places a premium on politeness and socially correct behavior. Preserving honor is paramount. When faced with criticism, Arabs will try to protect their status and avoid incurring negative judgments by others. This concept can manifest itself in creative descriptions of facts or in the dismissal of conclusions, in order to protect one's reputation. This cultural trait will generally take precedence over the accurate transmission of information.

The desire to avoid shame and maintain respect can also contribute to the tendency to compartmentalize information. One common manifestation of this behavior comes in the form of saying "yes" when one really means "no." Arabs try to take the personalization out of contentious conversations, which can lead to vagueness and efforts to not speak in absolutes. Fear of shame also leads to secrecy and compartmentalization of knowledge. It is also considered disrespectful to contradict or disagree with a person of a superior rank or age. A cliché often referred to concerning the prowess of the Iraqis' negotiation skills is, "The Iraqis have never won a war, but they have never lost a negotiation."

Conflict Resolution

Throughout most of the Ottoman period, the central government's control over Iraq was weak. Tribes controlled large parts of the countryside. Tribes, villages, and even some small towns followed customary law, which varied from community to community and was variably influenced by Islamic law. The rural population of Iraq, though largely sedentary, has a well-developed system of customary law.

In Iraqi Arab society, community and tribal affiliation is given priority over individual rights. Consequently, familial and status considerations factor significantly into the processes and outcomes of conflict resolution. This emphasis on community helps explain the dominance of informal over contractual commitments and the use of mediation to solve conflicts. Many disputes are resolved informally outside of the official courts. This has especially



been the case over the past two decades as many Iraqis have reverted to tribal customs and traditions.

There are several overarching principles that tend to guide conflict resolution. First, are the four Quranic influences that govern interaction between parties during conflict resolution.

- *Civility and Respect*: Most actions are condoned so long as they are civilized and show respect to others, especially those of a higher status.
- *Tolerance*: Be considerate to others. Tolerance of differences is important.
- *Humility*: It is offensive to speak loudly or harshly to others or to contradict or disagree with superiors (at least in public).
- *Moderation*: A high value is placed on moderation and deliberation. Avoid becoming angry, accusing, or arrogant.

Second, the protection and recognition of the status of individuals is paramount. Disrespect of elders or superiors can jeopardize negotiations. There are two accepted methods to resolve conflicts, mediation or deliberation in council. Both methods are typically time consuming. However, Arabs do not feel as pressed as Western cultures to finish tasks quickly. Unless the matter is urgent, there will be a casual approach to solving it.

In tribal and village society, the role of the mediator (*wasit*) or mediators in resolving conflict has been, and remains, a crucial one. In every conflict, those involved tend to feel their honor is at stake and that to compromise in any way would reduce their self-respect and dignity. This feeling is so strong that even to take the first step toward ending a conflict would be viewed as a sign of weakness and would greatly damage one's honor. As a result, it is almost impossible for an Arab to come to agreement in direct confrontation with an opponent. Given the Arab tradition of invective and proclivity to boasting and verbal exaggeration, any face-to-face encounter between the adversaries would likely exacerbate the dispute rather than help in its resolution.

Therefore, the function of the mediator is, first, to separate the adversaries to make it physically impossible for them to continue the conflict. This forces the adversaries to stop fighting and enables them to do so without incurring the shame associated with weakness or admitting defeat. The restraint results from the respect both sides hold for the mediator(s). Therefore, the greater the prestige of the mediator(s), the better the chance for a successful resolution to the conflict. Thus, mediator(s) of high status from noble tribes or with direct lines of descent to the Prophet Muhammad or one of his companions are often sought



for large disputes. The mediator(s), of course, must also be completely neutral to both sides of the dispute and preferably be wealthy, to preclude to any suspicion of bribery from either side.²⁴

Rituals play an important role in tribal conflict resolution. The *sulh* (settlement) ritual recognizes that injuries between individuals and groups will fester and grow if not acknowledged and repaired. Given the severity of life in the desert, competing tribes realized that *sulh* is a better alternative to endless cycles of vengeance. Following a conflict, tribes take stock of losses in human and material terms. The tribe with the fewest losses compensates the tribe that suffered most. Stringent conditions are set to settle the conflict definitively. The most important of these conditions is that the parties pledge to forget everything that happened and initiate new and friendly relations.

There are two types of *sulh*: total and partial. The former ends all conflict between the two parties; the latter ends conflict according to conditions agreed upon during the settlement process. The mediator of a *sulh* is a *Wasit*, who is perceived as someone having all the answers and solutions. He therefore has a great deal of power and responsibility. In Southern Iraq the mediator is always from the *Sada* class, who derive their status from being the descendants of Fatima, daughter of the Prophet Muhammad.

Throughout tribal groups in the Middle East, the process of blood settlement follows a generally uniform pattern of responses, strategies, and ritual activities. The majority of conflicts are brought to a peaceful settlement because Arab tribal societies contain structural forms and principles—such as *dakhala* (entering protection)—that regulate conflict and inhibit violence.

Following a homicide, for example, the killer and his close kinsmen flee the scene and take refuge in the nearest tent or house. Each home is regarded as a *haram* (sanctuary). The notion of *hurmat al-bait* (sanctity of the house) makes every dwelling a sanctuary even when it is empty of its owners. The owner is duty bound to receive any fugitive who asks for protection. Even his own enemy can demand sanctuary of him and rest assured of protection because the owner's obligation to respect the sanctity of his own home takes precedence over his right and temptation for vengeance. The *dakhal* (protector) must immediately assume the responsibility to ensure at all costs the safety of his *dakheel* (refuge seeker or supplicant). Once the fleeing culprit has sought *dakhala* in a house in the community where the killing occurred, he and his kinsmen group are given full protection for three days, which Bedouins aptly call *al-mahrbat* (escape days), to allow the culprit's group to flee their *dira* (tribal homeland).

In situations of blood conflict, the killer and members of his kin group are expelled from their tribal homeland and forced to seek refuge with a distant tribe



until the settlement is reached. The ritual practice of the *ritaa*—a payment that permits each household of the killer's kinsmen to stay within their tribal community—limits conflict and its potential spread across a wider social field. The custom of *jali* (exile) away from one's tribal homeland has several functions. First, it secures immediate protection for the expelled family within the territory of their protector. Second, *jali* saves the victim's group from dishonor because the killer and his group are not within practical reach. Throughout the period of exile, which may extend for months or years, members of the killer's group are relegated to a marginal sociopolitical position within the tribal community offering them protection.

After the passage of a period of time in exile, the killer's group contacts the eminent men of their own and neighboring tribes to start the mediation process. The majority of homicide cases are settled through a *sulh* – the mediation of tribal chiefs. The goal of the mediation is not to take the life of one particular person but to bring satisfaction to the members of the injured group and save face by redressing a wounded honor.

After a murder or crime a *sulh* works as follows: the family of the victim, in an attempt to prevent blood revenge, calls on a delegation of mediators consisting of village elders or notables (usually called *muslihs* or *jaha*). As soon as mediators are called in, a *hudna* (truce) is declared. The mediators initiate a fact-finding process. The role of the mediators is not to punish the offending party but to preserve the honor of both families involved. A blood price (*diya*) is then paid to the family of the victim. This *diya*, or an exchange of goods, substitutes for the exchange of death. The process ends with a public ceremony of reconciliation (*musalaha*) performed in the village square. The families of both the victim and the guilty party exchange greetings and accept apologies. The family of the offending party visits the home of the victim to drink a cup of bitter coffee and the ritual concludes with a meal hosted by the family of the offender. The ritual varies at times. In all cases it takes place within a communal, not a one-on-one, environment.

Because of these cultural characteristics, Arabs often convene a conference to study, deliberate, and address problems of a grave or complex nature. Conferences are announced in advance and the issues are declared. When no resolution can be achieved, the mediators announce and convene another conference as part of a long, iterative process of mediation, while preserving the honor of those involved in the issue at hand.



Concluding Observations

The picture of Sunni Arab identity in Iraq that emerges from the interaction of the Arab, Islamic, and Bedouin Tribal components of that identity is quite complex and, often, completely indecipherable by Westerners. However, understanding the intricacies of the Arab identity is critical to understanding Iraqi Sunni Arab culture which, in turn, is crucial to successful interaction with people and tribes of Iraq.

As noted earlier, the Arab component of Sunni Arab identity is inextricably tied to the Bedouin Tribal component and the Islamic component. The Bedouin Tribal component, with its pre-Islamic roots, includes the features of kinship, loyalty, bravery, manliness, (traditional) aversion to physical work, and a great emphasis on honor, “face”, and self-respect. It finds expression in such institutions as raiding, “blood revenge”, hospitality, and generosity. The Bedouin component also includes the emphasis on protecting the sexual honor of women, which can impact the honor of the entire extended family.

The Islamic component can be seen in how Islam permeates an Arab Muslim’s daily life in terms of regulating daily functions, providing a sustaining psychological force in living life, prescribing a specific belief system centering life on religion, and providing a meaningful purpose for living. The Islamic component also inculcates a belief in predestination, often referred to as fatalism, which creates a mental predisposition toward life – with both positive and negative aspects. For example, this can be a negative trait when things are going well, because it can result in a complete lack of action by an Arab, because there is no need to improve on a good thing. However, this predisposition can be quite a strength in adverse times because it gives the Arab an ability to withstand extreme hardship, because it is the will of God.

The combination of these components has often contradictory effects on the outward behavior of Arabs. For example, despite the emphasis in Islam on ethical and moral behavior, the Bedouin component of the need to save “face” and maintain one’s honor in order to have self respect, transfers ethical and moral behavior from an internal effort to an external one. This is because the concepts of honor and saving “face” are predicated on the perceptions and approval of others. As a result, the Arab ethical system is not focused internally on thoughts and intentions, but is almost entirely oriented on outward behavior, which forms the basis for the judgments of others. As a result, as mentioned earlier, shame (an external force), not guilt (an internal force), is the main factor in determining conduct among many Arabs, resulting in conformative social behavior.



In order to ensure the long-term stability of the culture of conformative social behavior, the Arabs have a culturally approved way of occasionally venting pent up emotions. This approved venting processed is the flare-up of tempers, and flashes of anger, aggressive behavior, and violence that are condoned by society and readily forgiven – and just as readily forgotten by the individuals doing the venting because it is so completely incomprehensible to them and contrary to their daily cultural norm.

These factors, in turn, contribute to an observed tendency among the Arabs to lack a correlation among what Raphael Patai calls the three functional planes of human existence: thoughts, words, and actions. Because of the separation of internal processes from the outside behavior needed for approval of the social group, Arab thought processes are often much more autonomous and independent of reality than the thought processes of Westerners. In addition, Arab verbal formulations are often less influenced by reality than are those of Westerners, instead they tend to be expressions of the ideal, or of actions desired, but not physically attainable. As a result, when dealing with Arabs, Westerners often see a disconnect between words and deeds as deception on the part of the Arab. This is confusing to the Arab because he is communicating with Westerners in the same way he communicates with his fellow Arabs where he is always understood and, indeed, expected to communicate that way. The solution to this problem is for Westerners to have an in-depth understanding of Arab culture and the Arabic language, in order to successfully interact with Arabs and their society.²⁵



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CHAPTER THREE: TRIBES AND IRAQI HISTORY

Introduction

Tribes have played a central role in the history of Iraq for thousands of years, and continue to do so today. Therefore, in order to understand Iraq, one must understand the interaction between the tribes and other factors throughout the history of the land now known as Iraq.

Between the 5th and 9th centuries, Mesopotamia was one of the richest agricultural areas in the world, owing to its rulers' ability to organize large-scale irrigation in a difficult environment. The Tigris and Euphrates Rivers have throughout Mesopotamia's history demonstrated "bad habits" in the form of regular floods, course changes, silting up, and salinity fluctuations, making settled agriculture and irrigation difficult and contributing to regular plagues originating from inundated marshes.¹

The decline of centralized power in the 9th and 10th centuries put nature back in charge, creating a poor environment for national and societal development, and contributing to the difficulties Iraq's people face today. Tribal forms of social organization were an adaptation to nature's challenges, as well as the territory's vulnerability to invasion by outsiders. In what one historian has called "a litany of disasters," Iraq's history and social landscape have been shaped by a constant struggle against nature and other men.

Throughout Iraq's history, conflict between political fragmentation and centralization has been reflected in the struggles between tribes and cities for the food-producing flatlands of the river valleys. When a central power neglected to keep the waterworks in repair, land fell into disuse, and tribes attacked settled peoples for precious and scarce agricultural commodities. For nearly 600 years, between the collapse of the Abbasid Empire in the thirteenth century and the waning years of the Ottoman era in the late nineteenth century, government authority was tenuous and tribal Iraq was, in effect, autonomous. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Iraq's disconnected and often antagonistic ethnic, religious, and tribal social groups professed little or no allegiance to the central government. As a result, the all-consuming concern of contemporary Iraqi history has been the forging of a nation-state out of this diverse and conflict-ridden social structure and the concomitant transformation of parochial loyalties, both tribal and ethnic, into a national identity.

Iraq's people have faced not only challenges from nature, but also weak government, oppressive taxation, and warfare and intrigues between tribes, between governors and tribes, and between the Ottomans and other powers



such as Persia.² Both the Ottomans and the British failed to form fully centralized states and monopolies of authority. As a result, tribal power has played a large role in shaping both the Iraqi people's day-to-day lives and Iraq's national character.

Historian Charles Tripp identifies three dominant themes in the modern history of Iraq, all of which are present today.³ They are the resilience of patrimonialism, or patron-clientism, as seen in the rise, fall, and rise of tribal politics; the political economy of oil, as seen in the way that oil revenues have shaped relationships between state and society and reinforced patrimonialism; and the prominent role that violence has played in Iraqi affairs. Most of these and other aspects of Iraqi society and politics today can be traced to the Mamluk, late Ottoman, and British Mandate periods. Events during these periods helped establish patterns such as conflict between tribal authority and effective agriculture, impoverishment of the countryside and resulting urbanization, and a tradition of weak government and lack of security in rural areas.

General patterns of tribalism in Iraq

For the purposes of this study, a working definition of a tribe can be a grouping of people unified by a "quartet of myths, memories, values, and symbols."⁴ Tribalism has a long and cyclical history in Mesopotamia. The majority of Iraq's tribesmen, throughout history, have been settled and semi-settled cultivators. Tribalism in Iraq predates the territory's Arabization, but assumed Bedouin-like features once Arab influence became dominant.⁵ For the most part, Bedouin Arabs did not displace the indigenous population, but were absorbed into it. Incursions by Ottoman and Persian armies in the 16th and 17th centuries encouraged the development of tribal confederations with military capability.⁶ Raids by neighboring tribes, such as the Wahhabis later in the 18th century, helped shape a pattern of tribal alliances with external powers.⁷ The support of tribal leaders was valuable to imperial powers such as the Ottomans, and some tribes profited from such alliances. Tribal migrations within Iraq often had a destabilizing effect, involving capture and use of other tribes' pastures, and their forced displacement.⁸

The tribal nature of rural Iraq has prevented much of its population from developing strong ties to the land, ties that form the backbone of social structure in much of the Middle East. Historian Phebe Marr notes:

Instead of love of the land, loyalty to family and tribe has dominated Iraq's social and political life. Among the legacies of tribalism in Iraq are intense concern with family, clan, and tribe; devotion to personal honor; factionalism; and above all, difficulty in cooperating across kinship lines – the underlying basis of modern civic society.⁹



Tribal society continues to place a high degree of importance on the organization and building blocks of the tribe, the roles and responsibilities of the shaikh, adherence to unwritten customary law, and tribal solidarity.¹⁰ The basic units of Iraqi tribes have been *bayts*, or households, several of which form a *fakhadh*.¹¹ Tribal structures above these basic building blocks have varied based on location and whether the tribe was sedentary, nomadic, or mixed. Large tribal confederations were fragile and shifting, conditions that successive governments did their utmost to exploit.¹²

Regardless of its cause, central government weakness has historically resulted in conquest by foreigners or damage to the elaborate canal system necessary to maintain agriculture, or both. In a repetitive pattern, times of government decline have seen resurgences of tribalism.¹³ Tribal structures have proven to be elastic and have endured though the creation and disintegration of several imperial governments. Tribal order alone preserved the continuity of agriculture for some periods, especially during the four centuries of Ottoman rule.¹⁴

Iraq's challenges of reconciling and integrating tribe and state take place in the context of similar problems across the Arab world. Throughout history, tribal forces have posed obstacles to state formation. One scholar argues that the nation-state is a novelty to Arab-Islamic history because it is based on the concepts of internal sovereignty, incorporating the ideas of citizenship and national identity and loyalty; and external sovereignty, or the mutual recognition of borders.¹⁵ Arab-Islamic history does not provide a reference point for either concept.

In the 14th century, Ibn Khaldun wrote about the difficulty of establishing a state in lands populated by tribes, highlighting the cyclical transfer of power between central rulers and the tribes.¹⁶ Weak internal sovereignty and other forces have resulted in "strong societies and weak states."¹⁷ Observed one scholar: "A nation-state requires more than the submission of tribes to a central authority; it also requires national integration, which affects not only the autonomy of a tribe but its uniqueness as well...the Middle Eastern nation-state failed to integrate the tribes into a citizenship-centered national structure."¹⁸

Throughout the Arab world, tribal societies showed striking resilience in the face of Islamization. Islam failed to transform the tribal structure of Arabia and assimilate the tribes into a homogenous Islamic community, and tribes remained the basic social units.¹⁹



Brief Chronology of the Wars of Conquest of Iraq

2300 BC -- The Akkadians conquer Sumer from the north.

2110 - 2010 BC -- Nomads from the east invade Mesopotamia.

1792 - 1750 BC -- King Hammurabi builds the capital city at Babylon and devises the most advanced legal codes.

1600 BC -- The Hittites conquer Babylon.

1200 BC -- The Assyrian conquest begins. By 859 BC, the Assyrians reach the Mediterranean Sea. They have created the first standing army.

612 BC -- The Assyrians are overthrown by the Chaldeans. King Nebuchadnezzar destroys Jerusalem and rebuilds Babylon, constructing the Hanging Gardens, one of the Seven Wonders of the World.

539 BC -- Cyrus the Great conquers Babylon for the Persians, and frees the Jews from the Babylonian Captivity. Under the reign of Darius (520-485 BC), the infrastructure of the region collapses; cities are abandoned as the rivers flood.

331 BC -- Alexander the Great conquers the region, restores the great infrastructure projects, and revives the worship of the Babylonian god Marduk. Trade routes are restored, and, even though Alexander dies and his generals battle among themselves for control, the Hellenization leaves a lasting impact.

227 BC - 636 AD -- The Sassanians (Persians) take control.

632 AD -- Within a year of the death of the Prophet Mohammed, both the Byzantine and Sassanian empires are conquered by the Moslems, and the First Caliphate is established. The Islamic conquest sets rules of conduct in wartime, protecting women and children. During the fight to control the Third Caliphate, the split between Shiite and Sunni Muslims occurs, establishing yet-another fault line for future conflicts that continue to the present day. Ali ibn Abu Talib, the son-in-law of the Prophet, is killed by Bedouin warriors, who first rallied behind his claim to the throne, and then broke with him when he sought a mediation with his rival Uthman, rather than fight for absolute victory. Ali is buried in Najaf, which becomes a holy site of Shiite Islam.

750 - 1258 AD -- The Abbasid Caliphate builds up Baghdad as a major trading city between Asia and the Mediterranean. By the reign of Harun al Rashid (786 - 806), Baghdad has become the second largest city, behind Constantinople. This



is the beginning of a period of great scientific and cultural advancement, known as the Arab Renaissance.

1055 AD -- The Turks, initially brought in as slave warriors, stage an internal takeover and establish the Seljuk reign, which extends from the Bosphorus to Chinese Turkestan. In this period, however, there was a great deal of autonomy in Baghdad and the Arab Renaissance continues, with the building of the great astronomical observatory of Omar Khayyam.

1258 AD -- The Mongol sacking and conquest of Baghdad by Genghis Khan, virtually wiping out the vestiges of the Arab Renaissance.

1401 AD -- Tamerlane sacks Baghdad, destroying all the urban centers, ruining agricultural production, and setting the stage for a Bedouin revival.

1514 - 1639 AD -- A period of perpetual wars between the Ottomans and the Persians over control of the area. Ultimately, the Ottomans consolidate power and rule until 1918. Under Ottoman rule, the territory of today's Iraq is divided into three main provinces (*vilayets*): Baghdad, Mosul and Basra. Each is run by a Pasha appointed by the Ottoman Court.

1623 - 1638 AD -- Warfare between Persian Shiites and Ottoman Turks over control of Baghdad, which goes back and forth, with massive casualties, particularly among Kurds and Iraqi Arabs. During this period of weak Ottoman control, great Bedouin tribal confederations emerge to fill the power vacuum. The major tribes are: Anaiza, Shammar, Dhafir, Muntafiq, Chaab, Bani Lam and Zubaid.

1638 - 1918 AD -- The Ottoman Empire rules over Iraq. As Ottoman power is eventually reconsolidated, Bedouin tribes become an important factor in maintaining order in rural areas, particularly during periods of weak central authority and incompetent leadership in Baghdad. By the reign of Midhat Pasha (1869 - 1872), the Ottomans have introduced some modern reforms, including the building of schools, hospitals, a postal system, factories, and military conscription. However, this is also the period of European imperial ascent and Ottoman decline. When the Ottoman Empire grants Germany the right to build a railroad line from Berlin to Baghdad and on to Basra, Great Britain reacts to this as a threat to Britain's own colonial sphere, extending from India through Afghanistan into Iran.

1908 -- With covert British backing, the Young Turk revolt begins the process of unraveling of the Ottoman Empire from the inside, leading into the Balkan Wars and, eventually, to the outbreak of World War I.



1913 -- Secret societies crop up in urban areas of Iraq, modeled on the Young Turks. The Reform League of Basra spawns several organizations like the Green Banner and the Black Hand.

1915 -- World War I, the British occupy Basra, and by 1918 have occupied all of Iraq, under the command of General Stanley Maude. In the course of the war, the Hashemite King Hussein has broken with the Ottoman Empire and aligned with Great Britain.

1919 -- Faisal, the son of the Hashemite King Hussein, attends the Paris Peace Talks, anticipating independence for Iraq, under a Hashemite constitutional monarchy. But Iraq is established, instead, as a Class A Mandate under the British, under Article 22 of the League of Nations Charter. This triggers a revolt by both Shiite and Sunni tribes against the British Mandate, particularly after the British Administrator, Colonel Arnold Talbot Wilson, brings in Indian civil servants as the administrative staff. Sunni and Shiite unite in a nationalist rebellion, prompting the British to allow a provisional Arab government, under the British Mandate. In an August 1921 referendum, King Faisal is installed on the throne.

October 13, 1932 -- Iraq is given its full independence, along with membership in the League of Nations. Kurds and Shiites both revolt against the "new Arab dynasty," with Kurds and Assyrians fighting bloody battles in the north of Iraq.

September 8, 1933 -- King Faisal dies and is replaced by his 21-year old son, Ghazi. Centralized authority in Baghdad breaks down once again, and the tribal shaikhs reassert their authority.

1936 - 1941 -- The first military coup in the modern Arab world takes place in Iraq, setting the stage for a succession of coups and counter-coups. By 1941, there have already been seven military coups.

April 1941 -- The British invade Iraq at Basra. Iraq is drawn into World War II on the side of the Allies.

1955 - 1958 -- Iraq, still under the Hashemite dynasty, is drawn into the Cold War, first, through the creation of the Baghdad Pact alliance with Turkey and Pakistan. On February 14, 1958, Iraq joins Jordan in creating the Arab Federation, in opposition to the United Arab Republic, formed by Egypt and Syria.

July 14, 1958 -- The Hashemites are overthrown in a military coup, led by Brigadier Abd al Karim Qasim. This marks the beginning of the rise to power of various Arab nationalist parties eventually culminating in the rule of the Baath



Party, which had been founded in 1945 in Damascus by Michel Aflaq and Salih Bitar, who were Syrian Christians.

1963 - 1968 -- A series of coups and counter coups by pro and anti-Baathist factions of the military. The 1963 Baath coup installed Brigadier Ahmad Hasan al Bakr and Colonel Abd al Salam Arif. In May 1964, the Baathists were temporarily overthrown by Colonel Abd al Salam Arif. But this coup is reversed on July 17, 1968, and al Bakr, with the backing of a group of military officers, including Saddam Hussein, all from the Tikriti tribe, consolidates power.

October 1968 - March 1970 -- In reaction to the crackdown, launched by the Baathists against those involved in the 1964 counter-coup, the Kurds stage a revolt in the north, which continues until March 1970, when a treaty is signed, granting significant independence to the Kurdish region, and allowing the Kurdish militia, the Pesh Merga, legal status as a border militia.

July 16, 1979 -- President Bakr resigns and Saddam Hussein officially replaces him as President of the Republic, Secretary General of the Baath Party Regional Command, Chairman of the RCC, and Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces.

September 22, 1980 -- Iraq invades Iran. Iran-Iraq War lasts from 1980 - 1988.

August 2, 1990 -- Iraq invades and occupies Kuwait.

January 17 - February 28, 1991 -- US-led Coalition forces defeat Iraqi forces and liberate Kuwait.

March 20, 2003 -- US-led Coalition forces launch an invasion of Iraq known as Operation Iraqi Freedom.

April 9, 2003 -- US-led Coalition forces capture Baghdad. Saddam Hussein's regime falls.



Ancient Iraq

At one time Mesopotamia ("the land between the rivers"), which encompassed much of present-day Iraq, formed the center not only of the Middle East but also of the civilized world. The people of the Tigris and Euphrates basin, the ancient Sumerians, using the fertile land and the abundant water supply of the area, developed sophisticated irrigation systems and created what was probably the first cereal agriculture as well as the earliest writing, cuneiform. Their successors, the Akkadians, devised the most complete legal system of the period, the Code of Hammurabi. Located at a crossroads in the heart of the ancient Middle East, Mesopotamia was a plum sought by numerous foreign conquerors. Among them were the warlike Assyrians, from the tenth century through the seventh century BC, and the Chaldeans²⁰, led by King Nebuchadnezzar, rose around 600 BC. Nebuchadnezzar promoted a revival of the Babylonian Empire, expanding its borders from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean Sea. Nebuchadnezzar built countless palaces and cities. One of his greatest achievements was the construction of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, one of the wonders of the ancient world. Archeological treasures from Nebuchadnezzar's time and other ancient periods can be found throughout Iraq.²¹

Iraqi history displays a continuity shaped by adaptation to the ebbings and flowings of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers (in Arabic, the Dijlis and Furat, respectively). Allowed to flow unchecked, the rivers wrought destruction in terrible floods that inundated whole towns. When the rivers were controlled by irrigation dikes and other waterworks, the land became extremely fertile.

The dual nature of the Tigris and the Euphrates--their potential to be destructive or productive--has resulted in two distinct legacies found throughout Iraqi history. On the one hand, Mesopotamia's plentiful water resources and lush river valleys allowed for the production of surplus food that served as the basis for the civilizing trend begun with the Sumerians and preserved by rulers through the Abbasids. Surplus food production and joint irrigation and flood control efforts facilitated the growth of a powerful and expanding state.

Mesopotamia could also be an extremely threatening environment, however, driving its peoples to seek security from the vicissitudes of nature. Throughout Iraqi history, various groups have formed autonomous, self-contained social units. Allegiance to ancient religious deities at Ur and Eridu, membership in the Shiat Ali (or party of Ali, the small group of followers that supported Ali ibn Abu Talib as rightful leader of the Islamic community in the seventh century), residence in the *asnaf* (guilds) or the *mahallat* (city quarters) of Baghdad under the Ottoman Turks, membership in one of a multitude of tribes – such efforts to build autonomous security-providing structures have exerted a powerful centrifugal force on Iraqi culture.



Two other factors that have inhibited political centralization are the absence of stone and Iraq's geographic location as the eastern flank of the Arab world. For much of Iraqi history, the lack of stone has severely hindered the building of roads. As a result, many parts of the country have remained beyond government control. Also, because it borders non-Arab Turkey and Iran, and because of the great agricultural potential of its river valley, Iraq has attracted waves of ethnically diverse migrations. Although this influx of people has enriched Iraqi culture, it has also disrupted the country's internal balance and has led to deep-seated schisms.

In 539 BC, Semitic rule of the area ended with the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus the Great. The successors of Cyrus paid little attention to Mesopotamia, with the result that the infrastructure was allowed to fall into disrepair. Not until the Arab conquest and the coming of Islam did Mesopotamia begin to regain its glory, particularly when Baghdad was the seat of the Abbasid caliphate between 750 and 1258.

The Arab Conquest

The first mention of Bedouin tribal raids in Iraq occur in ancient Assyrian and Persian tablets in which the Bedouin were described as *Ariibi*. However, the most significant historical Bedouin tribal incursion into Iraq was part of the early expansion of Islam during the 7th century.

During the 7th century, Muhammad, a member of the Hashimite clan of the powerful Quraysh tribe of Mecca, claimed prophethood and began gathering adherents for the monotheistic faith of Islam that had been revealed to him. The conversion of Arabia proved to be the most difficult of the Islamic conquests because of entrenched tribalism. Within one year of Muhammad's death in 632 AD, however, Arabia was secure enough for the Prophet's secular successor, Abu Bakr (632-634 AD), the first caliph and the father-in-law of Muhammad, to begin the campaign against the Byzantine Empire and the Sassanid Empire.

Islamic forays into Iraq began during the reign of Abu Bakr. In 634 AD an army of 18,000 Arab tribesmen, under the leadership of the brilliant general Khalid ibn al-Walid (aptly nicknamed "The Sword of Islam"), reached the perimeter of the Euphrates delta. Although the occupying Iranian force was vastly superior in techniques and numbers, its soldiers were exhausted from their unrelenting campaigns against the Byzantines. The Sassanid troops fought ineffectually, lacking sufficient reinforcement to do more. The first battle of the Arab campaign became known as the Battle of the Chains because Iranian soldiers were



reputedly chained together so that they could not flee. Khalid offered the inhabitants of Iraq an ultimatum:

"Accept the faith and you are safe; otherwise pay tribute. If you refuse to do either, you have only yourself to blame. A people is already upon you, loving death as you love life."

Most of the Iraqi tribes were Christian at the time of the Islamic conquest. They decided to pay the *jizya*, the tax required of non-Muslims living in Muslim-ruled areas, and were not further disturbed. The Iranians rallied briefly under their hero, Rustam, and attacked the Arabs at al-Hirah, west of the Euphrates. There, they were soundly defeated by the invading Arabs. The next year, in 635 AD, the Arabs defeated the Iranians at the Battle of Buwayb. Finally, in May 636 AD at al-Qadisiya, a village south of Baghdad on the Euphrates, Rustam was killed. The Iranians, who outnumbered the Arabs six to one, were decisively beaten. From al-Qadisiyah the Arabs pushed on to the Sassanid capital at Ctesiphon (Madain). The Islamic conquest was made easier because both the Byzantine Empire and the Sassanid Empire were culturally and socially bankrupt; thus, the native populations had little to lose by cooperating with the conquering power. Because the Muslim warriors were fighting a *jihad* (holy war), they were regulated by religious law that strictly prohibited rape and the killing of women, children, religious leaders, or anyone who had not actually engaged in warfare. Furthermore, the Muslim warriors had come to conquer and settle a land under Islamic law. It was not in their economic interest to destroy or pillage unnecessarily and indiscriminately.

The caliph Umar (634-44 AD) ordered the founding of two garrisoned cities to protect the newly conquered territory: Kufa, named as the capital of Iraq, and Basra, which was also to be a port. Umar also organized the administration of the conquered Iranian lands. Acting on the advice of an Iranian, Umar continued the Sassanid office of the *divan* (Arabic form *diwan*). Essentially an institution to control income and expenditure through record keeping and the centralization of administration, the *divan* would be used henceforth throughout the lands of the Islamic conquest. *Dihqans*, minor revenue collection officials under the Sassanids, retained their function of assessing and collecting taxes. Tax collectors in Iraq had never enjoyed universal popularity, but the Arabs found them particularly noxious. Arabic replaced Persian as the official language, and it slowly filtered into common usage. Iraqis intermarried with Arabs and converted to Islam.

By 650 AD Muslim armies had reached the Amu Darya (Oxus River) and had conquered all the Sassanid domains, although some were more strongly held than others. Shortly thereafter, Arab expansion and conquest virtually ceased. Thereafter, the groups in power directed their energies to maintaining the status



quo while those outside the major power structure devoted themselves to political and religious rebellion. The ideologies of the rebellions usually were couched in religious terms. Frequently, a difference in the interpretation of a point of doctrine was sufficient to spark armed warfare. More often, however, religious disputes were the rationalization for underlying nationalistic or cultural dissatisfactions.

During the reign of Umar, the second Caliph, the Arab tribes had already defeated the two major empires in the region and occupied Iraq, Syria, Egypt, and Persia. This expansion was motivated by commercial interests and religious fervour, leveraging the ancient Bedouin tribal traditions of raiding and warfare. As the invading tribes moved on to conquer lands to the west in North Africa and east into Persia, other Bedouin tribes migrated into Iraq in search of land and new opportunities.

From 650 AD to the establishment of the Abbasid Caliphate in 750 AD, the Islamic Empire suffered through its greatest schism – between Sunni and Shia Muslims. The key events of this schism took place in Iraq and resulted in the death of Ali and his son Husayn, who are now enshrined at Najaf and Karbala, respectively. Thus began the Umayyad Dynasty in 661 AD, which established its capital at Damascus in present day Syria.

During his caliphate, Ali had made al-Kufa his capital. The transfer of power to Syria and to its capital at Damascus aroused envy among Iraqis. The desire to regain preeminence prompted numerous rebellions in Iraq against Umayyad rule.

The Abbasid Caliphate: 750-1258

Source: Based on information from Philip K. Hitti, *Makers of Arab History*, New York, 1968, 56.

In 750, Abd al Abbas was established in Baghdad as the first caliph of the Abbasid Dynasty after a short rebellion against the Umayyads which started from Persia. The Abbasids, whose line was called "the blessed dynasty" by its supporters, presented themselves to the people as divine-right rulers who would initiate a new era of justice and prosperity. Their political policies were, however, remarkably similar to those of the Umayyads. During the reign of its first seven caliphs, Baghdad became a center of power where Arab and Iranian cultures mingled to produce a blaze of philosophical, scientific, and literary glory. This era is remembered throughout the Arab world, and by Iraqis in particular, as the pinnacle of the Islamic past. It was the second Abbasid caliph, al-Mansur (754-75 AD), who decided to build a new capital, surrounded by round walls, near the site of the Sassanid village of Baghdad. Within fifty years the population outgrew the city walls as people thronged to the capital to become part of the Abbasids' enormous bureaucracy or to engage in trade. Baghdad became a vast emporium



of trade linking Asia and the Mediterranean. By the reign of Mansur's grandson, Harun ar Rashid (786-806 AD), Baghdad was second in size only to Constantinople. Baghdad was able to feed its enormous population and to export large quantities of grain because the political administration had realized the importance of controlling the flows of the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers. The Abbasids reconstructed the city's canals, dikes, and reservoirs, and drained the swamps around Baghdad, freeing the city of malaria.

Harun ar Rashid, the caliph of the *Arabian Nights*, actively supported intellectual pursuits, but the great flowering of Arabic culture that is credited to the Abbasids reached its apogee during the reign of his son, al-Mamun (813-33). After the death of Harun ar-Rashid, his sons, Amin and al-Mamun, quarreled over the succession to the caliphate. Their dispute soon erupted into civil war. The Iraqis backed Amin, while al-Mamun had the support of the Iranians. Al Mamun also had the support of the garrison at Khorasan and thus was able to take Baghdad in 813. However, the split eventually resulted in the breakup of the empire.

The Iranians broke away from Abbasid control and a series of local dynasties appeared: the Tahirids (821-873), the Suffarids (867-ca. 1495), and the Samanids (819-1005). The same process was repeated in the West: Spain broke away in 756, Morocco in 788, Tunisia in 800, and Egypt in 868. In Iraq there was trouble in the south. In 869, Ali ibn Muhammad (Ali the Abominable) founded a state of slaves known as Zanj. The Zanj brought a large part of southern Iraq and southwestern Iran under their control and in the process enslaved many of their former masters. The Zanj Rebellion was finally put down in 883, but not before it had caused great suffering.

The Sunni-Shia split had weakened the effectiveness of Islam as a single unifying force and as a sanction for a single political authority. Although the intermingling of various linguistic and cultural groups contributed greatly to the enrichment of Islamic civilization, it also was a source of great tension and contributed to the decay of Abbasid power.

In addition to the cleavages between Arabs and Iranians and between Sunnis and Shias, the growing prominence of Turks in military and in political affairs gave cause for discontent and rivalry at court. Nomadic, Turkic-speaking warriors had been moving out of Central Asia into Transoxiana (i.e., across the Oxus River) for more than a millennium. The Abbasid caliphs began importing Turks as slave-warriors (Mamluks) early in the ninth century. The imperial palace guards of the Abbasids were Mamluks who were originally commanded by free Iraqi officers. By 833, however, Mamluks themselves were officers and gradually, because of their greater military proficiency and dedication, they began to occupy high positions at court. The mother of Caliph Mutasim (who came to power in 833) had been a Turkish slave, and her influence was substantial. By the tenth



century, the Turkish commanders, no longer checked by their Iranian and Arab rivals at court, were able to appoint and depose caliphs. For the first time, the political power of the caliphate was fully separated from its religious function. The Mamluks continued to permit caliphs to come to power because of the importance of the office as a symbol for legitimizing claims to authority.

Although all Muslims recognized the Abbasid caliph as a spiritual figure, he no longer held any political control over anything. Caliphs were even put under house arrest and were sometimes replaced by whoever controlled Iraq. Tribalism returned with to Iraq since the state was extremely weak.

The Mongol Invasion: 1258

The Abbasid dynasty finally ended when the Mongols under Hulagu Khan plundered Baghdad in 1258. While in Baghdad, Hulagu made a pyramid of the skulls of Baghdad's scholars, religious leaders, and poets, and he deliberately destroyed what remained of Iraq's canal headworks. The material and artistic production of centuries was swept away. Iraq became a neglected frontier province ruled from the Mongol capital of Tabriz in Iran.

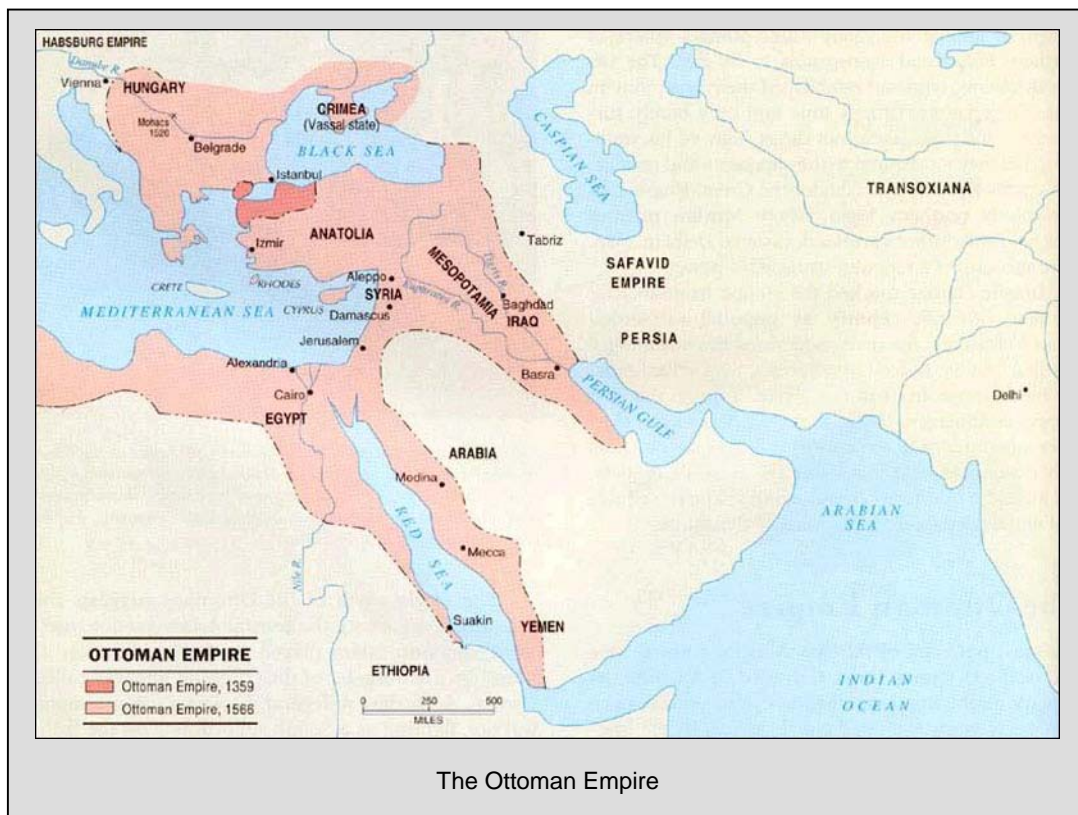
After the death in 1335 of the last great Mongol khan, Abu Said (also known as Bahadur the Brave), a period of political confusion ensued in Iraq until a local petty dynasty, the Jalayirids, seized power. The Jalayirids ruled until the beginning of the fifteenth century. Jalayirid rule was abruptly checked by the rising power of a Mongol, Tamerlane (or Timur the Lame, 1336-1405), who had been atabeg of the reigning prince of Samarkand. In 1401 he sacked Baghdad and massacred many of its inhabitants. Tamerlane killed thousands of Iraqis and devastated hundreds of towns. Like Hulagu, Tamerlane had a penchant for building pyramids of skulls. Despite his showy display of Sunni piety, Tamerlane's rule virtually extinguished Islamic scholarship and Islamic arts everywhere except in his capital, Samarkand.

In Iraq, political chaos, severe economic depression, and social disintegration followed in the wake of the Mongol invasions. Baghdad, long a center of trade, rapidly lost its commercial importance. Basra, which had been a key transit point for seaborne commerce, was circumvented after the Portuguese discovered a shorter route around the Cape of Good Hope. In agriculture, Iraq's once-extensive irrigation system fell into disrepair, creating swamps and marshes at the edge of the delta and dry, uncultivated steppes farther out. The rapid deterioration of settled agriculture led to the growth of tribally based pastoral nomadism. By the end of the Mongol period, the focus of Iraqi history had shifted from the urban-based Abbasid culture to the tribes of the river valleys, where it would remain until well into the twentieth century.



Iraq under Ottoman Rule: 1534 –1918

The territory of modern Iraq was occupied by the Ottoman Turkish Empire in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Ottoman Iraq was composed of three separate provinces based around the cities of Mosul, Baghdad, and Basra. The Sunni Ottoman conquest of Mesopotamia was part of a campaign of imperial expansion and a way of containing Shia Persia, the precursor of modern Iran. Competition between the Ottomans and Persians also contributed to the rivalry between the Sunni and Shia branches of Islam, as both empires used religion to justify their territorial aspirations in Mesopotamia.²²



Ottoman strategy was to have Iraq serve as a buffer between itself and Persia. The Turks believed that Iraq was vulnerable to Persian territorial ambitions because it was inhabited by a large number of Shia Arabs and was home to many important Shia holy sites. Iraqi Shia ties with Persia led to Persian influence in southern Iraq, especially in the holy cities. In order to reduce the influence of the Shia population, the Ottomans established a Sunni-dominated state. This arrangement laid the groundwork for Sunni domination in Iraqi politics. This policy alienated the Shia population, who considered the Ottoman Sunnis as foreign invaders and religious heretics.²³



By the seventeenth century, the frequent conflicts with the Safavids had sapped the strength of the Ottoman Empire and had weakened its control over its provinces. In Iraq, tribal authority once again dominated; the history of nineteenth-century Iraq is a chronicle of tribal migrations and of conflict. The nomadic population swelled with the influx of bedouins from Najd, in the Arabian Peninsula. Bedouin raids on settled areas became impossible to curb. In the interior, the large and powerful Muntafiq tribal confederation took shape under the leadership of the Sunni Sadoun family of Mecca. In the desert southwest, the Shammar--one of the biggest tribal confederations of the Arabian Peninsula--entered the Syrian desert and clashed with the Anaiza confederation. On the lower Tigris near al-Amara, a new tribal confederation, the Bani Lam, took root. In the north, the Kurdish Baban Dynasty emerged and organized Kurdish resistance. The resistance made it impossible for the Ottomans to maintain even nominal suzerainty over Iraqi Kurdistan (land of the Kurds). Between 1625 and 1668, and from 1694 to 1701, local shaikhs ruled al-Basra and the marshlands, home of the Maidan (Marsh Arabs). The powerful shaikhs basically ignored the Ottoman governor of Baghdad.

The cycle of tribal warfare and of deteriorating urban life that began in the thirteenth century with the Mongol invasions was temporarily reversed with the reemergence of the Mamluks. A class of military leaders, the Mamluk pashas administered Ottoman rule in the three provinces of Mosul, Baghdad, and Basra. The Ottomans gave limited powers to their governors in Baghdad to discourage them from seeking independence, and did not intend to rule Iraq for the benefits of its people. Consequently, Ottoman authority did not extend far beyond Iraq's cities and towns, and tribes became the dominant force. Tribal solidarity and traditions called for defense against outsiders, and set the stage for conflict and struggle during the entire period of Ottoman rule.²⁴

The Mamluks acknowledged the authority of the Ottoman sultan, though their distance from the Ottoman center of power allowed them to act autonomously.²⁵ The Shia subjects of the Mamluks did not recognize Ottoman authority, since the Shia were suspicious of the Sunni-dominated central government. Likewise, Ottoman authorities did not recognize Shia religious traditions. The Ottomans believed the Shia to be vulnerable to Persian influences and thus a threat to Ottoman rule.²⁶

In the early eighteenth century, the Mamluks began asserting authority apart from the Ottomans, extending their rule from the Persian Gulf to the foothills of Kurdistan. For the most part, the Mamluks were able administrators, and their rule was marked by political stability and by economic revival. The greatest of the Mamluk leaders, Suleiman the II (1780-1802), made great strides in imposing the rule of law. The last Mamluk leader, Daud (1816-31), initiated important



modernization programs that included clearing canals, establishing industries, training a 20,000-man army, and starting a printing press.

Perceptions of identity among ordinary Iraqis under the Ottomans were shaped by ethnicity, language, and, most importantly, tribal allegiances. Tribalism is a form of social organization based on close immediate and extended family and clan ties. Members of clans are generally associated with a particular village or region that is traditionally home to a particular tribe. The larger tribe is made up of a number of clans claiming a common ancestry. Clans and tribes are also known to forge alliances and unite through intermarriage, sometimes crossing ethnic and even religious lines. Ottoman Iraq was a multi-ethnic territory that included Arabs, Kurds, Turkomen, Persians, Assyrians, and other communities. Ottoman Iraq's inhabitants spoke many languages, including Arabic, Kurdish, Turkish and Persian. However, tribal affiliation contributed most to the development of local identities.²⁷



An artist's rendition of an Ottoman Mamluk.

During Ottoman times, the paramount shaikh of a tribe acted as mediator between the tribe and the government, and was elevated to this position by his tribesmen, on whose consent the shaikh's authority rested. The government usually did not interfere in the appointment process, but asked the shaikh to pledge loyalty, full payment of revenues, and to maintain law and order.

In addition, tribal leaders commanded their own tribal armies, which posed a military threat to the Mamluks. The tribes also often served as allies of the Ottoman authorities against invaders or other tribal groups that refused to pay taxes. The Mamluks allowed the tribes to keep their armies in exchange for military and political support from the tribes, though there were many fiercely independent tribes, which the Mamluks could not bring under their influence.²⁸ General tribal attitudes toward compliance with the government could be described as, "If the government can enforce its requirements, we will obey. If not, we will ignore it."²⁹

The Mamluk period ended in 1831, when a severe flood and plague devastated Baghdad, enabling the Ottoman sultan, Mahmud II, to reassert Ottoman sovereignty over Iraq. Ottoman rule was unstable. Baghdad, for example, had more than ten governors between 1831 and 1869. In 1869, however, the Ottomans regained authority when the reform-minded Midhat Pasha was



appointed governor of Baghdad. Midhat immediately set out to modernize Iraq on the Western model. The primary objectives of Midhat's reforms, called the *tanzimat*, were to reorganize the army, to create codes of criminal and commercial law, to secularize the school system, and to improve provincial administration. He created provincial representative assemblies to assist the governor, and he set up elected municipal councils in the major cities. Staffed largely by Iraqi notables with no strong ties to the masses, the new offices nonetheless helped a group of Iraqis gain administrative experience.

By establishing government agencies in the cities and by attempting to settle the tribes, Midhat altered the tribal-urban balance of power, which since the thirteenth century had been largely in favor of the tribes. The most important element of Midhat's plan to extend Ottoman authority into the countryside was the 1858 TAPU land law (named after the initials of the government office issuing it). The new land reform replaced the feudal system of land holdings and tax farms with legally sanctioned property rights. It was designed both to induce tribal shaikhs to settle and to give them a stake in the existing political order. In practice, the TAPU laws enabled the tribal shaikhs to become large landowners; tribesmen, fearing that the new law was an attempt to collect taxes more effectively or to impose conscription, registered community-owned tribal lands in their shaikhs' names or sold them outright to urban speculators. As a result, tribal shaikhs gradually were transformed into profit-seeking landlords while their tribesmen were relegated to the role of impoverished sharecroppers.

Ottoman rule in Iraq began to deteriorate by the 19th century. Weak central control over rural areas led to the establishment of a series of Kurdish tribal dynasties in the north, along with an increase in the influence of tribes in the middle and south, especially amongst the Shia. The Ottomans tried to reinforce their authority over the provinces by bringing Shia cities such as Karbala and Najaf under the rule of the Baghdad administration and weakening the influence of the tribes with a series of land reforms. In the north, Kurdish dynasties were dissolved militarily, forcing the region's Kurds to accept Ottoman rule.³⁰

The inability of the Ottomans to control Iraq's countryside highlighted divisions between urban and rural Iraqis. For example, urban dwellers identified more with Arab and Islamic-based customs, while rural Iraqis retained their tribal-based traditions. Urban Iraqis were exposed to Ottoman and Islamic-based legal and administrative codes, while their counterparts in the countryside held on to their fiercely independent way of life. The state was unable to gain a strong foothold in rural regions, which contributed to strong feelings of localism and provincialism amongst the tribes.³¹

After nearly 400 years under Ottoman rule, Iraq was ill-prepared to form a nation-state. The Ottomans had failed to control Iraq's rebellious tribal domains, and



even in the cities their authority was tenuous. The Ottomans' inability to provide security led to the growth of autonomous, self-contained communities. As a result, Iraq entered the twentieth century beset by a complex web of social conflicts that seriously impeded the process of building a modern state.

The oldest and most deeply ingrained conflict was the competition between the tribes and the cities for control over the food-producing flatlands of the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers. The centralization policies of the Ottoman government, especially in the nineteenth century, constituted a direct threat to the nomadic structure and the fierce fighting spirit of the tribes. In addition to tribal-urban conflicts, the tribes fought among themselves, and there was a fairly rigid hierarchy between the most powerful tribes, the so-called "people of the camel," and the weaker tribes that included the "people of the sheep," marsh dwellers, and peasants.

The cities also were sharply divided, both according to occupation and along religious lines. The various guilds resided in distinct, autonomous areas, and Shia and Sunni Muslims rarely intermingled. The territory that eventually became the state of Iraq was beset, furthermore, by regional differences in orientation. Mosul in the north had historically looked to Syria and to Turkey, whereas Baghdad and the Shia holy cities had maintained close ties with Iran and with the people of the western and southwestern deserts.

Although Ottoman weakness had allowed Iraq's self-contained communities to grow stronger, the modernization initiated by the Ottomans tended to break down traditional autonomous groupings and to create a new social order. Beginning with the *tanzimat* reforms in 1869, Iraq's for the most part subsistence economy was slowly transformed into a market economy based on money and tied to the world capitalist market. Social status traditionally had been determined by noble lineage, by fighting prowess, and by knowledge of religion. With the advent of capitalism, social status was increasingly determined by property ownership and by the accumulation of wealth. Most disruptive in this regard was the TAPU land reform of 1858. Concomitantly, Western social and economic penetration increased; for example, Iraq's traditional crafts and craftsmen were gradually displaced by mass-produced British machine-made textiles.

The legacy of Ottoman rule in Iraq had a profound effect on the country's political, social, and economic development. Ottoman reliance on urban Sunni Arabs and, to a lesser extent, Sunni Kurds, in ruling Iraq would ensure Sunni dominance in the country for the rest of the twentieth century. Although the decline and ultimate fall of the Ottoman Empire after World War I ended Ottoman support for Sunnis, they were still able to maintain their position of influence within the framework of a unified state long afterwards.³²



In time, the Sunnis came to regard themselves as Iraq's political and intellectual elite. Sunnis tended to be the most educated of the population, since the majority of schools were located in Sunni-dominated urban centers. Because of their education, Sunnis eventually occupied most of the key positions of leadership in Iraq's military and government bureaucracy. This led to the emergence of a political system in which powerful Sunni elites were convinced that they were the most qualified to make decisions and were not obliged to consult ordinary Iraqis on matters that concerned the entire country³³ The exclusion of the Shia from the government alienated them from their fellow Sunni Iraqis and the tribes remained suspicious of government attempts to control their fiercely independent and/or nomadic lifestyles.

WW I and the British Mandate: 1914-1932

British rule played an important role in shaping modern Iraqi society. In 1914, Britain feared the rising influence of Germany in the Persian Gulf region. Britain sent troops to Iraq to counter the German threat to British oil interests in the area, a strategy meant to protect Britain's trade and communication links to its holdings in India. When the Ottomans decided to enter World War I on the side of Germany, the British responded by dispatching troops to Iraq. After landing in Basra in 1918, British soldiers gradually expanded their control to all of Iraq.³⁴



A scene in downtown Baghdad during the British Mandate period.

After consolidating their authority, the British replaced Ottoman legal and administrative codes with a civil system modeled after the one they had installed in India. Britain doubted the local inhabitants' ability for self-government, so it divided the region into districts under the control of British officers. The British also imported civil servants from India to assist in running the mandate government offices.

In an effort to secure the cooperation of powerful rural tribes, Britain reversed Ottoman tribal policy, which had been designed to keep the tribes under the control of the state. While British colonial policy emphasized a program of direct rule, Britain largely relied on the local tribes to maintain control. The British granted tribal shaikhs responsibilities such as upholding law and order and collecting taxes in their respective districts. This plan reduced the need for British



representatives on the ground and increased the influence of tribal shaikhs by bolstering an already powerful land-owning class.³⁵

The League of Nations assigned Britain a mandate to rule Iraq after the breakup of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I. The mandate proclaimed that Iraq would be ruled by Britain until it was ready for self-government. However, Britain used this mandate to secure its interests in Iraq: the British formulated a treaty that essentially called for the Iraqi leadership to concede to British interests in Iraq and for Iraq to pay for the British presence.³⁶

Although most Iraqis welcomed the removal of Ottoman control, they did not want to be ruled by another foreign power, and British colonial policies eventually incited opposition among the population. Opposition began to grow under the banner of Islam, especially among residents of Baghdad, Shia leaders, and tribes from the mid-Euphrates region. Despite their different backgrounds, these groups united over their desire to rid Iraq of the British presence. These tensions exploded in June 1920 in what came to be known as the 1920 Revolt.³⁷

The revolt lasted for three months and spread throughout Iraq's countryside, demonstrating the ability of Iraqi Sunnis, Shia, and Kurds and other ethno-religious groups to unite and rise up against foreign occupation. While ethnic, linguistic and tribal-based allegiances were the main factors that shaped local identity at the time, the revolt demonstrated the ability of Iraqis to unite under a common banner. The revolt helped to foster the emergence of a distinct Iraqi identity. For example, Shia leaders revolted in the name of Islam and Arab honor in their pursuit of freedom – symbols to which most Iraqi Arabs, Shia or Sunni, could relate. Sunnis and Shia also began to pray alongside one another in mosques in Baghdad, delivering a unified message of nationalism and Islam. Many Kurdish tribes also supported this movement in the name of independence.³⁸ In short, the 1920 Revolt helped create an Iraqi national identity and is a key event in understanding the roots of current Iraqi identity and nationalism.



The 1920 Revolt against British colonial policies continues to inspire Iraqi nationalists today. This event is important because it demonstrated the ability and willingness of Iraqis to unite under the banner of Iraqi nationalism and Islam, regardless of ethnic, sectarian or religious differences.



While Britain succeeded in crushing the uprising, its reaction to the 1920 Revolt marked a major shift in its colonial policy. Britain's post-revolt plan entailed removing Iraq's military administration, creating a constitution with the input of Iraqis, and establishing a provisional government to be led by an Arab.³⁹ The 1920 Revolt forced the British to recognize nascent Iraqi nationalism as well as the impact this growing nationalist consciousness would have on its colonial administration. The Iraqis' military defeat at the hands of the British forces caused them to alter their opposition strategy. They began to resist through political parties, print media, and other non-violent methods. This movement developed into two opposition camps: one concerned with Shia objectives, with the other adopting a Sunni Arab nationalist character.⁴⁰

The most important aspect of Britain's new plan was the creation of a constitutional monarchy⁴¹ with Faisal ibn Hussein as King of Iraq. Faisal was born in Mecca and was a descendent of the Hashemite royal dynasty. The Hashemites⁴² had a close relationship with Britain stemming from when Faisal's father led the Arab revolt against the Ottomans during World War I. Faisal's Hashemite and pan-Arab nationalist credentials provided him with a crucial measure of legitimacy among Iraqis. As a ruler imposed by a colonial power, Faisal also understood the importance of establishing close ties with Iraq's different ethnic and religious groups in order to maintain peace, stability and his authority. In order to bolster his position in the eyes of Iraqis, the British engineered an election that gave Faisal a huge majority of the popular vote. In reality, Faisal enjoyed less support from ordinary Iraqis than the polls would indicate.⁴³



Faisal ibn Hussein, King of
Iraq

Faisal's main support base was a class of Ottoman-educated Sunni Arab nationalist intellectuals and military officers who were willing to work within the British political framework. Faisal appointed these Iraqis to key positions, and ordered that Iraq's civil system replace Turkish with Arabic as its primary language. A new Iraqi army was created, which featured an officer corps made up mostly of Sunni Arabs, while the lower ranks were occupied by Shia tribesmen. These policies contributed to the 'Arabization' of the country, as more and more Ottoman-era institutions were replaced with Arab-centric policies.⁴⁴

This period further reinforced the prominence of Sunni Arabs in Iraqi politics, especially as Sunnis filled the leadership ranks of the country's military and security forces. Iraq's education system was reformed, and the new curricula featured secular Arab nationalist themes highlighting the Arabic language, Arab



history, and Iraq's place within the larger family of Arab nations. Despite the national unity that developed during the 1920 Revolt, Faisal's Arab nationalist position prevented the further development of an Iraqi-centered nationalism because his Arab-centric approach made the Kurds and Shia suspicious of Sunni Arab motives.⁴⁵ Although an Iraqi identity was beginning to emerge, Sunni Arab prominence in the central government was a cause for concern among the Shia and other groups who had already experienced years of Sunni Arab dominance under the Ottomans and British.

During the monarchy, Iraqis increasingly saw their leaders as agents of British colonialism. Despite Faisal's reform efforts, he held a weak position in Iraqi politics since he owed his throne to the British. The Iraqi constitution granted the king and his government a minimal role in the management of Iraq's day-to-day affairs, and demonstrated Britain's goal of ensuring that Faisal and Iraq remained subjects of British rule. This alienated the majority of them from the government and drove them to focus on the removal of the British presence⁴⁶

Iraq was recognized by the League of Nations as an independent state in October 1932, ending Britain's mandate. Britain had already safeguarded its strategic interests in Iraq by formulating a treaty with Faisal in 1930, giving it access to military bases and the right to use Iraqi territory in the case of war. Britain's decision to abandon its mandate, due to increasing financial burdens and political pressure from home, forced the young Iraqi state to establish a government bureaucracy in a hasty manner, ushering in a period of political instability.⁴⁷

The Monarchy (1932-1958)

The removal of the colonial authorities in Iraq brought instability as competing domestic forces jockeyed for position in the early independence period. Consequently, Britain retained de facto control of Iraq until 1958. Iraq's delicate unity was also challenged, as the threat of inter-ethnic and religious violence increased as various ethnic, religious, and tribal communities demanded greater power in the central government.⁴⁸



British General Sir Edmund Allenby alongside Iraq's King Faisal. The British remained the main power brokers in Iraq up until 1958.



Iraq Tribal Study

Tribes and Iraqi History

In the early years of independence, two rival schools of thought emerged that would dominate political debate in the country well into the future. The Arab nationalist school was popular among educated urban elites. It called for building a strong Iraq that would have influence throughout the Arab world. This group highlighted Iraq's position as an Arab country within a larger Arab context. Their ultimate goal was the creation of a unified Arab state stretching from Morocco to Saudi Arabia.⁴⁹ On the other hand, the Iraqi social reformers were more concerned with Iraq's specific domestic socioeconomic situation, especially the popular discontent with the country's leaders and the widespread poverty affecting the majority of the population. This group included Leftists and Communists and appealed mainly to the Shia and minority communities. The Shia considered Arab nationalist goals as another form of Sunni Arab domination, given that the majority of Arabs follow the Sunni school of Islam.⁵⁰



The unification of the three Ottoman-era provinces of Basra, Baghdad, and Mosul, coupled with increasingly hostile feelings towards the British, encouraged the development of an Iraqi identity. However, this period in Iraqi history was shaped primarily by the complex interplay of competing political, social, and economic forces, and their respective agendas regarding Iraq's future. Little had changed from the time of the British mandate, given that Britain was still the driving force in Iraqi politics. However, the introduction of Arab nationalist and Iraqi-based themes in the education system, among other things, did go far to encourage the emergence of an Iraqi identity.⁵¹

King Faisal sought to satisfy Arab nationalists by placing a number of them in his government.⁵² The Iraqi Assyrian minority's request for autonomy from Baghdad in May 1933 revealed the strength of pan-Arab nationalist feelings in Iraq. The Assyrians are a non-Arab Christian minority and had received preferential treatment from the British. Britain had created Assyrian security units (the Levies), which worked with the colonial forces. Many Iraqis were resentful of the Assyrians for the special treatment they received. Tensions eventually erupted into bloodshed, leading to the massacre of Assyrians by Iraqi army troops. Because minorities like the Assyrians were seen as agents of Britain, attacking them was considered an act of national defense. As a result of this Iraqi nationalist fervor, the popularity of the Iraqi army increased after the clashes.



The general who led the forces against the Assyrians—an Iraqi Kurd named Bakr Sidqi - became a national hero. The military's success in crushing the Assyrian uprising also symbolized the emergence of the army as a major force in Iraqi politics, particularly considering the army's future role in a series of military coups. The Iraqi armed forces came to be regarded as a national savior that could defend the country from both external and internal threats.⁵³

King Faisal's death in September 1933 added to the turbulence of the period. His son Ghazi assumed the throne, but at the age of twenty-one he lacked his father's experience in navigating Iraqi politics.⁵⁴ But the impact of Iraq's transition from a traditional society based on tribalism to one on settled agriculture had greater affect on society than the death of the king. The expansion of state influence in rural areas reduced the authority of the tribal shaikhs relative to the government as the state began replacing tribal codes and traditions with its own laws and procedures. For example, most tribes relied on breeding livestock and subsistence agriculture for their economic livelihoods. The government's implementation of land reform measures meant that the tribes had to abandon their nomadic ways and settle on a plot of land in order to grow vegetables or raise animals. This required the enforcement of property laws that defined one's ownership over specific plots of land. This policy ultimately led to competition and rivalry between the tribes for the best plots of land.⁵⁵



Ghazi, King Faisal's son, lacked the experience and ability of his father to govern Iraq.

Throughout the monarchy period, there were numerous revolts by tribes who resented the land reforms, and by Shia Iraqis who felt politically marginalized. In the eyes of the Shia tribes, the Sunni Arab nationalists in control in Baghdad were seen as illegitimate because they were secular and still dominated by Britain. These feelings were compounded by traditional Shia suspicions of Sunni motives. Shia tribal rebellions reflected Shia anger towards what they saw as a Sunni-dominated central government plot to undermine their position in society. The Shia tribesmen also opposed the Sunni-supported pan-Arab nationalist ideology.⁵⁶ Arab nationalists called for the integration of Iraq into a state that would span the entire Arab world. Inevitably, this greater Arab state would be dominated by Sunnis. These political and ideological tensions led to widespread rural revolts throughout the monarchical period. The government moved quickly to suppress these uprisings with a ruthless display of force against the tribes. The government eventually succeeded in calming the tribal regions, but tensions remained.⁵⁷



After the rebellions, the central government took on an increasingly authoritarian character, attacking the press and silencing opposition parties. These repressive policies prompted the military to lead a coup against the leadership in 1936. The armed forces were inspired by their goal of accelerating Iraq's modernization and development process, modeled on the system of paternalistic authoritarianism- that the rulers know best and need not consult the people- that existed under the Ottomans.⁵⁸

This coup removed most of the Ottoman-era Sunni Arab ruling elite from power. In their place appeared a new class of politicians that included Leftists, liberal reformers, and others educated under the British rather than the Turkish system. Most importantly, this new government contained only a handful of Sunni Arabs and not a single Arab nationalist. This new leadership introduced a series of Iraq-centered policies that ran contrary to the Arab nationalist policies of before.⁵⁹

The overthrow of the government in 1936 was the first in a series of military coups in Iraq. Ideological conflicts between Arab and Iraqi nationalists, the armed forces, tribesmen, leftists, liberal democrats, and Communists, to name a few, would characterize the Iraqi political scene until 1968. The armed forces emerged from the 1936 coup as the most powerful force in Iraqi politics. King Ghazi's sudden death in 1939 added to the military's burden of maintaining order and stability in Iraq. Regional crises such as British policy in Palestine and global developments like the onset of World War II combined with increasing anti-British sentiment and Iraqi nationalism to usher in the second British occupation of Iraq.⁶⁰



A scene on the Tigris river.

Iraq's role in World War II shed light on the different ideologies held by Iraqi government officials, especially in terms of the future of the country's relationship with Britain. One faction supported the British, while another wanted to remain neutral or use Iraqi support for the war as a bargaining chip to secure reduced British involvement in Iraqi affairs. The anti-British group won out, prompting the British to present Iraq with an ultimatum: it

could maintain friendly relations with Britain or it must oust the anti-British leadership.⁶¹ The anti-British leadership refused to give in to British demands, and after another series of military coups the Iraqi nationalist camp was back in power. Britain could no longer stand by and watch as Iraqi nationalists remained in control in Baghdad. British troops were soon ordered back into Iraq in the hopes of installing another pro-British government. They succeeded in installing a pro-British leadership linked politically and economically to the occupation forces. A British military presence remained in Iraq until 1945.⁶²



The installation of a pro-British Iraqi leadership once again tied the Iraqi government to Britain. The pro-British leadership did not enjoy the support that the Iraqi nationalists did among Iraq's urban and middle classes. Ordinary Iraqis were angered by the arrest of nationalists and others who sympathized with the Axis forces. The removal of the Iraqi nationalists from the government also reduced the presence of the Sunni Arab elite in positions of power. The British essentially reversed their traditional policy of relying on Sunni Arabs and instead elevated far more Shia and Kurds to important positions. This shift also encouraged Leftist political ideologies, particularly Marxism and Communism, to take root at the expense of traditional Arab and/or Iraqi nationalist thought. These groups tended to be more organized politically and were able to fill the void left by the ousted nationalists.⁶³

Government crackdowns pushed anti-government groups underground throughout the 1950s. Opposition factions that included the Communists, National Democratic Party, Independence Party, and a new player on the scene, the Arab nationalist Baath Party (Renaissance or Revival Party) also began to work together against the regime. Popular anger against the regime soon combined with resentment from within the armed forces. The largely unpopular Iraqi monarchy was overthrown in a successful military coup on July 14, 1958.⁶⁴

The Iraqi Republic 1958 - 1968

The 1958 Iraqi Revolution that ousted the British-backed monarchy was welcomed by most Iraqis. The founding of the Iraqi Republic ushered in a period of hope and optimism among the population that the new government would free Iraq from foreign control. The forces that led the coup effort were led by 'Abd al-Karim Qasim. Iraqis believed that the revolution would modernize and reform their country. Instead, it led to a period of instability and military rule. The regime did reduce the power of the upper and land-owning classes by empowering lower and middle-class Iraqis. It also put forth economic development programs that targeted the poor and increased the participation of Leftists and Communists in the government. However, the regime's ultimate failure to secure a wide base of support, especially from within the armed forces, would lead to its downfall. This led to a series of coups and counter-coups originating from within the armed forces. Iraq would be ruled by four different regimes between 1958 and 1968.⁶⁵

General Qasim alienated certain factions in the military because of his close ties with the Communists. Qasim also moved Iraq farther from Britain and the West and closer to the Soviet Union. He also escaped an assassination attempt organized by a team of Baathist hit men that included the 22 year-old Saddam Hussein. Qasim's relations with the Iraqi Communists led to a coup organized by the Baath Party in 1963. However, the Baathists were ousted in another coup

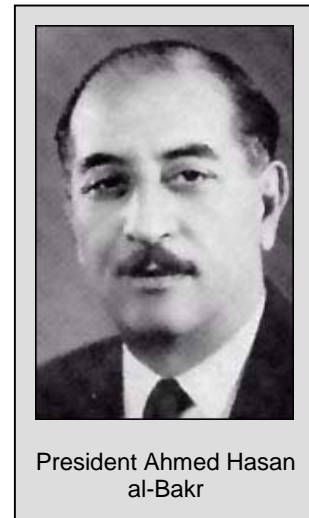


after only nine months led by Abd as-Salam Arif and a group of pan-Arab nationalist officers who felt betrayed by Qasim's strategy. The rivalry between Qasim and the Iraqi nationalists versus Arif and the Arab nationalists centered on whether Iraq should enter into the Nasser-led United Arab Republic (UAR), a union that brought Egypt and Syria together. Arif's hold on power did not last, as disappointed supporters and Baathists worked together to oust him, ushering in a second Baathist government in 1968.⁶⁶

The political rivalries during this chaotic period highlighted the competition between Communists and Leftists, pan-Arab and Iraqi nationalists, liberal reformers, and the military for control of Iraq. These power struggles also brought instability, which led to more violence and failed attempts at reform and development. In the end, the regimes during this period failed to create an environment that allowed the country's competing factions to shape a new Iraq in a civil and democratic manner.

1968 Baathist Coup - 1980

The Baathists returned to power in July 1968 led by President Ahmed Hasan al-Bakr and his deputy, Saddam Hussein. Within a few weeks, the new government moved to consolidate its position by forcibly removing remnants of the old regime and forming the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC). Ordinary Iraqis were largely indifferent to the change in leadership. Iraqis felt alienated from their leaders due to the chaotic nature of Iraqi politics. Most Iraqis were more concerned about their difficult economic situation than in the latest military coup.⁶⁷



The Baath Party's efforts to consolidate control continued with a series of sham trials led by Saddam Hussein that were designed to eliminate real or imagined threats to the new regime. The first victims of these trials were former government officials. The Baath Party's next target was the military, which was viewed with great suspicion by both al-Bakr and Saddam. Many of the officials singled out were executed. These men were replaced with individuals who owed their positions to al-Bakr and Saddam alone. The next step was issuing a new constitution that expanded the role of the RCC as the main authority within the Baath Party. Saddam would become vice chairman of the RCC, placing him in the second most important position under al-Bakr.⁶⁸

The Baath Party's rise to power was not the result of a popular revolution. The party's key figures – President al-Bakr and his deputy, Saddam Hussein— did



not command a reliable power base. The Baath instead turned to certain key tribes, clans and kin-based allegiances for support—especially the Tikritis. The Tikritis are Sunnis Arabs originating from the town of Tikrit, located just outside of Baghdad. Al-Bakr and Saddam were relatives and both were from Tikrit.⁶⁹



Saddam Hussein, Vice
Chairman of the Baath
Party's Revolutionary
Command Council (RCC)
in 1968.

Al-Bakr had been associated with Arab nationalist movements for over a decade. He also brought the party support from the army both among Baathist and non-Baathist officers. Saddam was a party official with an expertise in security. Saddam's experience with organizing opposition activities made him a valuable asset to al-Bakr and the Baath Party, especially considering Iraq's history of military coups. Saddam quickly proved to be a ruthless player in Iraqi politics. Although al-Bakr was the older and more experienced politician, by 1969 Saddam had become the driving force behind the party. He soon was taking the lead on key issues. For example, he personally directed the Baath Party's attempts to settle a dispute with the Kurds that threatened national unity.⁷⁰

Despite the fact that Baathist ideology was critical of tribalism, the Baath Party relied heavily on tribal and kin-based networks to maintain its power. The party leadership attempted to attract members with whom it shared close personal relationships, especially among those from the same town or village. This was done in order to create a power base that would have a stake in the regime's survival. Baathist strategy relied heavily on certain Arab and Sunni clans and groups tied to the ruling elite for political support. As a result, the role of the Sunnis rose dramatically in Iraqi politics, while that of the Shia and other groups declined significantly.⁷¹

Tikritis and other clans and tribes aligned with the Baath soon filled the ranks of the Iraqi armed and police forces and intelligence services. Saddam oversaw this program personally. By ensuring that Tikritis and loyal tribesmen filled the ranks of the security forces, Saddam was able to exert a great deal of influence over Iraq's military. This was important given the military's role as a key power broker in Iraqi politics. Saddam also ensured that no single branch of the security services would emerge with too much influence by creating a number of redundant units with overlapping responsibilities. This structure was designed so that one group is able to monitor the other's activities, in addition to their regular duties. The Baath leadership did not trust the armed forces.⁷² By filling the military ranks with Baathists from Tikrit and loyal tribesmen, the party was protecting itself from internal threats. The 'Tikritization' of the security services also enabled Saddam to build a corps of loyalists that he could rely on in the



future to support his personal ambitions. Tikritis held the key leadership posts in the Baath Party and RCC, the Defense and Security Ministries, as well as air force and tank regiments.

The Baath Party faced a number of internal and external challenges to its power early on. To confront these challenges, Saddam worked hard to expand party membership in order to legitimize the regime in the eyes of ordinary Iraqis. The regime used both incentives and threats to increase its mass base. For example, qualifying for a civil service job or gaining acceptance into medical school may have been based on whether one was a member of the Baath Party or not. Iraqis often lost jobs because of their refusal to join the party. The Baathists also used violent intimidation to maintain power. It was common for critics of the regime to be jailed or tortured. Executions, assassinations and 'disappearances' were also a regular occurrence.⁷³

Saddam's personal role in shaping the Baathist security structure earlier in his career paid off when al-Bakr's health relegated him to a symbolic position in the party. By 1977, high-ranking Baathist officials began reporting to Saddam instead of al-Bakr, especially officials from the security services. Saddam's moment had arrived. He soon began working to create a cult of personality around himself, going so far as to compare himself with Nebuchadnezzar and the father of the Iraqi people.⁷⁴

Islam

Islam, both Sunni and Shia, was a threat to regime stability, because the mosque had the potential to be a ready-made inter-tribal network for plotting anti-regime activities. Hussein's anxiety regarding the danger of Iraqi religious institutions became particularly acute following the 1979 Iranian Revolution, which demonstrated the power of religious social networks to achieve their political aspirations. After the Iranian Revolution, the Iraqi government launched a campaign against the Shia faith, including the assassination of religious leaders, the closure of mosques, and a prohibition on Shia pilgrimages within Iraq.⁷⁵

The Sunni Arab religious institutions fared better than the Shia after the Iranian Revolution. Hussein took care, however, to exercise a great deal of control over Sunni religious gatherings, writings, and sermons. The Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs monitored places of worship, appointed clerics, approved the building and repair of all places of worship, and monitored and censored the publication of religious literature.⁷⁶ The ministry served as a source of intelligence for the regime. The content of religious classes and study groups was monitored and evaluated by the ministry, and the ministry itself produced and broadcast all religious programming on the



state television and radio stations. In a number of cases, Sunni religious leaders who refused to adopt regime control were imprisoned. Other imams were removed from their positions of influence from mosques or forcibly transferred elsewhere in the Sunni Triangle, because they commanded a great deal of respect and authority outside the regime-controlled system of tribal leadership.⁷⁷

The Iran-Iraq War and the Gulf War: 1980-1993

The causes of the Iran-Iraq war were based on historical rivalry and tensions over borders and ideology. One reason is rooted in Iraqi fears of Iranian aspirations for greater influence in the region. For example, Iran's absorption of Khuzistan (an area with a large Arab population) in 1925 convinced Iraq that Iran held territorial claims on its territory.⁷⁸ Another factor involved the control of the strategically important Shatt-al-Arab waterway. The signing of the Algiers Agreement in 1975 granted Iran control of half of the waterway. Iraq was forced to concede to Iran on this issue from a position of strategic weakness.⁷⁹

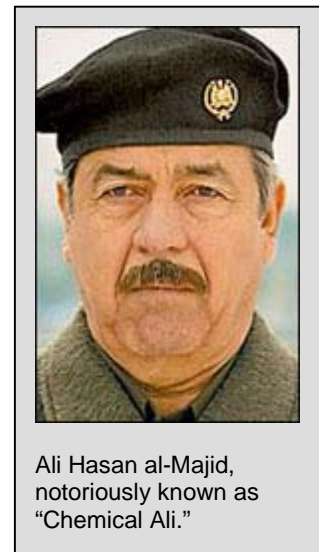
However, it was the 1979 Iranian Revolution that played the most important role in convincing Iraq to invade Iran. The Iranian revolution installed a Shia Islamist government in Iran. This event highlighted cultural, ethnic and religious tensions between both countries. The secular Arab nationalist Baathists feared that Iran was planning to spread its revolutionary Islamist message to Iraq, especially among Iraq's Shia majority. These fears were confirmed when the Iranian government began to support resistance by Iraqi Shia, as well as call for the overthrow of the secular Baathist government. The Baath Party feared that the dramatic political events in neighboring Shia Iran would enhance the feelings of religious identity among Iraqi Shia, which would threaten state unity. All of these factors convinced Saddam Hussein to take preemptive military action against Iran on September 22, 1980.⁸⁰

The Iraqi government sought to tap into feelings of Iraqi patriotism and mobilize Iraqis for war by emphasizing the threat of Iranian expansionism. The Baathist government portrayed Iranian Islamism as a threat to Iraqi secularism, unity and way of life. Saddam Hussein also highlighted the historical rivalry between the Arab world and Shia Persia. The Baathists claimed that ordinary Iraqis were obliged to defend the Arab world from Iranian expansion. To counter the Islamist message coming from Iran, Saddam Hussein set his secular credentials aside and highlighted Iraq's Islamic identity to mobilize support. He even claimed to be a descendent of the founder of Islam, the Prophet Muhammad, in an attempt to gain support from religious Iraqis for the war effort.⁸¹



The Iran-Iraq war strengthened Iraqi national identity in the face of an external threat, despite taking a devastating toll on the population. This is important considering Iraq's multi-ethnic and multi-religious character. It is also relevant because the majority of Iraqis, like Iranians, are followers of the Shia school of Islam. However, popular dissent did exist among the population during the war, but it was based more on a reluctance to fight and die in a brutal conflict than on ethnic or religious agendas.⁸²

Iraq's Shia community made up the vast majority of the troops that fought on the front lines during the war. Throughout the conflict, Iraqi Shia displayed little interest in aligning with their fellow Shia in Iran against the Iraqi government, despite the deportation of Iraqis of Iranian origin (Iraqi Persian speakers) prior to the war. Iraqi Shia-based opposition movements against the regime were also ruthlessly suppressed early on to prevent the emergence of any serious threats to the war efforts from the Shia community.⁸³ Shia dissent was displayed mostly in the form of desertions, rather through religious or ideological movements.⁸⁴



Ali Hasan al-Majid,
notoriously known as
"Chemical Ali."

When the Iran-Iraq war ended, many of the issues that led to the conflict remained unresolved. The Iraqi government portrayed the war with Iran as a great victory for the country. Iraqi forces still held onto some Iranian territory, but had little else to show for its efforts. Iraq did preserve its territorial integrity in the face of a powerful enemy. It also severely weakened Iran militarily and economically. However, Iraq itself also emerged severely weakened. The brutal measures used to maintain internal stability during the conflict, especially in the Kurdish regions, also enflamed tensions inside the country. In the Shia regions, the first open large-scale signs of opposition to Saddam's rule emerged in the immediate post-war period.⁸⁵

The economic and social costs of the Iran-Iraq war were devastating. Human casualties are believed to have numbered over a half a million Iraqis. The death toll in military casualties was around 380,000, with 125,000 deaths and 255,000 wounded. The number of Iraqi POWs captured by Iranian forces was believed to have ranged between 50,000 and 80,000. Between 50,000 to 100,000 Iraqis, mostly Kurds, are believed to have perished as a result of the bloody Anfal Campaign alone.⁸⁶

Iraq, which relies heavily on oil exports for its economic livelihood, suffered heavy financial losses during the war due to damaged production facilities and the inability to bring oil to market. By the end of the war, Iraq's oil revenues totaled



only one third of prewar levels. Much of Iraq's industry and infrastructure was also destroyed. This severely hindered the country's post-war reconstruction efforts. Iraq also had to contend with the massive foreign debt that it had accumulated during the conflict. For example, Iraq received substantial loans from Arab countries like Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, both of which supported Saddam out of fear of a rising Iran. However, Iraq considered these funds as contributions in its effort to protect the Arab Gulf states from the Iranian threat. The issue of debt would lead to serious tensions with both Saudi Arabia and Kuwait down the line.⁸⁷

The vital Shatt-al-Arab waterway was closed to shipping following the war, primarily because it was littered with heavy debris. The waterway was also polluted due to the use of chemical weapons. Control of the Shatt-al-Arab was a major objective of the war for Iraq. Iraq relied heavily on this waterway to export oil. It now had to look for alternative transit points to bring oil to market. This led Iraq to focus on Kuwait because of its strategic location on the Persian Gulf.⁸⁸



Years of war devastated Iraq's infrastructure and industrial base, forcing the majority of Iraqis into a life of unemployment and poverty.

Ordinary Iraqis paid the highest economic costs of the war, especially in areas that sustained the heaviest damage. For example, Iraq's northern and southern regions, which were home to most of the country's Kurdish and Shia communities, were hit particularly hard. Agricultural development was also neglected during the conflict, leading to massive food shortages throughout and immediately after the war. Labor shortages in key industries during the conflict also hurt the economy, since the Iraqi military tapped most of the country's skilled labor force for active duty on the frontlines. The government

compensated for the labor shortage by importing guest workers to fill positions in key industries. This hurt the economy because most of the income earned by foreign guest workers was sent out of the country.⁸⁹

Central Iraq was least affected by the war. Nonetheless, the Iraqi government focused much of its economic and infrastructure development there. This led to population flows of Iraqis from the hardest hit and poorest regions to Baghdad and surrounding cities in search of economic opportunities and access to vital social services like health care. On the other hand, Saddam's hometown of Tikrit benefited substantially from the government's post-war reconstruction efforts. Saddam's policy of bolstering his support base in Tikrit and the tribal regions surrounding it improved the status for Iraq's political and economic elites during a period when the majority of Iraqis were suffering.⁹⁰



The economic toll on the population also weakened Iraq's traditional middle-classes, especially in the north and south of the country. Most middle-class Iraqis were experiencing poverty for the first time.⁹¹

The Baath Party's strategy of targeting reconstruction and development funds towards certain key regions enabled a wealthy merchant class to emerge that reaped the benefits of its loyalty to Saddam. Close ties to the regime enabled them to amass enormous wealth at the expense of the rest of the population. This new elite cut across ethnic and religious lines, although most of the beneficiaries were Sunni Arabs from Tikrit and Iraq's central regions. However, Saddam did secure personal loyalty and support for the regime among a number of Kurdish and Shia tribes in the post-war era.⁹²



Saddam addressing his troops on the front. Iraq's poor economic situation complicated the military demobilization process. Saddam soon set his sights on Kuwait.

Despite the difficult social, political and economic troubles facing Iraq at the end of its war with Iran, Saddam set his sights on Kuwait.⁹³ Like the Iran-Iraq war, Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 was based on historical and strategic reasons. Iraqi nationalists argue that since Kuwait was a district in Iraq's southern Basra province during the Ottoman period, it should have remained a part of the new state of Iraq.⁹⁴ Iraq and Kuwait also had a number of territorial disputes that involved borders and seaways, namely, Iraq's claims on the Kuwaiti islands of Warba and Bubiyan. These islands were important for Iraqi shipping because of their location near vital waterways, especially since the Shatt-al-Arab remained blocked. Iraq was also angered by Kuwait's refusal to waive the huge debt Iraq had accumulated during its war with Iran. These factors were magnified by Iraq's vulnerable position relative to Iran after the Iran-Iraq war. Iraq believed that Iran was preparing to invade it and that it had to act to strengthen its position before it was too late.⁹⁵ Saddam ordered his forces to make their move on 2 August 1990. The Gulf War led by the US to oust Iraqi forces from Kuwait lasted from 17 January - 28 February 1991.⁹⁶

Saddam's heavy-handed defeat at the hands of a massive US-led multi-national coalition force led to the expulsion of Iraqi forces from Kuwait. Saddam's miscalculations in invading Iraq's southern neighbor forced his unconditional surrender under humiliating terms. This ushered in a period of United Nations-led economic sanctions and international scrutiny regarding Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). Weapons inspections under the direction of the UN Special Commission (UNSCOM) would go far in exposing Iraq's WMD stockpiles and related research and development programs.⁹⁷



Southern Iraq was the scene of some of the conflict's heaviest fighting, making life especially difficult for local residents in the post-war period. The UN-led sanctions, in place since Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, also started to have an affect on daily life, as it became increasingly difficult for ordinary Iraqis to cope economically. Inflation and unemployment were also on the rise due to the sanctions and the infrastructure damage from the fighting. Tensions inside Iraq gradually built up until they exploded in the spring of 1991, as Iraq's southern regions became the scene of an intifada among the Shia population against Saddam. A revolt in the Kurdish northern regions soon followed. Both of these uprisings demonstrated widespread displays of opposition to the regime and threatened Iraqi unity.⁹⁸

The intifada of March of 1991 was a popular movement that was sparked by Iraqi soldiers retreating and/or returning from the front lines. Feelings of frustration and humiliation over Iraq's one-sided defeat and anger towards the regime led to violent revolts in the Shia regions. Some Shia Iraqis living in exile in Iran also participated in the rebellion. The majority of the participants were made up of young people from urban areas. There were even instances when the uprising took on a distinctly Shia or religious character. The 1991 intifada demonstrated open opposition to symbols of the regime, namely, Baath Party officials and the feared security services that brutalized the population for so long. For the most part, the Shia intifada did not mobilize the upper- and middle classes, high-ranking military officials, influential religious figures and key tribes, whose support might have changed the course of the revolt.⁹⁹



UN Inspectors investigate suspicious looking containers.

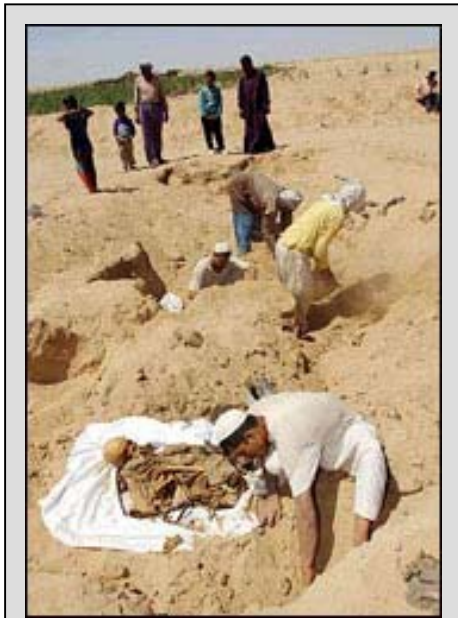
The *intifada* failed to oust Saddam because the movement was unable to pose a serious military threat to his power. According to state propaganda, people who revolted in the name of Shia Islam only confirmed the regime's arguments that Iraq was threatened by a conspiracy organized by Iran. However, there is no credible evidence to show that such a conspiracy existed. Nevertheless, this discouraged secular Iraqi Shia from joining the revolt, leading them to remain neutral or side with the regime. The anarchy and mass killings that came with the revolt also deterred Iraqis from joining the uprising.

The military also failed to support the rebellion. This was a significant blow to the revolt because it could not make use of the security services' organizational capabilities and access to heavy weaponry. Military and security service participation would have been a strong symbolic gesture that may have



influenced more Iraqis to join in the uprising. Finally, the Shia received no support from abroad, although the US did urge on the revolt in its rhetoric. Most Iraqi Shia believed that American military support was on the way. In the end, the American refusal to support the rebellion led to widespread distrust of the US within the Shia community.¹⁰⁰

Iraqi Kurds also revolted against the regime at around the same time and for many of the same reasons. The Kurdish *intifada* differed in that the revolt was more organized. Kurdish factions that were previously allied with the regime were



Iraqi Shia Muslims search for the remains of their loved ones in mass graves near Basra, in southern Iraq. The majority of the victims of Saddam's crackdown against the Shia *intifada* in 1991 were buried in graves like this one. Mass graves have also been found in north Iraq, where Kurdish victims of Saddam's Anfal campaign are buried.

also quick to defect and join ordinary Kurds in the uprising. The north also became a scene of mayhem and violence that featured mass killings of regime officials, especially members of the security services. Popular anger was high because of the region's experience during the bloody Anfal Campaign. However, the motives of the Kurdish uprising differed from those of their Iraqi Shia counterparts in that the Kurds expressed a desire for self-determination, not a new leadership in Baghdad.¹⁰¹

The situation in Baghdad and Iraq's predominantly Sunni Arab areas in the central regions remained relatively calm during this period. Although demonstrations against the regime did occur, most were concentrated in Shia populated sectors of cities like Baghdad. As word of the revolt spread around Baghdad, Sunni Arabs feared that they would become the targets of Shia and Kurdish anger. That the *intifadas* did not spread to Baghdad also demonstrated the strength of the regime in Iraq's central regions in the face of a series of internal threats.¹⁰²

Almost immediately, Saddam moved to crush the rebellion in the south with a ruthless display of force. Fearing dissent from within the military, the regime relied on special units like the Republican Guard, which was considered more reliable, to suppress the uprising. The regime used military and police units commanded by Tikritis to crush the rebellion. As usual, Iraqi forces used brutal tactics against the Shia. By March 29, it is estimated that thousands of Iraqi Shia were killed. The number of dead may be as high as 30,000. Tens of thousands of



Iraqi Shia were also forced from their homes, with many of them fleeing to Iran.¹⁰³

Many observers were surprised with Saddam's ability to organize militarily to confront the threat in the south, especially considering Iraq's recent military defeat. He soon set his sights on suppressing the uprising in the north. Tensions were especially high because of the regime's previous use of chemical weapons against the Kurds. By the end of March, the Kurdish intifada had been crushed. The Kurdish rebellion failed for many of the same reasons that plagued the Iraq Shia uprising.¹⁰⁴

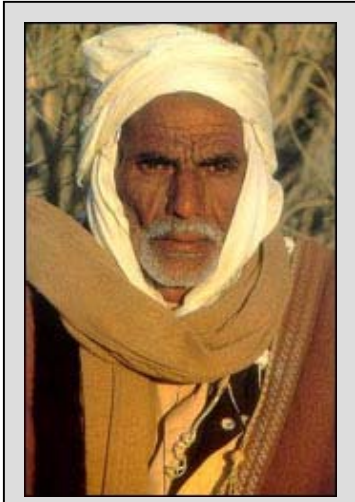


American soldiers provide much needed relief to Iraqi Kurds during Operation Provide Comfort.

Iraqi actions in the north led to a mass exodus of over two million Kurds to the borders of Turkey and Iran. A humanitarian disaster was in the making, as thousands of Kurds died of starvation and exposure to the cold. The US began supplying humanitarian aid through Operation Provide Comfort (OPC) in order to convince Kurds to remain in Iraq. The US also created a safe haven for returning Kurds under UN-led control and enforced a no-fly zone that would remain for years. This no-fly zone protected humanitarian aid drops from the skies and limited military and commercial flights within Iraq.¹⁰⁵

The devastating results of the Gulf War and the withdrawal of Iraqi troops in October 1991 dramatically altered the situation on the ground in northern Iraq. The Kurds succeeded in negotiating a ceasefire with Saddam on favorable terms and were guaranteed Western protection in the process. These circumstances enabled the Kurds to enjoy virtual autonomy. The Kurds soon created formal political institutions. They even established Kurdish language schools. This arrangement facilitated the emergence of a Kurdish identity independent of the rest of Iraq. It was not long before the Kurdish regions experienced an improvement in the local economic situation.¹⁰⁶

Although the southern Shia regions remained under Saddam's control, the Baath Party's base of support at this time was limited to Baghdad and the predominantly Sunni center. And even in the center, the regime had to focus on its tribal and clan bases for support. The Shia south remained hostile and bitter towards the regime, making it difficult to control. Tribal shaikhs aligned with Saddam were called upon to maintain order in the south, in return for arms, money and opportunities to handle lucrative sanctions-busting smuggling operations.¹⁰⁷



An Iraqi Tribesman

An important social consequence of both the Iran-Iraq and Gulf Wars was the growth in the role of tribalism in Iraqi society. Hardship resulting from harsh economic sanctions, years of conflict and the regime's inability to provide necessary social services and employment opportunities drove many Iraqis to rely on tribal and kin-based social networks for support. Since the Baath Party had destroyed virtually all associational life and civil society in Iraq, such as independent organizations or opposition political parties, ordinary Iraqis had nowhere to turn for support except to their tribes and families.

Traditionally, Iraqi culture is heavily influenced by tribalism. However, Iraq's transformation from a mostly rural and nomadic society to an urban one during the twentieth century greatly reduced the role of tribes, especially among educated urban dwellers. Nevertheless, the difficult social and economic circumstances facing the populations revived their dependence on these networks for the livelihoods.¹⁰⁸

Since it had become increasingly difficult to maintain control over the country, the government began to rely on the tribes for help in certain areas. The regime's propaganda increasingly relied on tribal poetry and myths to mobilize public opinion. Saddam dressed in traditional tribal clothing when addressing tribal areas of the country. Tribal shaikhs competed with the traditional Baathist elites for favors. Shortly after Iraq's defeat in the Gulf War, tribal chiefs visited the Presidential Palace for the first time in Iraq's modern history.¹⁰⁹ This period also saw a surge of black market smuggling activities organized around tribal and kin-based links. This emphasis on tribalism signified a departure from initial Baathist doctrine that considered tribalism to be a backward and divisive force that threatened Iraqi and Arab unity. While this policy contradicted Baathist doctrine, the use of tribal and kin-based links has been central to Baathist rule since 1968.¹¹⁰



UN Sanctions and the Demise of the Baath: 1993-2003

The immediate post-Gulf War period featured Saddam's attempt to restructure the Baath Party and the security services in order to reestablish control over the country. Saddam ordered numerous purges of government and military officials. He ordered a series of assassinations, especially of military officers. Trusted members of the Tikriti clan were also placed in the most sensitive positions in the military and intelligence services, while others were shuffled around or removed if they posed a threat to the regime.¹¹¹ As he had done in the past, Saddam established new security and intelligence services in order to prevent the emergence of a united front that could move against the regime.

This strategy featured a greater effort to win over the support of tribes, especially in the rural areas. Saddam soon formalized tribal laws and incorporated tribal customs and values into the state. For example, the regime attacked practices that were considered corrupt by the tribes, such as drinking alcohol.¹¹²



Saddam widened the Baath Party's traditional support base by cultivating ties with influential tribal groups. This strategy ran contrary to Baath ideology, which originally viewed tribes as backward and a threat to state unity.

The Baath Party then incorporated tribal codes of justice into its legal system, such as utilizing the punishment of hand amputation for theft. Shaikhs who swore allegiance to the regime were granted policing and other authorities in their respective regions. What began as an informal alliance between the Baath and certain tribes was elevated to an official level during this period. Saddam also reversed an earlier law banning the use of names showing tribal identity or regional affiliation. By the mid-1990's, most Iraqis had begun to attach their respective tribal affiliation to their last names. Saddam then created the High Council of Tribal Chiefs (HCTC) in 1996 as a Cabinet-level post. Tribes were even granted the authority to operate their own legal system, independent of the state—another custom banned by the Baath Party. However, Saddam put a stop to this practice in 1997 when he saw the influence of certain tribal shaikhs grow too quickly. Nevertheless, the expanded role of tribes enabled the Baath Party to control Iraq through its relationship with influential shaikhs, especially in the rural areas, and to focus on other pressing issues much as the British had attempted to do following WW I.¹¹³

Saddam's reliance on tribes for maintaining power was accompanied by an increase in the role of religious symbols. Saddam's previous secular principles



were quickly discarded in an attempt to appeal to religiously conservative Iraqis for support. Saddam used a similar strategy just prior to his invasion of Iran in order to motivate Iraqis for war. After the Gulf War, religious symbols that were once banned by the regime were encouraged. Saddam often referred to Islamic themes in public speeches, and he began to portray the US-led coalition's war against Iraq as a war against Islam.¹¹⁴

The terms of Iraq's surrender included UN Resolution 687, which provided for, among other things, a permanent border between Iraq and Kuwait and the disposal of Iraq's WMD and long-range missiles, along with an observation mission that would ensure compliance. It also entailed the continuation of the economic sanctions program. UN member states were authorized to use all available means, including force, to ensure that Saddam would comply with these provisions.¹¹⁵

UN-imposed economic sanctions dramatically altered Iraq's socio-economic structure and the standard of living of its people for the worse. The level of Iraq's oil production, which had declined 85 percent between 1990 and 1991, remained unchanged until a loosening of the sanctions in 1997. Iraq's middle and educated classes were hit the hardest during this period, as their living standards reached close to or below the poverty line. The drop in wages was worsened by the rise of inflation and widespread shortages. Iraqi sanctions remained in force because of Saddam's failure to fully comply with UNSCOM on the issue of WMD.¹¹⁶



This climate had a particularly damaging effect on Iraq's youth. According to a 1997 census, over half of the country's population was below the age of nineteen. This means that the majority of Iraqis were born and raised during Baath rule. Having grown up knowing and understanding only death, destruction and deprivation, it is understandable that most of these young people would be pessimistic about their future in Iraq. These feelings of desperation have influenced a great number of Iraqi youth to turn to religion. Saddam's policy of highlighting Islamic themes also encouraged this trend.¹¹⁷ Many Iraqis blamed Saddam for their situation. Saddam's numerous miscalculations, especially his most recent military adventure in Kuwait, were seen by many Iraqis as the cause of their misery. Feelings of anger and resentment towards the US and international community were and remain widespread, since it was ordinary Iraqis who suffered most during the sanctions, not Saddam and the Baath Party elites.¹¹⁸



The economic situation for ordinary Iraqis bordered on a humanitarian disaster, yet Iraq failed to comply with UN inspectors. To alleviate the crisis, the UN enacted Resolution 706 in August 1991, which allowed Iraq to sell oil for food, medicine, and other human necessities. However, the funds for this provision were not given to the Iraqi government, but instead monitored by a special reviewing committee. Saddam rejected these grounds on the count that it violated Iraqi sovereignty. The UN passed a similar resolution in 1995 with Resolution 986, but it was also rejected. Iraq was convinced that it was complying with UNSCOM weapons inspectors and was confident that sanctions would be lifted soon, but this would not be the case.¹¹⁹

The End of the Saddam Hussein Era

After months of threats and counter-threats and an extensive military buildup, the US launched Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) in the early hours of 19 March 2003. OIF's objectives were to remove Saddam Hussein and the Baath Party from power and to destroy and/or secure Iraq's WMDs and related facilities. The first shots of the war were meant as a "decapitation attack" against Saddam and other Baath leaders. These initial air strikes failed to hit Saddam and were followed by a second round of air strikes on Baghdad later that day. American and Coalition ground forces also entered southern Iraq from Kuwait intending to secure Baghdad. Saddam's government fell on April 9, 2003 when Coalition forces captured Baghdad.

When Coalition Forces defeated the Baathist regime, they accomplished the first step of the mission in Iraq: eliminating a dictatorship perceived as dangerous to the interests of the United States and Coalition partners. With that victory, however, came the next and more complicated step of establishing a functioning government in the Baath regime's place.

The immediate effect of toppling a regime that ruled through extensive and brutal internal security services was a security vacuum. Motivated by fear and opportunity, looters stripped everything from shops and museums to power and telephone grids and government ministries in the weeks after the Baath fell. With absolutely no rule of law, these looters faced no consequences. The Iraqi people



A crane removing one of four large busts of Saddam Hussein that sat atop the Presidential Palace



were also left without any functioning government to provide the services they depended on – police, electricity, potable water, sewage treatment, waste removal, medical services, among others.

Out of this chaotic environment, an organized insurgency developed to compete with the Coalition for power. While the insurgency has disparate elements that have competing ambitions for controlling Iraq, they have been able to mobilize personnel and resources from across a broad portion of Iraqi society, and have gained enough popular support to challenge the new government and Coalition forces. In some areas of the Sunni Triangle, northwest of Baghdad, and in some other areas, they essentially maintain control of the towns and cities. Each insurgent group ultimately seeks forceful control of Iraq for itself, but they are united for now by the single political goal of making the Coalition and Iraqi Government fail to achieve their objective.

The Coalition's objective in Iraq is to establish a stable Iraqi government that is not a threat to its neighbors. Building a new Iraqi government and governing Iraq while it is being developed are significant military, economic, political and social challenges, especially in the context of an insurgency that is trying to prevent these developments.



- ¹ Tom Nieuwenhuis, *Politics and Society in Early Modern Iraq: Mamluk Pashas, Tribal Shayks and Local Rule Between 1802 and 1831*, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1982), 1-5.
- ² Ibid., 5.
- ³ Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 2nd ed. 2002 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 5-7.
- ⁴ Bassam Tibi, "The Simultaneity of the Unsimultaneous: Old Tribes and Imposed Nation-States in the Modern Middle East," in *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East*, ed. Philip S. Khoury and Joseph Kostiner, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990), 142.
- ⁵ Albertine Jwaideh, "Tribalism and modern society: Iraq, a case study," in *Introduction to Islamic Civilisation*, ed. R.M. Savory, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press 1976), 16.
- ⁶ Nieuwenhuis, 122.
- ⁷ Ibid., 123.
- ⁸ Ibid., 128.
- ⁹ Phebe Marr, *The History of Modern Iraq*, 2nd Ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2004), 18.
- ¹⁰ Jwaideh, 161-162.
- ¹¹ Nieuwenhuis, 141.
- ¹² Ibid., 143.
- ¹³ Jwaideh, 161.
- ¹⁴ Ibid., 161. The Kurds are also tribally structured, but their basis of tribal unity is their common ties with the land. Arab tribal unity is based on ties with extended family. Jwaideh, 163.
- ¹⁵ Tibi, 127.
- ¹⁶ Ibid., 128.
- ¹⁷ Ibid., 146-147.
- ¹⁸ Ibid., 132.
- ¹⁹ Ibid., 134-135.
- ²⁰ Hellen C. Metz. Ed. *Iraq: A Country Study*. (Washington: Library of Congress, 1988).
- ²¹ Amatzia Baram, *Culture, History & Ideology in the Formation of Ba'athist Iraq, 1968-89*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 46-50.
- ²² Tripp, 8-9.
- ²³ Ibid., 8-9.
- ²⁴ Jwaideh, 161.
- ²⁵ Ibid., 9-10.
- ²⁶ Tripp, 12-13.
- ²⁷ See Elizabeth Warnock Fernea, *Guests of the Sheikh: An Ethnography of an Iraqi Village*, (New York: Anchor Books, 1989).
- ²⁸ Tripp, 12-13.
- ²⁹ Jwaideh, 162.
- ³⁰ Ibid., 20-1.
- ³¹ Marr, 18-19.
- ³² Ibid., 14-15.
- ³³ Ibid., 8.
- ³⁴ Majid Khadduri and Edmund Ghareeb, *War in the Gulf: 1990-1991: The Iraq-Kuwait Conflict and its Implications*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 88-9.
- ³⁵ Ibid., 36-38.
- ³⁶ Ibid., 39-41.
- ³⁷ Yitzhak Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), 66-70.
- ³⁸ Ibid., 66-70.
- ³⁹ Marr, 23-25.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid., 31-33.
- ⁴¹ A Constitutional Monarchy entails a monarch with powers limited by a constitution, and a parliament that handles the main issues of governance. This model is a replication of the British system. The many



coups that occurred during the monarchy years did not overthrow the king and replace the monarchical system in its entirety, but alter the composition and control of the parliamentary body. It was not until 1958 that a coup removed the monarchy in favor of a republic.

42 Hashemites or “Bani Hashem” are descendants of the Prophet Muhammad through his daughter Fatima and her husband Ali bin Abi Talib.

43 Ibid., 24-25.

44 Ibid., 24-25.

45 Ibid., 26.

46 Ibid., 26.

47 Ibid., 34-35.

48 Ibid., 41-43.

49 Kanan Makiya, *Republic of Fear: The Politics of Modern Iraq*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 149-150.

50 Marr, 89-90.

51 Ibid., 25-26.

52 Ibid., 24-25.

53 Ibid., 38-39.

54 Ibid., 40.

55 Ibid., 41-43.

56 Ibid., 41-43.

57 Ibid., 42-43.

58 Ibid., 8, 44-45.

59 Ibid., 44-45.

60 Tripp, 98-99.

61 Ibid., 99-101.

62 Ibid., 99-101.

63 Marr, 58-59.

64 Ibid., 62-63.

65 Ibid., 81-119.

66 Ibid., 81-119.

67 Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq: A Study of Iraq's Old Landed and Commercial Classes and of its Communists, Ba'thists, and Free Officers*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1978), 1073.

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69 Ibid., 1084-1085.

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75 Khatib, S., 2000. Hizb ul-ba'ath: Qira'a islamiyya fi masaadir fikriyya. Beirut: Riyaad al-Rayyis lil-Kutub wa-al-Nashr. p. 21-37.

76 Ibid., p. 39.

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81 Marr, 210-211.

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83 Nakash, see Preface.

84 Marr, 196-197.



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- 85 Ibid., 196-197.
86 Hiro, 250-251.
87 Marr, 202-204.
88 Ibid., 205-206.
89 Ibid., 207-208.
90 Ibid., 207-208.
91 Ibid., 207-208.
92 Ibid., 208-209.
93 Ibid., 208-209.
94 Khadurri and Ghareeb, 6.
95 Ibid., 95-96.
96 Marr, 235-236.
97 Daniel L. Byman and Matthew C. Waxman, *Confronting Iraq: U.S. Policy and the Use of Force Since the Gulf War*, (Santa Monica: RAND, 2000), 39-42.
98 Marr, 241-243.
99 Ibid., 245-246.
100 Ibid., 245-246.
101 Ibid., 248-250.
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108 See Faleh A. Jabar, "Sheikhs and Ideologues: Deconstruction and Reconstruction of Tribes under Patrimonial Totalitarianism in Iraq, 1968-1998," in *Tribes and Power: Nationalism and Ethnicity in the Middle East*, eds. Faleh A. Jabar and Hosham Dawod, (London, Saqi Books, 2003), 88-89.
109 See Keiko Sakai, "Tribalization as a Tool of State Control in Iraq: Observations on the Army, Cabinets and the National Assembly," in Jabar and Dawod, 156-158.
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114 Nakash, 273-275.
115 Byman and Waxman, 39-41.
116 Marr, 295-298.
117 Ibid., 296-298.
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119 See UN Security Council Resolution 706 Documents at: <http://ods-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/596/42/IMG/NR059642.pdf?OpenElement>

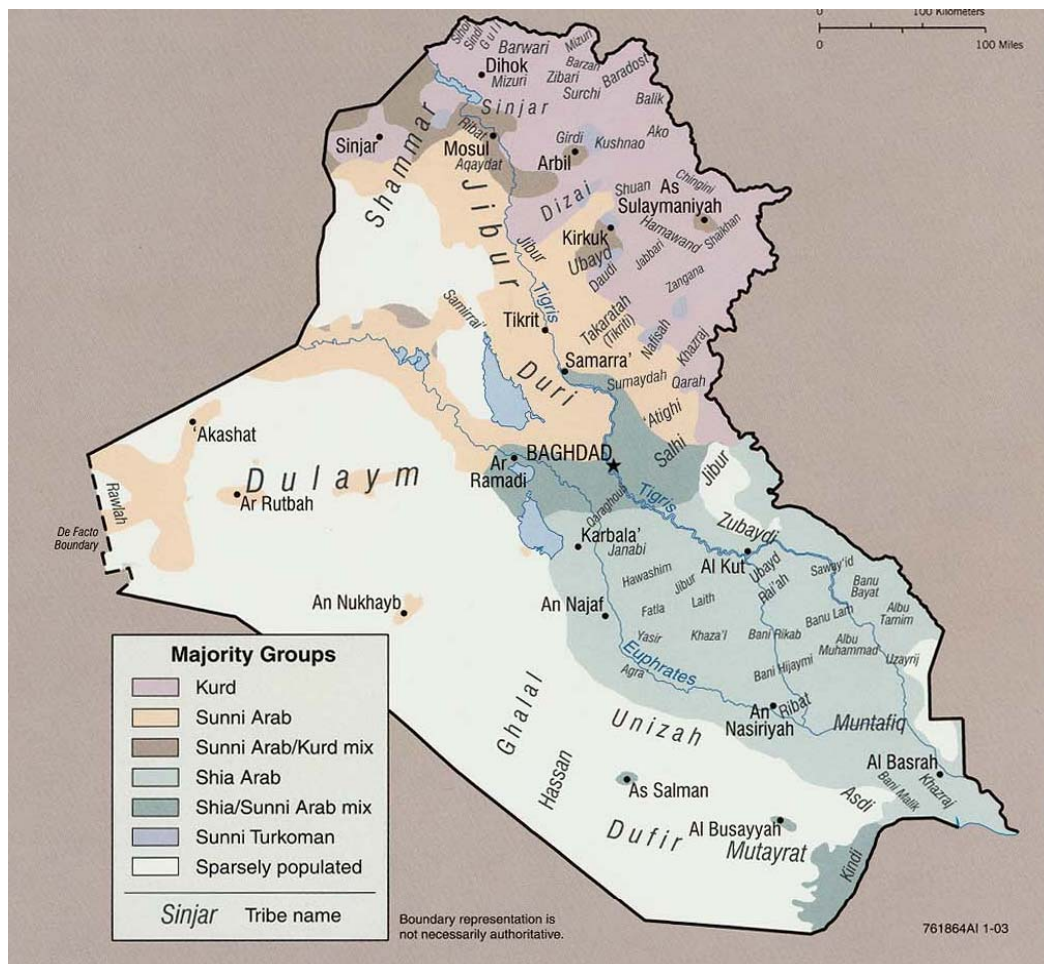


CHAPTER FOUR: THE TRIBES OF AL- ANBAR GOVERNORATE

Introduction

Understanding the tribal structure in Iraq has been a challenge since the onset of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The tribal structure was splintered significantly after World War I, and Saddam Hussein further eroded the basic historical structure. For purposes of discussion, most tribes in Iraq can trace their lineage to three confederations, the Tayy, the Zubaydis, and Rubia.

In addition to Saddam's own tribe, the Albu Nasir, the Baathist regime gave preferential treatment to a loose confederation of the largest tribes in the Sunni Triangle, to the north and west of Baghdad. After the fall of the regime, these tribes still retain a great deal of influence, as many of the smaller and less important tribes established links with them through marriage.¹





The largest and most influential Sunni Arab tribes include the:

- Jubur, mainly from the Tikrit area, but also Mosul;
- Ubayd, from North of Baghdad;
- Janabi, from the mid-Euphrates;
- Dulaym confederation in al-Anbar Governorate;
- Shammar Jarba confederation, located throughout the Sunni triangle;
- Harb and the affiliated, but non-tribal, population of Dur;
- Aqaidat, from the Southwest of Mosul;
- Azza, from the Iranian border north of Baghdad;
- Khazraj, from the area between Baghdad and Samarra;
- Saadun merchant clan from Nasiriya; and,
- Mushahada, who occupy the tribal land just south of the Khazraj in Tarmiya.²

Other than the Jubur,³ each of these tribes is primarily Sunni Arab and each has enjoyed great prestige and wealth under previous regimes and occupiers of Iraq. In the post-war situation, the ever-changing history of tribal leadership is important. The Baathist regime's previous influence over the tribal leaders and the tribal process of governance means that there is a precedent of external forces molding tribal decisions. If given incentives, in terms of power, wealth, and influence, to cooperate with outside authority, tribes will most often choose to do so.

Post-Baath Sunni Arab Tribal Behavior

Throughout the modern history of Iraq, the Sunni tribes have occupied a privileged position in Iraqi society and enjoyed wealth and political clout. To lose those advantages in a system of proportional representation that empowered the Shia, or in a truncated Iraq with a Kurdish autonomous province, would bring shame to a long and prosperous Sunni history.⁴ The Sunni Arabs seek to maintain as many of the benefits they enjoyed under Saddam Hussein as possible. The Sunnis seek to retain not only their superior status as a group relative to the Shia and Kurds, but are also willing to compete with each other to advance in the new Iraq.

Political representation is the most important issue to Sunnis in the post-Hussein environment. Sunnis understand that they will lose some of the benefits that they enjoyed under the Baath regime and will maneuver to the best of their political abilities to prevent what they view as "oppression" by the majority Shia in the South. The Sunnis do not favor a system of direct elections with a strong central government in Baghdad. Under that system,



they will be outvoted on a number of key issues by the Shia, to the detriment of their political and economic security. The Sunnis prefer a federal system with extensive powers delegated to the provinces.⁵

Despite the Sunni Arabs' privileged position in Iraq for the last thirty years, they have also experienced political, intellectual, and religious oppression. While the Sunni tribes were recipients of greater wealth and opportunities than any other ethno-religious group in Iraq, that privilege came at a cost. Sunni Arab prestige was a gilded cage that afforded benefits to those who did not speak out against the regime and kept ranks with tribe and state. The regime compensated the Sunnis with wealth in exchange for giving up democracy and political freedoms, and the Sunni tribes could opt only for blind political loyalty or exclusion.⁶

The Sunni Arabs are trying to find their place in post-Baath Iraq, and face internal political and tribal divisions as they attempt to do so. They see Iraq as an Arab state, and themselves as an essential component of it, but the changing nature of the state raises more questions for the Sunnis than it answers. Many Sunnis are as yet unable to reconcile their relatively comfortable, privileged past with the uncertainty of the future, and until they do so, they cannot define the role they will play in post-Baath Iraq.

Sunni Arab Tribal Interests

The Sunni Arab tribes seek three things after the fall of the Baathist regime. First, to the greatest extent possible, the Sunni tribes seek to retain control of the military and key political instruments. They want to perpetuate the overrepresentation of Sunnis in the chief instruments of power and wealth as a whole, and they will compete with other Sunni tribes to secure greater rewards for their tribes, subtribes, and families.⁷ Sunni feelings of ethno-religious group unity do not override their tendency to compete with each other.

Second, the Sunni tribes want stability within the tribal power structure in a post-Saddam Iraq. They want a structure to govern relations within the tribe without being so restrictive that it quashes opportunity or advancement. The ideal situation is a delicate balance between "tribal meritocracy," the idea that a tribe member can ascend to positions of importance through loyalty, faithful service, and social manner; and "tribal hierarchy," the idea that each member has a clearly defined social function and level of power within the tribe. This same balance of tribal power dynamics applies to inter-tribal relations. Tribes seek to advance in terms of wealth and power relative to other tribes, but not at the risk of volatile relations between tribes that could lead to conflict and chaos.⁸



Third, social groups at the family, clan, subtribe, and tribe levels will strive to surpass rival groups in terms of wealth and power, within the context and limitations of the rules of tribal meritocracy and tribal hierarchy.⁹ The Sunnis continue to jostle for position in the post-Saddam environment in order to secure a place for themselves, their family, and tribe in the new order.

Sunni tribal behavior is highly interdependent; it is the result of a complex web of tribal loyalties and betrayals, and of competition over limited resources. In Saddam's Iraq, tribes frequently broke rank with each other, and individuals broke rank from within the tribe, to take advantage of the regime's favor. When trying to secure the cooperation of Sunni tribes in post-Hussein Iraq, there will likely be multiple tribes involved, and each tribe must consider the patterns of behavior of all of the others.¹⁰

Al-Anbar Governorate

Al-Anbar is the largest and one of the most violent of the 18 governorates of Iraq. It has a total population of approximately 1.2 million people. The name of the province is Persian and means "the warehouse," as this region was used as a source of food for the Persian Sassanid troops.

The Iraqi insurgency is considered more concentrated and stronger in this governorate than in any other in Iraq. It is for this reason the governorate is looked upon as the heartland of the insurgency fought mainly by nationalist insurgent forces, to include former regime military, intelligence and political elements. To this day, Coalition forces struggle to gain control of the region, where hostility towards occupation forces has been especially fierce.

The population of al-Anbar Governorate, and its two largest cities, al-Ramadi and Falluja, are known for their strong tribal and religious traditions. Saddam Hussein was constantly wary of the volatile nature of the area – many of the officers in the former Iraqi military and security services were from al-Anbar.

Most of the inhabitants of al-Anbar Governorate are Sunni Muslims from the Dulaym Tribal Confederation. The grand patriarch of Dulaym tribes, Saad Bin Ebadda Bin Dulaym Bin Haritha, appears in history about 600 BC. The Dulaymis are historically traced to the Zubayd Tribal Confederation.

Other major tribes unrelated to the Dulaymis in al-Anbar are the Zobas, Shammar Jarbas, and the Anaizas. The Shammar Jarbas are primarily located in the al-Jazira region in western Iraq between the Euphrates and Tigris rivers along the border with Syria. The Anaiza, are located along the border with Saudi Arabia. The Shaikh General of the Anaiza is Miteb Anaiza - he is also the shaikh general of the family that includes the House of Saud, the royal family of Saudi



Arabia, and families related to the royal family in Kuwait. Shaikh Miteb is among the most respected shaikhs in Iraq.

The largest tribe in al-Anbar after the Dulaymis is the Zobas. The tribe traces its ancestry to Tayy through the Shammars. The Zobas wield great influence in al-Anbar (predominantly Abu Ghraib and Falluja), Baghdad, and Mosul. The current leaders pride themselves on the fact that their great grandfather Prince Dhari al-Dhaher and his son Khamis killed the British officer whose death sparked the 1920 uprising in Iraq. The current leaders of the Zoba are Shaikh General Meshaan Khamis al-Dhari al-Dhaher; Hareth Sulaiman al-Dhari (one of the most revered Sunni clerics in the country and head of the Association of Muslim Scholars) and his son Muthana; Barakat Barghash and Naghmarsh al-Faris (from the al-Hamam subtribe); Shaikh Haddi Yousif al-Arssan (from the al-Arssan subtribe); and Mahmud al-Zoba (from the Abu Ghraib area). The influence of the Zobas in the Abu Ghraib area is the strongest of the more than sixteen tribes that are located in the area.

The Three Target Tribes: Abu Fahd, Abu Mahal, and Abu Issa

Historically, the three target tribes of the study, the Abu Fahd, Abu Mahal, and Abu Issa, have not held a high position in the overall tribal hierarchy in al-Anbar Governorate. In addition, the three tribes are relatively small in comparison with the dozens of tribes, clans, houses, and families that exist in al-Anbar. While all levels of the tribal structure are often referred to as “tribes” and each has its own shaikh, the influence and prominence of each tribe is dependent upon the specific locality in the province and, of course, the particular circumstances at a given time. It is for this reason the three target tribes are of such interest today.

Specifically, of the three tribes, the Abu Issa tribe (from the Falluja area) has been the most visible and outspoken of the Coalition. This is in large part due to influential leaders within the tribe. The other two tribes are localized within al-Qaim and al-Ramadi and did not rise in prominence until late 2005 when chieftains within the tribes took an active stand against al-Qaida in Iraq (AQIZ) and the foreign fighters who operated in their areas. Now, these three tribes, despite their relatively small size, are key players in each of the critical areas of insurgent activity in al-Anbar Governorate – al-Ramadi, al-Qaim, and Falluja – particularly the Abu Fahd and the Abu Mahal. All three tribes are affiliated with the Dulaym Tribal Confederation.

The Dulaym Tribal Confederation

The Dulaym Tribal Confederation is the largest and most influential tribe in al-Anbar Governorate. In fact, during the early years of the Iraqi Monarchy, the tribe



gave its name to the Dulaym Governorate of Iraq – now al-Anbar Governorate. In general, Dulaym tribes live primarily along the Euphrates River from a point just below Falluja to al-Qaim, but their tribal lands are spread throughout the governorate. The Dulayms trace their ancestry to the Zubaydi Tribal Confederation, one of the original tribes to migrate from Yemen to the Arabian Peninsula and Iraq. The Dulayms claim origins at Dulaymiyyat in the Najd region of the Arabian Peninsula five centuries ago, but these are doubtless mythical, and in fact the tribe represents a wide variety of mixed tribal fragments and tribeless peasantry.

The tribe itself is divided into many subtribes and sections, cohesion among which depends upon the personality and inter-relations of the leading shaikhs. The tribe has a record of bad relations with the Shammar of the Jazira region south and west of Mosul, and of friendliness with the Anaiza in the Syrian desert; but tribal disorder has been slight and rare since 1921, and the Dulaym, thanks largely to leadership by two or more outstanding shaikhs (notably Ali Sulaiman), were viewed by the British as among the better behaved major tribes of Iraq.

As the British prepared to replace the Ottoman Empire as the leading imperial force occupying Iraq at the close of World War I, teams of the British Arab Bureau intelligence officers were dispatched into the tribal areas of Iraq, to develop in-depth genealogical profiles of the tribes, subtribes and clans; and to also do an inventory of the current fighting capabilities, weapons stocks, and political allegiances of the tribal structures. One such report on this intelligence mission was completed in July 1918, and was issued the following year by the Arab Bureau, Baghdad, and published by the Superintendent of Government Printing, Calcutta, India, under the title “Arab Tribes of the Baghdad Wilayat”.

The 288-page study, comprised predominantly of detailed genealogical and contemporary structural charts of all of the tribes of the Baghdad Wilayat, also featured short historical accounts of the major tribes. Typical of those historical accounts is the following description of the al-Dulaym, found on page 58 of the original report:

“The Dulaim belong to a large group of tribes of Zubaid origin and are therefore closely connected by race with the Jannabiyn, Ubaid and other Mesopotamian confederations. They themselves state that they came from Central Arabia, from some springs called Dulamiyat, hence their name. The founder of the tribe in the Iraq was one Thamir, who came with his followers to rescue his three nieces, about which there is a long story. The Dulaim are Sunnis of the Shafii sect. They are not badu; about half the tribe are cultivators while the other half are sheep and camel breeders in the desert on either side of the Euphrates. They are well off for horses



and own large flocks of sheep from which the Damascus merchants draw a great part of the supply for the Egyptian market. This trade has, however, ceased since the war, and a couple of bad years have depleted the flock of the Dulaim. The tribe is better armed at present than it was before the war, but still not so well armed as the Muntafik. Of the eight principle sections here given, the Abu Isa and the Jumailah are not of Dulaim origin, but would unite with the latter for purposes of defense. The Jumailah, if fighting alone, have their own {Nekwah} 'Aid and the battle cry of the Abu Isa is Ais, whereas that of the Dulaim is Awlad Nasir. The Muhamdah are known as Awlad Khamis, while the remaining sections, being all descended from Sabat, are called the Awlad Sayaf. The genealogical table shows the relationship between the sections. Other clans who follow the Dulaim Shaikhs are the Abu Ghannam, Abu Halyat, Jaghaifab, Mu'Adbid and Muwali (see Abu Rudaind) and the Abu Farraj and Abu Mujbil (see Abu Dhiyab under Abu Muhammed al-Dhiyab).

"The boundaries of the Dulaim are roughly from Anah in the north to the Jannabiyla on the R. bank (i.e. about opposite Khan Magdam) and the Zoba on the L. bank (about 2 miles south of the mouth of the Abu Ghuraib canal). The nomad sections wander as far as Tikrit and even further north in the Jazirah, and pasture their flock to a distance of 2 or 3 days journey from the Euphrates in the Shamiyah. The chief Shaikh on the R. bank is Ali al Sulaiman of the Abu Rudaini; on the L. bank Shaukah ibu Mutlaq and Muhsin ibn Kardan are the leading men. The influence of Ali al Sulaiman is greater than that of any other single shaikh of the tribe. [NOTE: While Ali al Sulaiman wielded great influence, he was considered weak as a leader. He failed to subdue the tribes and was ineffective in addressing many of the central issues in 1920.] Besides his own section, the Abu Rudaina, the Muhamlah, though a wholly independent section, would follow him in war, and so would the Abu Isa and the Jumailah. The Abu Fahad on the R. bank also turn to him. The Abu Nimr and the Abu Muhammad al Dhiyak turn to Shaukeh as well as the Abu Farraj and Abu Majbil; Muhsin controls Abu Hamid al Dhiyab, Abu Fahad on the L. Bank, and various constituents of the Abu Rudaini, such as the Abu Ali al Jasim, Mulahima, Abu Ubaid and part of the Abu Hazim and Abu Saudah on the L. bank. Except for the Abu Asaf, Ali al Sulaiman does not seem to command any of the Abu Rudaini on the L. bank, though he maintains that the ultimate allegiance of all the Abu Hazim would be to himself. The Abu Fahad on the R. bank are on Sanniyab land; the Turkish Government was accustomed to deal with them not



through the Shaikh but directly with each petty Sarkal, with the result that they have broken up into a number of small independent sections over which the Shaikh has no control, and from which he gets no shaikh's right on the crops. His poverty goes far to render him impotent.

"After the occupation of Baghdad, the position with regard to the Dulaim was somewhat difficult. We held Fallujah which is in Dulaim territory, but the Turks were still at Ramadi where Ali al Sulaiman lives and has a house and garden. With the capture of Ramadi, in September, the situation improved. Ali al Sulaiman made submission and so did Hardan of the Abu Daiyab who was probably the most important man after Ali al Sulaiman. Hardan was, however, accused of correspondence with the enemy and was deported to India later in the autumn. The capture of Hit further advanced matters. Ali al Sulaiman, who has cooperated usefully with us since the occupation of Ramadi, acquired a stronger hold over his tribesmen on the R. bank and the Abu Mahal and the Abu Mar'I sections of the Abu Rudaina, which had given some trouble, came in and begged to be allowed to cultivate on the Azizya (Tash) canal. The Shaikh of the Abu Nimr, Nijris ibn Qa'ud, a man who had gained a considerable reputation before the war, chiefly as a thorn in the flesh of the Ottoman Government, sat on the fence for some time and finally got down on the wrong side. He is still with the Turks; but Fahad ibn Hilal, shaikh of the second section of the Abu Nimr, has succeeded in drawing away many of his followers. Fahad ibn Hilal is commonly known as the Shaikh al Jadid. Muhsin ibn Hardan is a good and trustworthy shaikh and has been very useful in intercepting caravans destined for the Turks."¹¹

During the Ottoman Empire, the Dulaym's frequent aggressions against travelers on the Baghdad – Aleppo trunk road called for punitive action by the government, notably by Nazim Pasha in 1910, and for the building of a line of military posts and khans in the 19th century. The tribal area was occupied by the British in 1917, and insurgent action in the turbulent year 1920 was limited to one section of the tribe.

The structure and organization of the Dulaym tribes today is difficult to ascertain due to the adaptive nature of the tribal system in Iraq, as well as Saddam's efforts to manipulate the status and power of tribes by creating new tribes as he saw fit. However, considerable reporting today indicates the following tribes are major tribes of the Dulaym:

- Albu Alwan tribe



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- Albu Dhiyab tribe
- Albu Fahd tribe
- Albu Issa tribe
- Al-Jumailah tribe
- Al-Muhamadah tribe
- Albu Nimr tribe
- Albu Rudaini tribe
- Albu Mahal tribe (also often listed as a subtribe of the Albu Rudaini and allied with the Albu Nimr)
- Al-Falahat tribe
- Al-Karabla tribe
- Albu Issaf tribe
- Albu Ali tribe
- Albu Assaaf tribe
- Albu Khaleefa and Albu Marai tribe
- Albu Aytha and Albu Thiyaab tribe
- Albu Hazeem tribe
- Albu Jaabir tribe
- Albu Sawda tribe
- Albu Ali al-Jaasim tribe
- Albu Hussein al-Ali (Abu Reesha) tribe¹²

As mentioned earlier, the Dulaym tribes, in general, were part of the group of tribes that supported the Saddam Hussein regime. As a result, they received significant benefits in the form of money, power, jobs, resources, and autonomy. However, the Dulaym's fortunes under the Baath, like those of other tribes, depended on the often vicious and irrational whims of Saddam and his constant fear of losing control of Iraq. Many members of the Dulaymi tribes were purged, jailed and murdered by Saddam's security forces due to suspicions of coup plots and disloyalty. Dulaym tribes remember what they consider these unjust measures by Saddam against their prominent tribal members and, therefore, do not necessarily want to see the Baathists return to power in Iraq. They consider themselves nationalist and are fiercely committed to Iraq, not necessarily an Iraqi government.

Since much of the Iraqi insurgency is centered in al-Anbar Governorate, many, if not most, of the Dulaym tribes have been involved in the Iraq insurgency, especially during 2003 – early 2005. However, since the Spring of 2005, there has been an increasing split between many Dulaym tribes and the religious zealots of AQIZ. At this point, many tribes are at all out war with AQIZ and its allies, which also includes some Dulaym and other tribes – even parts of tribes. As this conflict has grown, there have been many examples of instances in which the tribes have attempted to cooperate with Coalition forces. Therefore, the



timing for engagement and influence operations with the Dulaym tribes seems to be good.

THE ALBU FAHD TRIBE

Other Spellings

Albu Fahad, Albu Fahaad, Albu Fehd, Albu Fehad, Albu Fehed

Associated Forms: Fahadawi, Fahdawi, Fehedawi, Fehdawi, Fahadaawi, Fahdaawi, Fehedaawi, Fehdaawi, Fahadaawi, Fahdowi, Fehedowi, Fehdowi, al-Fahadaawiya, al-Fahdaawiya, al-Fehedaawiya, al-Fehdaawiya

(Note: Albu also appears as Albou, Albo, Al bo, Al Bu, Al-Bu, Abu and Abbu.)

Introduction

The Albu Fahd tribe is one of the most prominent Dulaym subtribes and one of the most important tribes in the al-Ramadi area.

Ancient History through 20th Century:

The Albu Fahd tribe traces its ancestry to the Tayy Tribal Confederation through the Shammar Tribal Confederation. However, the Albu Fahds have allied themselves with the Dulaym Tribal Confederation due to the geographic proximity with the Dulayms in what is now al-Anbar Governorate.

The Albu Fahd's tribal ancestors migrated from Yemen and settled in the Najd area of the Arabian Peninsula as part of the Shammar Abda tribes. The Albu Fahd are believed to have migrated from the Arabian Peninsula within the past 200 years as a result of drought, war, and the fall of the ruler al-Rashid. During that time, the Albu Fahd tribe moved to lands in Syria where it lived near the Dulaym tribes in the vicinity of Bir Hadaaj for two years. The Albu Fahds then migrated along with Dulaym tribes to the Upper Euphrates (al-Anbar) region of Iraq, accompanied by some members from the al-Muhaamida and Albu Alwaan tribes. At the time, the head of the Albu Fahd tribe was reportedly Shaikh Ali al-Hamad, nicknamed al-Shallaal.

Upon migrating to Iraq, the Albu Fahd experienced disputes over land and river issues with the al-Aslam tribe. The al-Aslams were a subtribe of the Shammar Tribal Confederation (probably Shammar Jarba) and had already laid claim to the lands. It is unclear whether the Albu Fahd won the dispute with the al-Aslams;



however, it is clear that the Albu Fahd tribe then joined the Dulaym tribe against the al-Aslam. In the end, the Albu Fahd settled in the area of the Dualym tribes in the vicinity of al-Ramadi. As a result of the close relationship between the Dulaym and Albu Fahd, the Albu Fahd became accepted as a member of the Dulaym Tribal Confederation.

Territorial Issues

A large part of the Albu Fahd tribe settled in al-Ramadi on the east bank of the Euphrates River and downstream along the river for approximately 15 miles. In addition, a small section of the tribe is located on the west bank of the Euphrates just downstream from al-Ramadi.¹³ The Albu Fahds also live in the Sufiya district of al-Ramadi and in rural villages around the city.¹⁴

The Albu Fahd also have tribal elements located throughout al-Anbar Governorate and have considerable land and linkages in the western desert area of the Governorate.

Al-Ramadi

Al-Ramadi is the capital of al-Anbar, with a population of approximately 400,000. The name also appears as al-Ramadie or Rumadiya. Al-Ramadi is situated about 70 miles, or 110 kilometers, west of Baghdad on the Euphrates River. The city is the eastern boundary of a highway across the desert from the Mediterranean Sea. The town was reportedly founded in 1869 by the local rulers of the Ottoman Empire in order to control the nomadic Dulaym tribes of the region. While Al-Ramadi was established for political reasons, it proved to be vital as a stop-over on the caravan routes between Baghdad and the cities to the West.

The British won an important victory over the Ottoman Army at al-Ramadi in 1917 during WW I. The town has been a center of Sunni insurgent resistance since the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003. Al-Ramadi is considered to be the southwest point of Iraq's "Sunni Triangle". Because it hosts the main railway line into Syria, American commanders have long suspected it of being a staging area for insurgents.

There were anti-government demonstrations in al-Ramadi province in 1995. About 2,000 people arrested following the demonstrations were held without charge or trial, as were tens of thousands arrested in previous years.

Lineage, Linkages and Alliances:

As mentioned earlier, the Albu Fahd tribe's origin is traced from the Tayy through the Shammar (Abda) Tribal Confederation. Centuries ago, the tribe allied itself



with the Dulayms due to geographic proximity. Today, the Abu Fahd considers itself part of the Dulaym Tribal Confederation.

The men of the tribe memorize long Bedouin poetic verses (*Kaseed*), which contain references to the relation of this tribe to their great grandfather Deegham, who is thought to be the ancestor of many other Tayy tribes such as the al-Aqaidat, al-Akra, Afik, and other great tribes. In addition, the Abu Fahd tribes trace their genealogy to a great grandfather, Fahad bin Jaasim bin Hamad bin Hasb bin Omar bin Rashid, who is alleged to have been a brother of al-Rashid for whom the emirs of Haail in what is now Saudi Arabia are named.

In addition to the al-Ramadi area, there are many branches of the Abu Fahd throughout al-Anbar and in many other areas of Iraq, such as Khalis in the Diyala Governorate. Reporting also indicates that the Abu Fahd have a branch in Syria led by Shaikh Muhammad bin Mekled.

There are many variations in the reports of the makeup of the Abu Fahd tribes of al-Anbar Governorate. For example, the British Military reports of the 1920s indicate that the Abu Fahd tribes of what is now Iraq's al-Anbar Governorate were led by Abdul Muhsin al-Farhan and consisted of the following subtribes and their leaders:

- Abu Husain al-Ali, headed by Abdul Muhsin al Farhan
 - Abu Arab, headed by Qudaiyan al-Hamaid
 - Abu Diminah, headed by Sulaiman al-Mudawwid
 - Abu Dulail, headed by Zaid al-Khalaf
 - Abu Sabti, headed by Nail al-Hamad
 - Abu Salih al-Ali, headed by Mutlaq al-Darach
 - Abu Ujur, headed by Ali al-Saad
- Abu Raihan, headed by Faris al-Muhammad
 - Abu Chulaib, headed by Jasim al-Khalaf
 - Abu Dhuwaiyib, headed by Abbad al-Muhammad
 - Abu Faiyadh, headed by Unaizi al-Mukhlif
 - Abu Hamzah, headed by Farhan al-Muhammad
 - Abu Juhaish, headed by Anfus al-Aiyid
 - Abu Musa, headed by Ali al-Nasir
 - Abu Taha, headed by Suaiyid al-Ali

An Encyclopedia of Iraq Tribes, published in Iraq in 1992, reported that the Abu Fahd tribes in al-Anbar Governorate were led by Shaikh (Nasser) Abdul Kareem Mukhlif. Shaikh Nasser was assassinated in January 2006. It is unclear from



available reporting who is currently leading the Albu Fahd. Some reports state that the Albu Fahd are now reportedly led by Shaikh Hakem al-Dhaher al-Ali al-Saad, though there have also been references to another Albu Fahad leader, Shaikh Fawaaz Dahaam Haleel. The encyclopedia also reported that subtribes of the Albu Fahd are:

- Albu Ali al-Hamad, headed by Shaikh Abdul Kareem Mukhlif (Now deceased, this subtribe shaikh also served as the paramount shaikh of the Albu Fahd tribe from the time of Shaikh Ali al-Hamad to the present.)
- Albu Dumna (or Dimina)
 - Ali al-Dumna (or Dimina), headed by Sheehaan al-Abud Tareed
 - Hamad al-Dumna (or Dimina), headed by Zaydaan al-Daawud
- Albu Hussein al-Ali, headed by Nawwaaf al-Rasheed (or Hameed Abdal Jabaar)
- Albu Arab, headed by Turki Ali al-Hameed
- Albu Ajur, headed by Muhammad Hussein al-Saad
 - Albu Ali al-Ajur, headed by Mahmud Mulla Khadir
 - Albu Abd al-Ajur, headed by Haakim Hussein al-Saad
- Albu Taha, headed by Hussein Ali al-Saad
- Albu Jahash (or Juhaish), headed by Ahmad Khalaf Khudayr
- Albu Khateeb, headed by Jubayr Abdul Hamaadi
- Albu Shubayl, headed by Ali Zaydaan Khalaf (or Ali Dayeeh Jaru)
- Albu Raslaan, headed by Jihaad al-Siraat
- Albu Hamza, headed by Huraat Abdul Badawi (or Mahmud al-Shaikh Ibrahim)
- Albu Fayyaad (or Faiyadh), headed by Kaamil Hamad al-Anaizi
- Albu Daleel (or Dulayl), headed by Muhammad Abd al-Khalaf
- Albu Sabti, headed by Ahmad al-Naayil al-Salaal
- Albu Dandal, headed by Haaj Sulaymaan Khalaf al-Dammaagh



- Albu Musa, headed by Haatim Hussein Ali al-Naasir
- Albu Reehaan (or Rahayn), headed by Taha Faaris Muhammad
- Albu Daydaan, headed by Abdallah al-Munsi
- Albu Ali, headed by Mukhlif Hardan Shahaab Al-Hamad
- Albu Shaeab, headed by Majeed Salabi Khalaf¹⁵



MCIA unclassified sources report the subtribes of the Abu Fahd as follows:

Dulaym

Abu Fahd

Abu Ali al Hamad

Abu Khateeb

Abu Dumna

Abu Shubayl

Abu Hussein

Abu Raslaan

Abu 'Arab

Abu Hamza

Abu 'Ajoori

Abu Fayyaad

Abu Taha

Abu Daleel

Abu Jahsh

Abu Sabti

Abu Dandal

Abu Musa

Abu Reehaan

Abu Daydaan



These discrepancies in reporting on tribal organization are likely due to both the passing of time and to the dynamic nature of the tribes in general, with some tribes, subtribes, clans, and families:

- changing their tribal allegiance;
- increasing their size and superceding other tribes in the confederation;
- merging with other tribes;
- changing their names due to the increased prominence of a particular subtribe or clan or the emergence of new tribal leaders; or,
- breaking up and disappearing as identifiable entities.

Another reason for the discrepancies is likely due to the manipulation, creation, and destruction of tribes under Saddam Hussein, as well as the current dynamic and chaotic environment in Iraq. Of course, these discrepancies could also be the result of errors in reporting. One common error is to equate family lineages with tribal structures. As noted earlier, tribal allegiances and structures are often based on the changing circumstances of individual tribes and clans and fictive rather than actual lineage relationships. (Note: Additional reporting is available through US Government channels from Iraq, but this reporting was not available for this study.)

Key Traits and Cultural Narratives

The Albu Fahd tribes are Arab tribes with a reportedly long history full of greatness and true Arab values. The Albu Fahds are descendents of the Bedouin tribes. Most members of the tribe continue to revere the traditions, customs, and characteristics of the Bedouins.

The *nakhwa* (battle cry) of Albu Fahd is *Deegham*, which is named after their great grandfather Deegham. His bravery and great deeds have been immortalized in the collective memory of the tribe.

Actions During Previous Crisis Periods (e.g. 1920's, 1930's, WWII, Coups, 1990's):

Under the Ottomans, the Albu Fahd tribes were fragmented. The Ottoman Government usually dealt with the tribes directly rather than through the paramount shaikh. As a result, the tribe had broken up into a number of small independent sections over which the shaikh had no control. This Ottoman tactic of bypassing the shaikh deprived the shaikh of the wealth he would have received otherwise. As a result, he had little power or influence over his subtribes.¹⁶



There is little information concerning the activities of the Albu Fahd in hostilities during previous crisis periods in Iraq. However, British reports from the early 1900s indicate that they followed the lead of the Dulaym paramount Shaikh Ali Sulaiman before, during, and after WW I. During that period, most of the tribes of the Dulaym Tribal Confederation were considered well-armed. Their proximity to the desert made it relatively easy for them to obtain arms and ammunition. The Dulaym tribes also had a reputation as thieves and raiders who displayed good fighting skills both against other tribes and against Ottoman troops before WW I. For example, each year when the Ottoman authorities tried to assess the crops of the Dulaym tribes, the Dulayms came into contact with Ottoman troops. In many cases, the Ottoman troops were defeated by the tribesmen.

During WW I, the Ottoman Army occupied al-Ramadi and much of the Dulaym tribal area. As a result, the Dulaym assisted the Ottomans in their operations against the British. This changed when the British forced the Ottomans out of the Dulaym's tribal lands in September 1917, at which time Shaikh Ali Sulaiman made "submission" to the British. Despite this, many tribes of the Dulaym whose lands were still occupied by Ottoman forces continued to assist the Ottomans until their lands were occupied by the British.

Following WW I, most Dulaym tribes supported the British, due largely to a desire to operate in their own self-interests and to maintain their wealth in the form of extended land ownership. However, a number of Dulaym tribes went their own way and fought with the British – particularly the Abu Nimr, the Albu Qartan, and the Albu Mahal. The Abu Nimr and the Albu Mahal also joined with the Jaghaifa and the Aqaidat tribes to fight the British during the insurrection of 1920. Most other Dulaym tribes supported the British during the insurrection.

Religion

The Albu Fahd tribe is Sunni.

Economic Issues

Historically, the Albu Fahd tribe was known as a tribe of cultivators and sheep herders.¹⁷ Today, members of the Albu Fahd tribe say they consider the western desert border area near Syria part of their tribal territory and follow their goats, sheep and cattle there to graze. They leave their comfortable homes in al-Ramadi and roam the desert, as far as 250 miles to the west, in the springtime. Smuggling livestock into Syria is also part of a herdsman's life – although no one in the tribe admitted to that – as well as smuggling other things of value.



Influential Leaders

The leaders of this tribe during the end of Ottoman occupation through the British occupation were Mukhlif al-Abed al-Muhsen, Eanaiz al-Mukhlif, Hassan al-Mukhlif, and Mudhi al-Hassan.

Among the other well-known leaders of the Albu Fahad tribe were Shaikh Ali al-Hamad, who was famous for his overwhelming bravery, generosity, wisdom, and patience. He was followed by Hussein al-Ali.

The paramount shaikh of the Albu Fahd tribe was Nasser Abdul Kareem al-Mukhlif until his assassination on January 16, 2006. He was extremely influential in al-Ramadi, revered by the city's population as well as insurgents. Shaikh Nasser was viewed as a leader faithful to the interests of his people until his murder. He was also a physics professor at al-Anbar University. Shaikh Nasser was a high ranking Baathist who lost his job as a physics professor because of the Coalition de-Baathification program. He was an open supporter of nationalist and Baath elements of the insurgency even though he also supported political engagement with the Coalition and Iraqi Government. While he opposed AQIZ, he did not actively oppose al-Zarqawi's cells until late 2005.

It is unclear from available reporting who is currently leading the Albu Fahd. Some reports state that Shaikh Nasser was succeeded by the second most influential shaikh in the Albu Fahd tribe, Hussein al-Dhaher al-Ali al-Saad, but he too was killed by insurgents in February 2006. The leadership of the Albu Fahd is reported then have passed to Hussein's brother Hakem al-Dhaher al-Ali al-Saad, though there have also been references to another Albu Fahad leader, Shaikh Fawaaz Dahaam Haleel. Shaikh Haleel is reported to be highly regarded in al-Anbar and very generous. Many people are said to have pride in the goodwill and capabilities of Shaikh Haleel. Shaikh Fawaaz is a "Fake or Saddam shaikh," meaning he is not a hereditary shaikh, but was appointed by Saddam Hussein. Fawaaz was a high-ranking Baath member and close to Saddam's inner circle. He made tens of millions of dinars through construction contracts for the former regime. He went to Albu Ghuraib from the fall of 2003 to the spring 2004 to assist in financing the insurgency. His views are similar to those of the late Shaikh Nasser in that he supports both the insurgency and political engagement. Other influential leaders include Raad al-Abdulla Manssi Mezher al-Dheddan and Abud al-Mulla Herez.

A recent governor of al-Anbar Governorate was also a member of the Abu Fahd tribe. He was killed in a kidnapping incident after he cooperated with US and Iraqi government forces in the battle of Falluja in May 2005.



Leaders in this tribe are considered honorable and influential men among most of the tribe. None have overtly challenged the Coalition.

General Background Since March 2003

Early in the insurgency, members of the Albu Fahd were active supporters of the national Iraqi insurgency movement, having members in the various groups that organized after the fall of the former regime. While they were directly involved in the Iraqi insurgency movement, they openly supported al-Qaida in Iraq (AQIZ) cells loyal to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. From members of the Albu Fahd and other tribes, AQIZ received considerable support in al-Ramadi. In addition, reports suggest that al-Zarqawi selected his bodyguards from the city. At the onset of the insurgency, when Iraqi fighters were disorganized, they looked to al-Zarqawi for help in attacking Coalition forces. However, as the insurgency in al-Ramadi evolved towards a pluralistic “national movement” with the aim of ejecting Coalition and other foreign interests, the alliances between the two sides have disintegrated.

Although al-Anbar Governorate is heavily Sunni, many local residents have grown weary of the presence of the foreign fighters who joined the Sunni insurgents. They have tired of the violent control the foreign fighter groups wield over cities and towns, and of the US attacks the insurgents draw.

Participation in Insurgency / Relations with Insurgent Groups

Members of the tribe have participated with various Iraq insurgent groups within al-Anbar Governorate. Support from the tribal leadership appears to be indirect and specifically in the interest of self-preservation. It is not uncommon for the tribal leadership to “walk in the middle of the road” to position themselves as mediators among their members, the Coalition, and the insurgency when it is necessary.

Tribal involvement in the insurgency has been predominantly with Iraqi nationalist groups, to include insurgents who were former regime military, intelligence and political leaders. Tribal cooperation in the insurgency with al-Zarqawi continued through mid- to late 2005, but differences began to emerge as al-Zarqawi focused his attacks on local Iraqis in addition to Coalition forces and the Shia. As a result, local tribes, including the Albu Fahd, began to openly oppose Al-Zarqawi’s assertion that he was justified in killing Iraqis linked to the Government, including local Sunni policemen. This ideology was increasingly rejected by local residents and caused a divide between the two groups.

A similar split occurred during the run up to the elections in 2005, when Sunnis voted in large numbers, while al-Zarqawi, fixated by the notion of an Islamic



caliphate, rejected the political process. Albu Fahd leader Shaikh Nasser al-Mukhlif, who was an important figure in the efforts to bring al-Anbar into the political process, hosted meetings in the Fall of 2005 with other tribal leaders and insurgency chiefs to arrange security measures for the referendum and election votes. As a result, the elections passed peacefully in al-Ramadi. With what he thought was the acquiescence of the insurgents, he also encouraged tribal leaders to commit recruits to the al-Ramadi police force.

However, when US and Iraqi forces held the first local recruiting drive in al-Ramadi for local Sunni young men in January 2006, al-Zarqawi's people set off bombs that killed more than 60 of the Sunni tribal enlistees and others. The bomb on January 5, 2006, that tore apart the police recruiting location was condemned by Shaikh Nasser. Then, on January 16, 2006, one day after attending a tribal leader meeting on security and cooperation with the Iraqi Prime Minister and US Ambassador to Iraq, Shaikh Nasser al-Mukhlif was murdered by al-Zarqawi's followers.

Shaikh Nasser al-Mukhlif was regarded as untouchable by the Sunni populace in al-Ramadi, and he believed that he had no need for bodyguards. However, driving alone through the center of al-Ramadi in his maroon Mercedes after attending a tribal wake, the shaikh was killed by AQIZ assassins, who fired from two passing Opels.

Following Shaikh Nasser's assassination, another leading al-Ramadi shaikh and relative of Shaikh Nasser was reported as stating that the tribe no longer welcomed al-Qaida in the city, but he acknowledged that it would be difficult to throw them out because the AQIZ foreign insurgents are both well armed and well funded. The assassination sparked a cycle of revenge killings between al-Ramadi Iraqi resistance cells and the followers of al-Zarqawi they believed responsible for the death of the shaikh.

An al-Ramadi man known to be connected to the insurgency was reported as saying that local tribesmen were conducting operations with the Iraqi mujahidin and hunting down al-Qaida members, killing them in and around al-Ramadi. Reports indicate that residents of al-Ramadi now had an open hatred for Zarqawi. The Iraqis are exhausted by what he has done. In the summer of 2005, Zarqawi was still accepted by the al-Ramadi residents as a viable leader of the insurgency. Because he targeted the locals and killed several prominent leaders, he caused a backlash of opposition.

As late as February 2006, local tribes and foreign fighters continued competing for control in al-Ramadi, as well as in Sunni Triangle towns such as Taji and Samarra.



Residents of al-Ramadi stated that the nationalist Iraqi insurgents (not AQIZ's forces) in the city were not the hit-and-run fugitives that they were a year ago. Rather, they are involved with civil administration in a way similar to Hizballah in Beirut, supplying neighborhood security patrols, securing the roads, and organizing gas lines.

In addition, tribal chiefs claim to have raised an independent militia in al-Anbar referred to as the al-Anbar Revolutionaries. Khalaf al-Fahdawi reportedly said that the militia was forged in a series of secret meetings among tribal leaders, each of whom was asked to help form the group. Some contributed men and some contributed money. Members from Zarqawi's group reportedly have denounced the local militia and declared them collaborators with the Americans. Al-Fahdawi does not claim that all the people in al-Ramadi support the militia. Reports indicate US military officers attended some of the meetings and helped with significant financial support.

The tribal militia has been denounced by AQIZ terrorists as "collaborators and dogs for America. They kill the mujahidin to get money from the American crusaders." In January 2006, members from this militia claimed to have killed 20 foreign fighters from AQIZ and 33 Iraqi sympathizers who aided the insurgents with arms and money in the past. Khalaf al-Fahdawi, a leader of the Albu Fahd, claimed the local militia was established from a need to destroy al-Qaida. Reports indicate that leaders in al-Anbar are opposed to both Zarqawi and the American military occupation of Iraq, describing them as feeding off each other to the detriment of the country.

Members of the al-Anbar militia report that the group is comprised of about 100 men who have had relatives slain by AQIZ. Ahmed Ftaikhan, a former Iraqi intelligence officer from the now-disbanded Iraqi army who lives in al-Ramadi, reportedly leads the group. Members of the militia believe that they have killed a number of the foreign fighters, including Saudis, Egyptians, Syrians, Kuwaitis, Syrians, and Jordanians.

According to other sources, in al-Ramadi, tribal leaders were reported as saying the three dominant Iraqi insurgency groups, the 1920 Brigades, the Anuman Brigade and the Islamic Mujahidin Army, had formed an alliance known as the Advisory Council to expel AQIZ members from the city. It is not clear if this is the same militia as the "al-Anbar Revolutionaries", an affiliate group, or a different group altogether.

Relations with Coalition

The Albu Fahd tribe had little reason to cooperate with the Coalition immediately following the invasion of Iraq, but they also did not overtly oppose the Coalition



initially. Unfortunately, actions by Coalition forces turned many of the Albu Fahds increasingly against the Coalition and into the arms of a variety of insurgency groups. For example, during 2003 and 2004 there were documented cases of Coalition soldiers seizing gold and other valuables during raids of Albu Fahd homes in al-Ramadi. In nearly all of these cases, the dispositions of the seized assets were not reported to the Iraqis, nor were the assets ever returned, resulting in rampant reports and rumors of thefts by Coalition soldiers throughout the city and the province.

In addition, the way the raids of houses were carried out by US forces in the middle of the night, harassing families including women, and embarrassing the men in front of their families and tribes, further inflamed tribal passions against the US.

Another well-publicized incident in May 2004 further incited the Albu Fahd tribe, and many other tribes, against the Coalition. The incident resulted from a nighttime attack by Coalition forces against what they thought was an insurgent gathering in the small town of Mukr al-Deeb (or al-Dib) located in the far west of al-Anbar Governorate, 15 miles from the Syrian border. Tragically, the Coalition attacked what very strong evidence indicates was a wedding party being celebrated between two families of the Albu Fahd tribe.

As a result of the attack, at least 42 men, women, and children were reportedly killed, and Coalition forces confiscated weapons, equipment, cash, and jewelry they found. When confronted with evidence of the incident, US military commanders and spokesmen insisted they had attacked insurgents and not a wedding party and were incredulous that anyone would hold a wedding party in such a remote location. However, the Associated Press reported, members of the Albu Fahd tribe said they consider the border area part of their territory and follow their goats, sheep, and cattle there to graze. They leave their comfortable homes in al-Ramadi and roam the desert, as far as 250 miles to the west, in the springtime. Smuggling livestock into Syria is also part of a herdsman's life -- although no one in the tribe admitted to that.

Unfortunately, there is no indication that the incident was ever resolved to the tribe's satisfaction, which likely helped persuade members of the Albu Fahd and other tribes to join the insurgency in attacking US forces, to include cooperation with al-Zarqawi.

However, as disagreements increased between the tribes and al-Zarqawi during 2005, the tribes became more receptive to working with the Coalition. As a result, a large number of local Sunni tribal leaders turned out for a groundbreaking meeting with US military officers in al-Ramadi in November 2005 to start talking



about the first major, open cooperation between al-Ramadi's shaikhs and US forces.

As tribal cooperation with the Iraqi Government and the Coalition moved closer, al-Zarqawi turned on the tribal leaders in al-Ramadi. First, he attacked a police recruiting center, killing 60 local tribal members and others. Then, on January 15, 2006 there was a significant meeting held between key al-Ramadi tribal leaders, including Albu Fahd tribal Shaikh Nasser al-Mukhlif, and Iraqi Prime Minister al-Jaafari and US Ambassador Khalilzad. During the meeting, al-Jaafari reportedly agreed to replace US forces spread throughout al-Anbar province with locally enlisted security forces. In return, the local tribal leaders committed to expelling the foreign fighters and isolating the local AQIZ network. Shaikh Nasser al-Mukhlif was assassinated by AQIZ the next day.

As a result, many of the al-Ramadi tribes increasingly cooperated with the nationalist Iraqi insurgents and began openly fighting al-Zarqawi's people. The tribes also attempted to increase their cooperation with Coalition forces in the area, but tribal leaders have tried to perform a delicate balancing act because of the danger posed by AQIZ. In response, AQIZ's assassination of tribal leaders have mounted, in what is seen as a clear warning to them not to cooperate with US forces, and fighting has raged throughout the Spring. AQIZ's insurgents have assassinated at least 11 tribal leaders in the al-Ramadi area since the end of 2005, when Sunni shaikhs in the city began open cooperation with the US military.

Media reports quote tribal leaders in al-Anbar Governorate and south of Kirkuk as saying they opposed both AQIZ and the American military occupation of Iraq, describing them as feeding off each other to the detriment of the country. "We are a group of the Anbar people who want to get rid of Zarqawi . . . because this is the only way to make the Americans withdraw from al-Ramadi or Iraq in general."

The tribal leaders have also said that groups linked to AQIZ were carrying out attacks on the "army, police, oil and gas pipelines and technicians, which harm the interests of Iraq." In a communiqué, the tribal leaders vowed "the shedding of blood" of anyone involved in "sabotage, killings, kidnappings, targeting police and army, attacking the oil and gas pipelines and their transporters, assassinating the religious and tribal figures, technicians, and doctors."

Shaikh Abdel Rahman al-Assai is quoted in the media as stating, "Terrorists and Takfiris (Sunni extremists) kill, kidnap, and terrorize our people. We cannot accept this...We never offered refuge to terrorists. All those who offer shelter to terrorists will be treated like terrorists."



Despite these efforts by the tribes in the al-Ramadi area to cooperate with US forces and defeat AQIZ and its followers, violence surged in al-Ramadi in April and May 2006. As of June 1, 2006, al-Ramadi was largely under the control of AQIZ forces. A surge of violence linked to AQIZ has severely damaged efforts to turn Sunni Arab tribal leaders against the insurgency. That alliance was heralded by US commanders as a sign of a major split between Sunni insurgents and the larger Sunni community of western Iraq. However, local leaders say the attacks by AQIZ since then have all but frozen the cooperation between Sunni tribal leaders and US forces in al-Ramadi.

One Sunni shaikh from al-Ramadi, who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of insurgent retaliation, said of the development, "We hope to get rid of al-Qaida, which is a huge burden on the city. Unfortunately, Zarqawi's fist is stronger than the Americans." In al-Ramadi, "Zarqawi is the one who is in control," the shaikh said. "He kills anyone who goes in and out of the US base. We have stopped meetings with the Americans, because, frankly speaking, we have lost confidence in the US side, as they can't protect us."¹⁸

Another shaikh, Bashir Abdul Qadir al-Kubaisi of the Kubaisa tribe in al-Ramadi, expressed similar views. "Today, there is no tribal sheik or a citizen who dares to go to the city hall or the US base, because Zarqawi issued a statement ordering his men to kill anyone seen leaving the base or city hall," he said. "We are very upset. But being upset is better than mourning the death of a shaikh or tribal leader," Kubaisi said. "Zarqawi has imposed himself on us. We started thinking of appeasing Zarqawi and his group, because rejecting them means death."¹⁹

In response to the deteriorating situation in al-Ramadi, on May 29, 2006, the U.S. military said it was deploying the main reserve fighting force for Iraq, a full 3,500-member armored brigade, as emergency reinforcements for the embattled western province of al-Anbar, in hopes that more force structure on the ground would "reenergize" the shaikhs to begin their efforts against AQIZ.

In al-Ramadi, people describe themselves as under siege. Residents said that AQIZ's insurgents are moving to enforce the strictest form of Islam on the city, requiring head scarves for women and banning shorts and jeans for men. Insurgent groups, calling themselves "Promoting Virtue and Banning Vice" regiments, have threatened households that have Internet service and warned that they will monitor rooftops for satellite dishes turned toward European satellites.

One al-Ramadi resident asked, "Is it possible that the US Marines are able to control only the government buildings, while al-Qaida is walking freely in the streets and in the buildings with no one to deter it? Until the Arab fighters start to interfere with the daily, smallest, and personal details of our lives?" In addition,



residents say basic services have fallen, with electricity, water, and schooling interrupted, and the university closed for long periods. Reporting also indicates that the imported Shia police force has collapsed, and many doctors, professors, and other professionals are fleeing the city.

Many al-Ramadi residents want AQIZ and its followers driven out of the city, but they have mixed feelings about US military action. One resident stated, "We hope this will end soon, and that Americans will clean the city, but first they have to change the troops here now, and bring in more, better troops, just like a year and a half ago in Fallujah.... For I expect if these troops were given the orders to launch a military campaign, many civilians will fall. The Marines in al-Ramadi now are considering the whole situation as a matter of a challenge, or revenge, because of the daily strikes they get. It makes them put civilians and the al-Qaida men all in one category."²⁰

Observations

Experience with the insurgency in al-Anbar Governorate indicates that tribal leaders that are forced to attempt a balancing act between the insurgency and the Coalition by "playing both ends" usually lose on both sides. If they fall too much in favor with the Coalition, the insurgency kills them; if they play too close to the insurgents, they are arrested by the Coalition. In the case of the latter, when the arrested shaikhs are released in the normal six months to a year, they are revered among the insurgency, and any contact with the Coalition is only through necessity. There are numerous anecdotes of prominent shaikhs and local leaders that have fallen victim to their activities from both sides of the conflict.

Reports indicate that the Albu Fahd, along with other tribes from al-Ramadi, have recently sought the support of the US to remove the foreign insurgents from the city. While meetings have occurred between Albu Fahd tribal leaders and Coalition officials concerning Coalition assistance in removing the foreign fighters from al-Ramadi, the Albu Fahd are opposed to both AQIZ and the Coalition military presence. As a result, overtures from the Albu Fahd toward the Coalition should be viewed as an attempt by the tribe to attain its short-term goal of dislodging the foreign insurgents from al-Ramadi while, at the same time, providing the Iraqi nationalist insurgents time to reorganize.

The Advisory Council to expel AQIZ should not be considered a move away from insurgency activities, but is a probable indication that the Iraqi insurgency feels it is strong enough to "go it alone" and is no longer in need of foreign insurgent direct support. In addition, a more serious concern is that the indigenous insurgents are willing to form alliances for a common cause. This willingness to



organize could have serious implications on future Coalition efforts in the Governorate.

The growing animosity of the residents of al-Ramadi toward AQIZ should not be misconstrued as support for either the Coalition or the central Iraqi Government. The ideology of most al-Ramadi residents is fiercely nationalistic and, despite their hatred for AQIZ, they maintain their contempt for the occupation by the Coalition and the control of the Iraqi Government by the Shia.

What the people in al-Anbar have clearly surmised is that if there is a modicum of stability in the region due to a reduction of attacks by AQIZ, the US military will be happy to go home.



THE ALBU MAHAL TRIBE

Other Spellings

Albu Mahl, Albu Mahol, Albu Mahaal, Albu Mehl, Albu Mehal, Albu Mehel, Albu Mehol

Associated Forms: Mahalawi, Mahlawi, Mehelawi, Mehlawi, Mahalowi, Mahlowi, Mehelowi, Mehlowi

(Note: Albu also appears as Albou, Al Bo, Albo, Al Bu, Al-Bu, Abu and Abbu.)

Introduction

The Albu Mahal tribe is a prominent subtribe of the Dulaym Tribal Confederation in the al-Qaim area.

Ancient History through 20th Century

The Albu Mahal tribe traces its ancestry through the Dulaym Tribal Confederation to the Zubaydi Tribal Confederation. The Zubaydis were originally from Yemen and migrated through the Arabian Peninsula to Iraq during the first millennium. Some scholars believe they were part of the first Arab Conquests in the 7th century. The Dulayms are a large Sunni tribe in Iraq, living on the Euphrates from a point just below Falluja to al-Qaim. They claim origins at Dulaymiyyat in the Najd area of Arabia five centuries ago. However, these claims may be mythical, because, in fact, the tribe has historically represented a wide variety of mixed tribal fragments and tribeless peasantry. Myth or not, if the members of the tribe believe the story, it has a powerful effect on their perceived identity.

Territorial Issues

The Albu Mahal tribal area borders the al-Qaim district near Syria. They have traditionally settled along the east bank of the Euphrates River from five miles upstream of al-Qaim to ten miles downstream of the city. The Albu Mahals also have tribal elements in Hit and Qubaisa.

The majority of the Albu Taauma subtribe of the Albu Mahal lives in the villages of Hasseba, Saaeda and Muhammdi, while smaller numbers are located in Abi Dhebian near Hit. The majority of the Albu Abass subtribe of the Albu Mahal (also referred to Albu Jassem al-Khalaf) lives in Muhammdi village. The Albu Ezba subtribe is primarily located in Hasseba (Huseyba) village.



Since 2005, much of the Albu Mahal tribe has been exiled to the small town of Akashat due to clashes with foreign fighters and their local tribal allies.

Al-Qaim

The city of al-Qaim is located nearly 400 km/250 miles northwest of Baghdad near the Syrian border and is situated along the Euphrates River. It has a population of approximately 150,000.

Al-Qaim was reportedly the site of Iraq's refined uranium ore production from 1984 through 1990. The "Chemical Fertilizer Complex," as this was called, was originally built by Belgian contractors in January 1976, and by 1982 it was processing phosphate from the nearby Akashat mine. That year, Iraq decided to build a uranium extraction facility on the same site. The facility was completed in 1984. Unused uranium from al-Qaim was stored in nearby Tuwaitha. The production facility was completely destroyed during a 1991 US bombing campaign during the 1991 Gulf War.

Al-Qaim is a key city in the Iraqi insurgency because of its remote location near the Iraq-Syria border. The city is a hub for smuggling operations between the two countries, to include weapons, equipment, money, and manpower for the insurgents.

Lineage, Linkages and Alliances

The Albu Mahal tribe is considered by many to be an independent subtribe of the Dulaym Tribal Confederation. Some scholars place the Albu Mahals as a section of the Rudaini subtribe of the Dulayms; however, the Rudainis have a reputation for having a loose tribal structure with little control or influence over their affiliated tribes and clans.²¹

In the past, the tribe has had close associations and alliances with Abdul Razaq Enad Najres al-Ekaud, the shaikh of the Albu Kaud (subtribe of the Albu Nimr) in Hit.

Historically, the Albu Mahal tribe has had close relations with the Albu Nimr tribe (another subtribe of the Dulaym Tribal Confederation) in general. These close relations continue today, as the Albu Mahal and the Abu Nimr have joined together to fight rival tribes allied with al-Qaida in Iraq. These rival tribes are the Karabila and Salmoni tribes.

There are many variations in the reports of the makeup of the Albu Mahal tribes of al-Anbar Governorate. For example, the British Military reports of the 1920s indicate that the Albu Mahal tribes of what is now Iraq's al-Anbar Governorate



were a section of the Rudaini subtribe of the Dulaym Confederation. At that time, the Albu Mahal were led by Aftan al-Sharqi and consisted of the following subtribes and their leaders:

- Albu Abd, headed by Aftan al-Sharqi
- Albu Taiyib, headed by Hussain al-Izbah
- Albu Tuaimah, headed by Lutaiyif al-Fadhil

Recent reporting from Iraq indicates that the Albu Mahal tribes of al-Anbar Governorate are an independent subtribe part of the Dulaym Confederation and not a section of the Rudaini or Albu Nimr subtribes. Shaikh Sabah Sattam Effan Fahren al-Shurji al-Aziz is the shaikh general of the Albu Mahal tribe. He is from the Albu Aziz clan. The Albu Mahal reportedly consists of the following subtribes and their leaders:

- Albu Aied (or Aabid), headed by Shaikh Sabah Sattam Effan Fahren al-Shurji al-Aziz, is the shaikh general of the Albu Mahal tribe. This tribe may also have the following subtribes or clans:
 - Albu Aziz, headed by Sabah Sattam Effan Fahren al-Shurji al-Aziz, is the shaikh general of the Albu Mahal tribe
 - Albu Wardi
 - Albu Hamad
 - Albu Muttar
 - Albu Teeb
- Al-Baaliun (or al-Ghalien), headed by Isfihan al-Emssekh
- Albu Taauma or Albu Tuaimah, headed by Abed Hamadi al-Ajeel (Another branch of the Albu Taauma Clan, is located in the village of Muhammdi and its shaikh is Abdul Kareem Latif al-Fadhil.)
- Albu Abass (also referred to Albu Jassem al-Khalaf), headed by Imad Hameed Abdul Muhsen
- Albu Ezba, headed by Herddan al-Ezba
- Albu Salih, headed by Jazaa al-Raheel

The discrepancies in the reports of tribal organization are likely due to both the passing of time and to the dynamic nature of the tribes in general, with some tribes, subtribes, clans, and families:

- changing their tribal allegiance;



- increasing their size and superceding other tribes in the confederation;
- merging with other tribes;
- changing their names due to the increased prominence of a particular subtribe or clan or the emergence of new tribal leaders; or,
- breaking up and disappearing as identifiable entities.

Another reason for the discrepancies is likely due to the manipulation, creation and destruction of tribes under Saddam Hussein, as well as the current dynamic and chaotic environment in Iraq. Of course, these discrepancies can also be the result of errors in reporting. One common error is to equate family lineages with tribal structures. As noted earlier, tribal allegiances and structures are often based on the changing circumstances of individual tribes and clans and fictive rather than actual lineage relationships. (Note: Additional reporting is available through US Government channels from Iraq, but this reporting was not available for this study.)

Key Traits and Cultural Narratives

The Albu Mahals are descendents of the Bedouin tribes. Most members of the tribe continue to revere the traditions, customs, and characteristics of the Bedouins.

Actions During Previous Crisis Periods (e.g. 1920's, 1930's, WWII, Coups, 1990's)

There is little information concerning the activities of the Albu Fahd in hostilities during previous crisis periods in Iraq. However, British reports from the early 1900s indicate that they followed the lead of the Dulaym paramount Shaikh Ali Sulaiman before, during, and after WW I. During that period, most of the tribes of the Dulaym Tribal Confederation were considered well-armed. Their proximity to the desert made it relatively easy for them to obtain arms and ammunition. The Dulaym tribes also had a reputation as thieves and raiders who displayed good fighting skills both against other tribes and against Ottoman troops before WW I. For example, each year when the Ottoman authorities tried to assess the crops of the Dulaym tribes, the Dulayms came into contact with Ottoman troops. In many cases, the Ottoman troops were defeated by the tribesmen.

During WW I, the Ottoman Army occupied Ramadi and much of the Dulaym tribal area. As a result, the Dulaym's assisted the Ottomans in their operations against the British. This changed when British forced the Ottomans out of the Dulaym's tribal lands in September 1917, at which time Shaikh Ali Sulaiman made "submission" to the British. Despite this, many tribes of the Dulaym, whose lands were still occupied by Ottoman forces, continued to assist the Ottomans until the British defeated the Ottomans and occupied the land in their place.



Following WW I, most Dulaym tribes supported the British, due largely to a desire to operate in their own self-interests and to maintain their wealth in the form of extended land ownership. However, a number of Dulaym tribes went their own way and fought with the British, including the Albu Mahal.

The Albu Mahal tribe was one of the only tribes of the Dulaym Confederation that took part in the 1920 uprising against the British in Iraq. The tribe, under the leadership of Shaikh Aftan al-Shaqi, along with the Albu Nimr tribe under Nijris ibn Qaud, and the Albu Qartan tribe (both also Dulaym tribes) and the Jaghaifa tribe joined the Aqaidat Tribal Confederation when they sided with the Syrian Government during the disturbances in early 1920. The activity of these hostile Dulaym tribes took the form of raids on British lines of communication and attacks on detached garrisons – typical tribal guerilla warfare tactics. Hostile elements from these same tribes were active again against the British during the tribal insurrection in the summer of 1920. In August 1920, the tribes attacked the town of Anah, which was occupied by a British Assistant Political Officer supported by Dulaym paramount shaikh Ali Sulaiman and friendly Dulaym tribes. Together with the inhabitants of Anah, the Albu Mahal and their allies forced the Political Officer and the tribes under Ali Sulaiman to retreat down river. The Albu Mahal ceased their hostilities against the British when its leader made “submission” to the British in January 1921.²²

Religion

The Albu Mahal tribe is Sunni.

Economic Issues

The Albu Mahals are known to use their tribal links that cross into Syria to aid their extensive smuggling operations across the Iraq border with Syria. This is likely the major source of their income. In addition, the decision to cooperate with Coalition forces has led to economic and infrastructure assistance from the Coalition and the Iraq government for the Albu Mahals.

Influential Leaders

Shaikh Sabah Sattam Effan Fahren al-Shurji al-Aziz is the shaikh general of the tribe. He is from the Albu Aziz tribe. The tribe is predominantly located in Hit, Qubaisa and Qaim.

Other influential shaikhs are Fihan al-Emssekh of al-Baaliun tribe, Abed al-Hamaadi al-Ajeel and Abdul Latif al-Fadhil of the Albu Taauma tribe, Ali al-



Fadaaem and Hameed Abdul Emhossen of the Albu Abass tribe, Herran al-Ezba of the Albu Ezba tribe, and Jazaa al-Rahil of the Albu Salih tribe.

General Background Since March 2003

Since the collapse of the former regime, al-Qaim has been a center of attacks by the Iraqi insurgency against Coalition Forces. The Coalition regards al-Qaim as strategically important because it has served as an entry point for foreign fighters into Iraq.

Participation in Insurgency / Relations with Insurgent Groups

Initially following the fall of Saddam, the Albu Mahal's did not overtly support the insurgency. This was reportedly because the Albu Mahal shaikh of Teabon, a General Hardin, had long been an opponent of Saddam Hussein. However, by the end of 2004, the Albu Mahal tribe actively opposed the Coalition, with members of the tribe participating in the insurgency with various insurgent groups. The initial change in attitude was most likely retribution for actions by the Coalition and not an overt support of the insurgency. There are reports that suggest the tribe's support for the insurgency was in large part a move motivated by survival rather than on ideological support for any particular insurgent group. With limited Coalition and Iraqi government presence in the area, members of the Albu Mahal tribe aligned themselves with al-Zarqawi's AQIZ foreign insurgents operating in the area. Still, the dominant leaders of the Albu Mahal do not appear to have exhibited open support for the insurgency.

By the Spring of 2005, there were signs of infighting among some of the tribes in and around al-Qaim and AQIZ. The reasons for the infighting are varied, but reporting indicates that al-Qaida often oversteps its bounds with the local Iraqis. In some cases, AQIZ attempts to skim from the profits of criminal enterprises, often well in excess of 50%. In addition, the terrorists increasingly attempt to install their draconian form of Taliban-like rule in local communities, and murder the residents for minor offenses of the law. AQIZ is also insensitive to the fact that Iraqi civilians are often caught in the crossfire of their horrific suicide attacks; in fact, civilians are often the main targets. On top of all this, AQIZ has made the penultimate mistake of intimidating and killing insurgent leaders, shaikhs, and respected members of the tribes.²³

As a result, many insurgents have switched sides and now openly fight AQIZ. During the fighting in the al-Qaim region, the Albu Mahal tribe and the Abu Nimr tribe have publicly turned on the terrorist group after AQIZ demanded an excessive cut from their smuggling profits, and intimidated and assassinated tribal leaders. Over the spring and summer of 2005, the Albu Mahal and Albu



Nimr fought AQIZ without Coalition or Iraqi government assistance, despite having requested assistance in fighting AQIZ since April 2005.

However, by September 2005, the Albu Mahal and Coalition forces had begun to cooperate in operations against the AQIZ insurgents. Tribesmen from the Albu Mahal independently organized a group called the “Desert Protectors” to patrol the Syrian border and provide security for their people. The Albu Mahal tribe is now an ally of the Iraqi government, and provides the majority of the troops for the Desert Protection Force, which is a organization of the local tribal fighters that provide for local security and act as scouts for Iraqi Army and US forces.

Relations with Coalition

The Albu Mahal tribe did not initially support the insurgency. As noted earlier, the Albu Mahal shaikh of the village of Teabon, a General Hardin, had long been an opponent of Saddam Hussein, and for this reason his village had not been awarded the money and projects that other villages received during the Hussein regime. In fact, reporting from June 2004 indicates that the Coalition forces worked with the tribal leaders of the Albu Mahal tribe in Teabon and the Assaf tribe of the village of Qutnyah to bring to the 4,500 residents of the village their own potable water source for the first time in modern history.

The tribe then began cooperating with various insurgent groups, primarily Iraqi nationalist insurgents, but also later including AQIZ. This cooperation appears to have been based on self-protection due to the lack of Coalition and Iraqi government forces in the al-Qaim area, rather than on ideological support for any particular insurgent group. Albu Mahal's cooperation with the foreign insurgents continued until Spring 2005, when major fighting broke out between the two groups. The Albu Mahal's conversion from American foe to ally reportedly came when the tribe objected to fundamentalist laws that militants from AQIZ tried to impose in the al-Qaim area.

The Albu Mahal requested assistance from the Iraqi government and Coalition forces when fighting AQIZ and its allies in al-Qaim during April 2005, but they were turned down. However, Coalition forces responded to increased insurgent activity in al-Qaim with a major military operation in May 2005. Unfortunately, while many al-Qaida insurgents were killed, so were a lot of Albu Mahal tribe members because Coalition forces did not coordinate with the local fighters.

Despite this setback, Albu Mahal and its allies continued to battle AQIZ on their own through the spring and summer of 2005. During that time, the Albu Mahal had apparently become involved in a major confrontation with the local Karabila and Salmoni tribes, which had allied with AQIZ. This led to months of vicious tribal feuding, including reports of beheadings and regular gun battles. In the end,



nearly 4,000 people, mostly Albu Mahals, were forced out to the Akashat area, about 60 miles south of al-Qaim and the AQIZ supporters moved in. In addition, Ubaydi, about nine miles east of Huseyba, also became a stronghold of AQIZ.

By late August and early September, AQIZ had also managed to take control of parts of al-Qaim.²⁴ At the time, tribal leader Muhammed Mahallawi, said his Albu Mahal tribe began the latest fighting against AQIZ insurgents after they kidnapped and killed 31 members of his tribe to punish them for joining the Iraqi security forces. He said, "We decided either we force them out of the city or we kill them," with the support of US bombing.²⁵

From this point on, the Albu Mahal and their tribal allies have cooperated closely in military operations with Coalition forces. By November 2005, the Albu Mahals were back in Husayba fighting alongside the Marines as part of the Iraqi Army's Desert Protection Force (DPF).²⁶

The tribe has also had clashes with foreign insurgents since the beginning of 2006. While there are members of the tribe that remain allied to various insurgent groups, tribal leaders have actively looked to the Coalition for assistance, and they no longer openly oppose the Coalition activities. In fact, over 1,000 tribal members joined the Iraqi military from February through April 2006.²⁷

Despite these positive developments, reports indicate the Desert Protection Force is resisting deployment out of the al-Qaim region because they would not be able to protect their tribal members and land: "Tribes there are willing to support the DPF, but want solid assurances that their boys will remain in the province – they see the DPF as helping them keep control of their own turf, which happens to include keeping al-Qaida out."

Observations

In all probability, the Albu Mahals were betrayed by the foreign insurgents and were forced to turn to the Coalition for assistance. In either case, since early 2006, the opportunity for the Coalition to effectively engage the Albu Mahal on the local level has been present. In particular, opportunities to exploit effective IO themes have been present. This includes messages to the tribe, the tribal militia, and the foreign insurgents. Reports indicate that the IO campaigns to date may not have had a positive message for the local fighters opposed to the foreign insurgency.

Reports indicated that leaders from the Albu Mahal tribe openly opposed foreign fighters in the areas around al-Qaim, and had looked to the Marines for assistance in clearing the villages of fighters loyal to al-Zarqawi. While this should not be construed as full support to the Coalition or the legitimate



government of Iraq, it indicates that there is an opportunity to exploit the weaknesses from the void produced by the opposition between the foreign fighters and Iraqi tribes. Coalition assistance to the Albu Mahal tribe is necessary to secure prolonged support from the tribe. However, efforts to support the Albu Mahal must be undertaken with caution so that other local tribes do not feel alienated or abandoned by the Coalition.

The primary reason for the change is a vicious fight with rival tribes that had allied themselves with AQIZ (reportedly the Karabila and Salmoni tribes) expelled the Albu Mahal from towns around the city of al-Qaim, leaving them desperate for friends and turning to the Coalition.

The cooperation between the Coalition and the Albu Mahal is a budding example of how the Coalition can use tribal engagement and influence – especially in rural areas – to help control Iraq's violence and keep out insurgents. Despite the new relationship with the Albu Mahal, reports indicate that local Coalition commanders are wary of being misled into settling residual anger from last year's tribal fighting. Apparently some of the Coalition leaders have experienced this problem in Afghanistan, where they often had to sift through charges between dueling warlords to identify misleading tips.

Yet even a success like winning over the Albu Mahal has its dangers and downsides in the complex world of Iraqi tribal politics. The Coalition faces the task of gaining the trust of rival tribes – some with factions loyal to AQIZ leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi or with strong tribal ties to neighboring Syria.

The tribe's motivations aside, according to media reports, the Coalition forces operating with the Albu Mahals seem happy with their new allies. “The beauty of this is that it gave them an indigenous capability,” said COL Stephen W. Davis, who oversaw the offensive that led to the establishment of several Marine bases throughout the area. “They were clearly good agents.” The Marines later expedited efforts to train and incorporate the clan into the Iraqi Army, mindful of allegations that they were a rogue militia responsible for brutal vigilante attacks.



THE ALBU ISSA TRIBE

Other Spellings

Albu Isa, Albu 'Isa, Albu Issah, Albu Eissa, Albu Eissah, Albu Easa, Albu Easah, Albu Aisa, Albu 'Issa, Albu 'Issah, Bayesa, Bayesah, Itha Albu Issa, Itha Albu Issah, Itha Albu 'Issa, Itha Albu 'Issah

Associated Forms: Issawi, 'Issawi, Eissawi, Eassawi, Aisawi, Bayesawi, al-Isawiya, al-Isawiyah, al-Eisawiya, al-Eisawiyah, al-Easawiya, al-Easawiyah

(Note: Albu also appears as Albou, Al Bo, Albo, Al Bu, Al-Bu, Abu and Abbu.)

Introduction

The Albu Issa tribe is one of the most prominent subtribes in the Dulaym area of al-Anbar and an important tribe in the Falluja area; however, it is not the most important tribe in the area. The other significant tribes in Falluja are the al-Muhammada, al-Jamaila, al-Zoba, and Albu Alwan.

Ancient History through 20th Century

The Albu Issa tribe traces its ancestry to the Tayy Tribal Confederation; however, the Albu Issas allied themselves with the Dulaym Tribal Confederation due to the geographic proximity with the Dulayms in what is now al-Anbar Governorate.

The Albu Issa's tribal ancestors migrated from Yemen and settled between Albu Kamal (on the Iraq – Syria border) and Halab (currently Aleppo in Northern Syria). During this period, they were led by their key ancestor, Issa al-Rayyaash, who is reported to have had great influence in Aleppo at the time. With the passing of time, many of Issa al-Rayyaash's children and their families migrated to Iraq near Falluja on the east bank of the Euphrates River. On the west side of the river are the Zobas – a significant tribe of the Shammar Tribal Confederation and historic ally of the Albu Issas.

Territorial Issues

A large part of the Albu Issa tribe settled in the area of Falluja, south of the Falluja bridge on the east bank of the Euphrates River and downstream along the river for approximately 16 miles – as far as the border between al-Anbar Governorate and the Karbala Governorate. Most of the tribal members are still located in this area today.



Falluja

Falluja is a large town located in the al-Anbar Governorate with a population of approximately 500,000. Falluja is known for its anti-American sentiment. It has been a major area of concern for the Coalition since the invasion of Iraq in March 2003. Falluja is a strategic city 35 mi (56 km) west of Baghdad, and is the area where a highway linking Baghdad, Damascus (Syria), and Amman (Jordan) crosses the Euphrates River. Falluja has a strong religious following and is reported to be a center of Salafi and Wahhabi extremist Islamic sentiment. The citizens of the city have nicknamed it "The City of 100 Mosques." Its people feel bound by Iraqi patriotism and a strong commitment to defend their country and the Islamic religion. Many within the city claim that they are prepared to die for their faith. Falluja has been a dominant safe haven for the insurgents in Iraq. Other safe havens include Hit, al-Ramadi, and al-Qaim.

Falluja has been a base of Islamic unrest for some time in Iraq, going back to the 1990s and perhaps even the 1980s. Under Saddam Hussein, Falluja's religious leaders were reportedly subjected to persecution because they refused to eulogize Saddam in Friday sermons.

Before the Gulf War, Falluja was believed to be one of Iraq's principal production sites of chemical warfare materials.

The Albu Issa tribe also settled in the villages of al-Aamiriya, al-Hasi, al-Ajeer, al-Muwaylaha, al-Batra, and al-Sakhriya, along with others that extend to the borders of Jaraf al-Sakhr, where it backs against the Janabi tribe in the Karbala Governorate.

Lineage, Linkages and Alliances

As mentioned earlier, one of the well-known Tayy tribes, the Albu Issa tribe is originally from Yemen. The tribe migrated to the Najd region of Arabia, then Syria and Iraq, settling down between Aleppo and Albu Kamal. However, many of the actual Albu Issa subtribes are of Zubaydi or Qais (or Jais) origin.²⁸ The Qais are an ancient and much scattered tribe. Many of its members are located east of Aleppo. In addition, many Qais live along the Diyala River in Iraq.

The tribe's name is derived from its ancestor, Issa Abu Reesha, who fought with al-Thaahir Beebris, one of Syria's kings.

In addition to the Falluja area, members of the Albu Issa tribe settled in Samarra in the Salah al-Din Governorate and Kufa in the Najaf Governorate. The leaders of the Samarra branch are Ghazi al-Kareem and Emzahem al-Kareem. The leader of the Kufa branch is Shaikh Waheed Abbud. There are reports of large



branches of the Albu Issas in Jordan led by Shaikh Seetaan Najm al-Maadi and a branch in Syria led by Shaikh Ata Muhammad al-Ata. There are also distant branches of the tribe in:

- Palestine, in the al-Isawiyah area of northern Jerusalem
- Algeria, in the town of al-Isawiyah
- Egypt, where they are known as al-Isawiyah
- Saudi Arabia and Yemen

While all of these branches of the Albu Issa are related through ancestors, they act as independent tribes and are not under the control of one paramount shaikh.

There are many variations in the reports of the makeup of the Albu Issa tribes of al-Anbar Governorate. For example, the British Military reports of the 1920s indicate that the Albu Issa tribes of what is now Iraq's al-Anbar Governorate were led by Harat al-Jasim and consisted of the following subtribes and their leaders:

- Albu Hatim, headed by Aqab al-Shunaidikh
- Albu Hawa, headed by Ali al-Suwait
- Huraiwat, headed by Farhan al-Dhahir
- Albu Khamis, headed by Dalaf al-Ali and Fahad al-Shahadhah
- Albu Muhammad al-Jasim, headed by Abbas al-Ibad
- Albu Muhanna, headed by Muhammed al-Dhabir
- Albu Quraiti, headed by Matar al-Murais
- Albu Salih, headed by Abd al-Khalaf

On the other hand, an Encyclopedia of Iraq Tribes published in Iraq in 1992, reports that the Albu Issa tribes in al-Anbar Governorate are led by Shaikh Hasnaawi Sayfaan. It also reports that Shaikh Hasnaawi Sayfaan is also the shaikh of the Albu Abd branch and Albu Huraat clan under the Albu Abd. The subtribes of the Albu Issa are listed as:

- Albu Abd, headed by Shaikh Hasnaawi Sayfaan
 - Albu Huraat, headed by Shaikh Hasnaawi Sayfaan
 - Albu Aasi, headed by Haadi al-Aasi al-Jaasim
 - Albu Mijrin, headed by Muhammad Baradi Haththaal
 - Albu Ahmad, headed by Salmaan Ali Farhaan
- AL Muhammad Jaasim
 - Al-Manaaseer, headed by Haaj Saami Abbaas al-Abd
 - Albu Jaasim, headed by Muhammad Hussein al-Inaad
 - Albu Thaahir, headed by Hussein Abbud al-Farhaan



- Al-Hajaaji, headed by Aasi Khalaf Alaawi
- Albu Hawa
 - Albu Sultan clan, headed by Khaleel Ibrahim Ali al-Suwayt
 - Albu Jaasim Muhanna clan, headed by Abbaas Ali al-Abd
 - Albu Jidaa clan, headed by Hussein Abdul al-Lateef
- Albu Khaalid, headed by Abd Ali Saalih
- Albu Abd, headed by Badyawi Raheed Saud
 - Albu Jalaut clan, headed by Abbaas al-Ahmad
- Al-Maamur, headed by Jaasim Mijbil Jawaad
- Albu Yusif
 - Albu Teeba, headed by Hasan Ali al-Hamad al-Haayis
 - Albu Akub, headed by Saari Turki Jaasim
- Albu Khamees
 - Albu Khamees, headed by Mishrif Ali al-Dalaf
 - Albu Sibaa, headed by Alaawi Muhammad Shahhaath²⁹

Recent reporting from sources in Iraq indicate that Khamis Hasnawi al-Aifan Albu Issa is the recognized shaikh general of the tribe, but is considered a figurehead and has little independent influence. In late 2003, Barakat Saadoun Aifan Albu Issa became the most prominent figure in the tribe and wielded much more influence and power than Shaikh Khamis. The reporting also assigns four subtribes to the Albu Issa tribe:

- Albu Khalifa, headed by Khamis Hasnawi al-Aifan Albu Issa, the shaikh general of the Albu Issas, but actually controlled by Barakat Saadoun Aifan Albu Issa.
- Albu Hamad al-Hatemmi, headed by Muhammad Salih al-Hadid. Other noted tribal members are Emnaje Salim al-Fahdal and Ibrahim Farhan Muhammad al-Hatemmi.
- Albu Salih, headed by Muhammad al-Dahel.
- Albu Salama, headed by Jaddaan al-Aich, known as al-Baa.



These discrepancies in reporting tribal organizations are likely due to both the passing of time and to the dynamic nature of the tribes in general, with some tribes, subtribes, clans and families:

- changing their tribal allegiance;
- increasing their size and superceding other tribes in the confederation;
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- changing their names due to the increased prominence of a particular subtribe or clan or the emergence of new tribal leaders; or,
- breaking up and disappearing as identifiable entities.

Another reason for the discrepancies is likely due to the manipulation, creation and destruction of tribes under Saddam Hussein, as well as the current dynamic and chaotic environment in Iraq. Of course, these discrepancies can also be the result of errors in reporting. One common error is to equate family lineages with tribal structures. As noted earlier, tribal allegiances and structures are often based on the changing circumstances of individual tribes and clans and fictive rather than actual lineage relationships. (Note: Additional reporting is available through US Government channels from Iraq, but this reporting was not available for this study.)

Reliable reporting from Iraq indicates that Khamis Hasnawi al-Eifan Albu Issa is now the recognized shaikh general of the tribe, but as stated earlier, he is considered a figurehead and has little independent influence.

Key Traits and Cultural Narratives

The Albu Issas are characterized as an extremely independent tribe, despite their allegiance to the Dulaym Tribal Confederation.³⁰ They are descendents of Bedouin tribes, and most members of the tribe continue to revere the traditions, customs, and characteristics of the Bedouins. Most members of the Albu Issa tribe live in rural villages around the city of Falluja.

The Albu Issa's *nakhwa* (battle cry) is "Awoos", which is in reference to its ancestor Issa Abu Reesha or Issa al-Rayyaash.

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There is little information concerning the activities of the Albu Issa in hostilities during previous crisis periods in Iraq. However, British reports from the early 1900s indicate that they followed the lead of the Dulaym paramount Shaikh Ali Sulaiman before, during, and after WW I. During that period, most of the tribes of the Dulaym Tribal Confederation were considered well-armed. Their proximity to



the desert made it relatively easy for them to obtain arms and ammunition. The Dulaym tribes also had a reputation as thieves and raiders who displayed good fighting skills both against other tribes and against Ottoman troops before WW I. For example, each year when the Ottoman authorities tried to assess the crops of the Dulaym tribes, the Dulayms came into contact with Ottoman troops. In many cases, the Ottoman troops were defeated by the tribesmen.

During WW I, the Ottoman Army occupied Ramadi and much of the Dulaym tribal area. As a result, the Dulaym's assisted the Ottomans in their operations against the British. This changed when the British forced the Ottomans out of the Dulaym's tribal lands in September 1917, at which time Shaikh Ali Suleiman made "submission" to the British. Despite this, many tribes of the Dulaym, whose lands were still occupied by Ottoman forces, continued to assist the Ottomans until their lands were occupied by the British.

Following WW I, most Dulaym tribes supported the British, due largely to a desire to operate in their own self-interests and to maintain their wealth in the form of extended land ownership. However, a number of Dulaym tribes went their own way and fought with the British – particularly the Abu Nimr, the Albu Qartan, and the Albu Mahal, along with the al-Zoba of the Shammar Jarba tribe. The Abu Nimr and the Albu Mahal also joined with the Jaghaifa and the Aqaidat tribes to fight the British during the insurrection of 1920. Most other Dulaym tribes supported the British during the insurrection. It is interesting to note that the Zobas, close ally of the Albu Issas, were actively involved in undermining the British in the post WW I period, but there is no available evidence that suggests the Albu Issas joined them in fighting the British.

It is interesting to note that a branch of the Albu Issas migrated to Maysan Governorate due to strife with other tribes during the Ottoman Empire. This branch of the Albu Issas participated in the 1920 insurrection against the British and reportedly had a battle named after them, "the battle of al-Isa - battle of al-Madfa", near al-Kufa.

Religion

The Albu Issa tribe in al-Anbar Governorate is Sunni. The Albu Issa's influential tribal leaders are close to the fanatical religious leaders in Falluja, to include Jamal Nazzal and Abdullah al-Janabi.

Economic Issues

Unclassified reporting indicates the Albu Issas were smuggling weapons and funds to insurgents as late as the summer of 2004. Sheikh Barakat provided funding to insurgents in Falluja in 2003 and 2004.



Influential Leaders

As noted earlier, Khamis Hasnawi al-Aifan Abu Issa is the shaikh general of the tribe, but is considered a figurehead and has little independent influence. In late 2003, Barakat Saadoun Aifan Abu Issa became a prominent figure in the tribe and wielded much more power and influence than Shaikh Khamis. Barakat is deeply involved in the insurgency in al-Anbar Governorate. Barakat was arrested by Coalition forces in October 2003 and released in April 2004 during the cease-fire negotiations concerning Falluja. It was after his release that Barakat was elevated within the insurgency of Falluja for his “sacrifices” to the cause. Other Abu Issa leaders are Eifan Hasnawi al-Bunni and Emzahem Ali al-Kareem.

General Background Since March 2003

The Abu Issa tribe’s members were not staunch supporters of Saddam Hussein’s regime, but they are fiercely loyal to the country, hold a strong nationalistic ideology, and are known to align themselves with the Association of Muslim Scholars’ platform that calls for the withdrawal of the Coalition from Iraq.

In June 2003, Barakat reportedly received a message from Saddam Hussein offering men and weapons as reward for the tribe’s support in the resistance against Coalition Forces. The alleged response of Barakat to Saddam was “I don’t need your men or weapons – I have missiles.” Barakat was subsequently confronted with the report by a member of the Coalition. Barakat responded with defiance, but did not deny the accusation. During the meeting, Barakat was openly opposed to the Coalition’s presence in Iraq and insisted that they needed to immediately withdraw. Barakat was arrested by the Coalition during October 2003, setting off a backlash of attacks against Coalition Forces in tribal areas. The attacks included the shooting down of a US CH-47 helicopter that killed 16 servicemen outside the village of Barakat.

Participation in Insurgency / Relations with Insurgent Groups

In the days following the fall of the Hussein regime, influential Abu Issa tribal leaders were outspoken against the “occupation” by Coalition Forces and began organizing insurgent activities. The Abu Issas have very close relations with the Zoba tribe. Reports indicate that the two tribes collaborated in coordinating Iraqi nationalist insurgent “resistance” activities in Falluja.

Large parts of the Abu Issas are involved in the insurgency in Iraq. While the entire tribe is not involved in the insurgency, those that are primarily align to groups that are focused on the “Nationalist” insurgency movement. They are not Saddamist, and after the collapse of the regime, any loyalties that may have



existed to the former regime have been abandoned. Most of the Albu Issa tribal elites felt betrayed by Saddam because he did not provide the weapons that were promised before the war. Afterwards, they were ashamed because of what they saw as the “cowardice” displayed by Saddam.

Reporting indicates that members of the Albu Issa tribe have provided support to the insurgency in the form of direction, finances, manpower, and direct action. Of the five tribes in Falluja, the Albu Issa and the Zobas are believed to have planned and coordinated attacks against the Coalition. Both tribes are considered to be extremely influential among the top insurgents in Falluja.

In open source reporting, villagers from the Albu Issa tribe celebrated the death of 16 US service members who were killed in November 2003 when a Chinook helicopter was downed near a village outside of Falluja. Some members of the Albu Issa tribe in the village believed that if the resistance continued these types of attacks, the Americans would leave Iraq. Reports also indicated that the villagers celebrated at the sight of American troops removing the wreckage of the helicopter. The village’s chief was Shaikh Barakat Saadoun Aifan Albu Issa.

From April through June 2004, funding and arms were smuggled to insurgents in Falluja along a route under the railway underpass north of the city. Reporting indicates that a senior member of the Albu Issa tribe coordinated with family sources in Syria for delivery of the equipment.

Shaikh Khamis Hasnawi al-Eifan, chieftain of the Albu Issa tribe, escaped an assassination attempt in late 2005. The reason for the attack was not reported. While Khamis worked with different Coalition activities during 2003-2005, there are conflicting reports concerning his support of the Coalition and the current government of Iraq. Coalition officers that were close to Khamis in 2003-2004 report that he overtly supported the Coalition, but his direct involvement in insurgency activities was reported in 2004.

As stated previously, reports indicate that parts of the Albu Issa tribe are pro-insurgency and/or pro-AQIZ, but other than the direct supporters of Barakat, there is no other open source information available on the Albu Issa tribe’s direct participation in the insurgency or relations with specific insurgent groups.

Relations with the Coalition

Both Shaikh Barakat and Shaikh Khamis were known to have an open dialogue with Coalition officials until at least July 2004. While they both met with Coalition officials, neither provided any overt or covert support for ongoing US activities during that period.



An influential leader of the Albu Issas collaborated with Coalition Forces during the Coalition incursion in Falluja during April 2004, but reports indicate that, at the same time, he was deeply involved in the insurgency coordinating attacks against the Coalition. In addition, during June 2004, Barakat allegedly brokered the sale of US military equipment, which was captured during an insurgent ambush in Falluja.

No other information was available on the Albu Issa tribes relations with the Coalition since June 2004.

Observations

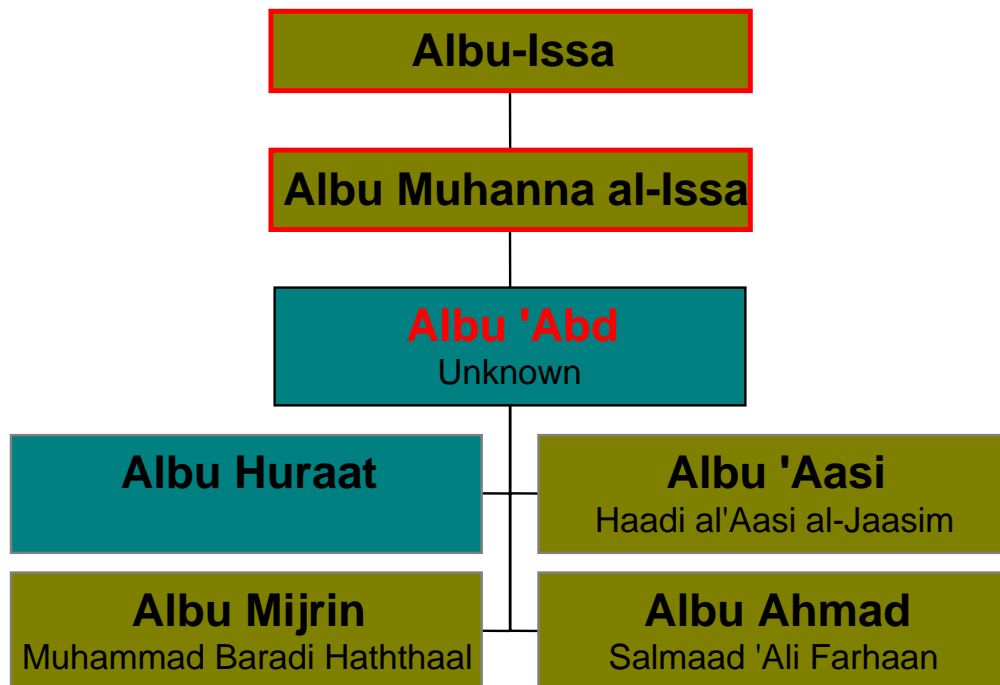
The leaders of the Albu Issa tribe are fiercely loyal to Iraq, which should not be confused with loyalty to the former regime. Their anger and frustrations stem from feelings of betrayal by the US and the cowardice of Saddam Hussein.

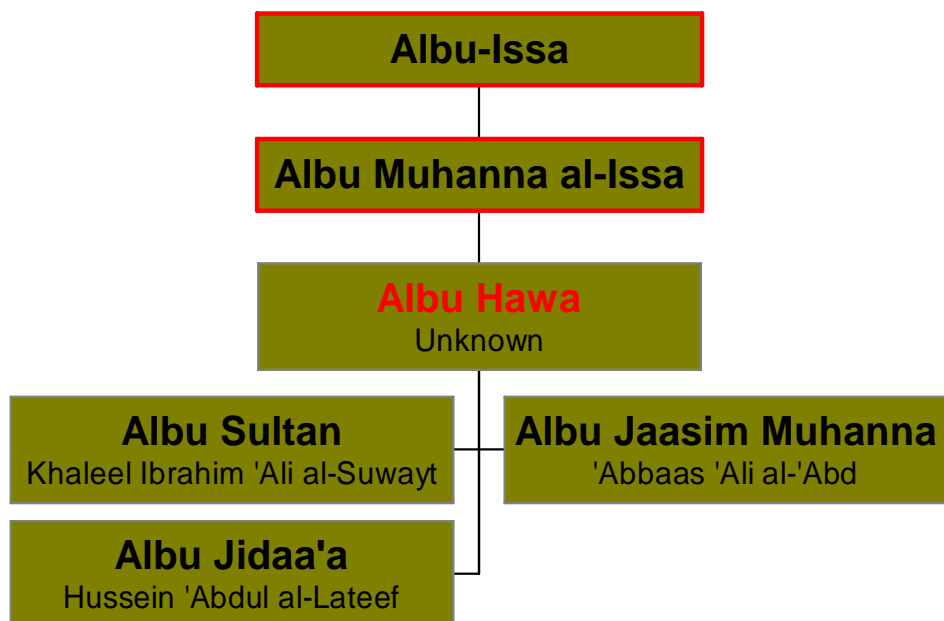
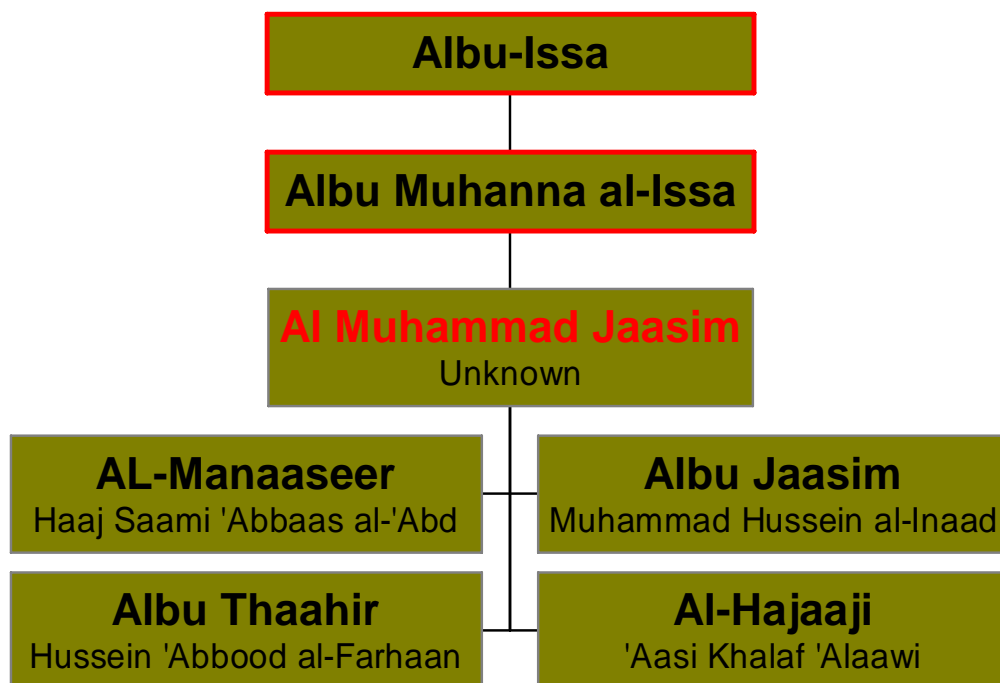
The fact that large numbers of Albu Issa tribe members are actively involved in the Iraqi nationalist insurgency, and that leaders of the Albu Issa tribe have met frequently with Coalition officials, presents a complicated and contradictory picture of the actual loyalties and intentions of the tribe. Such a picture indicates that the loyalty of the Albu Issas may be bought and sold by the highest bidder, but only temporarily. It also indicates that the Albu Issas will do whatever they believe to be in their own interest. That fact, combined with the knowledge that Barakat has demonstrated his duplicity on more than one occasion, means that Coalition officials should be cautious in dealing with the Albu Issas, because attempts to win their loyalty through diplomatic or covert bargaining could leave the Coalition vulnerable to future embarrassing propaganda from these supposed allies.



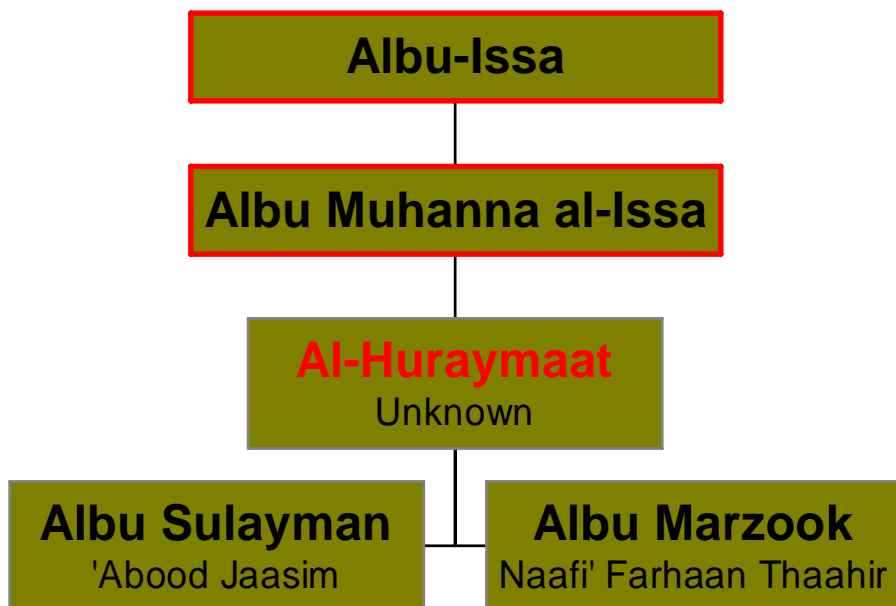
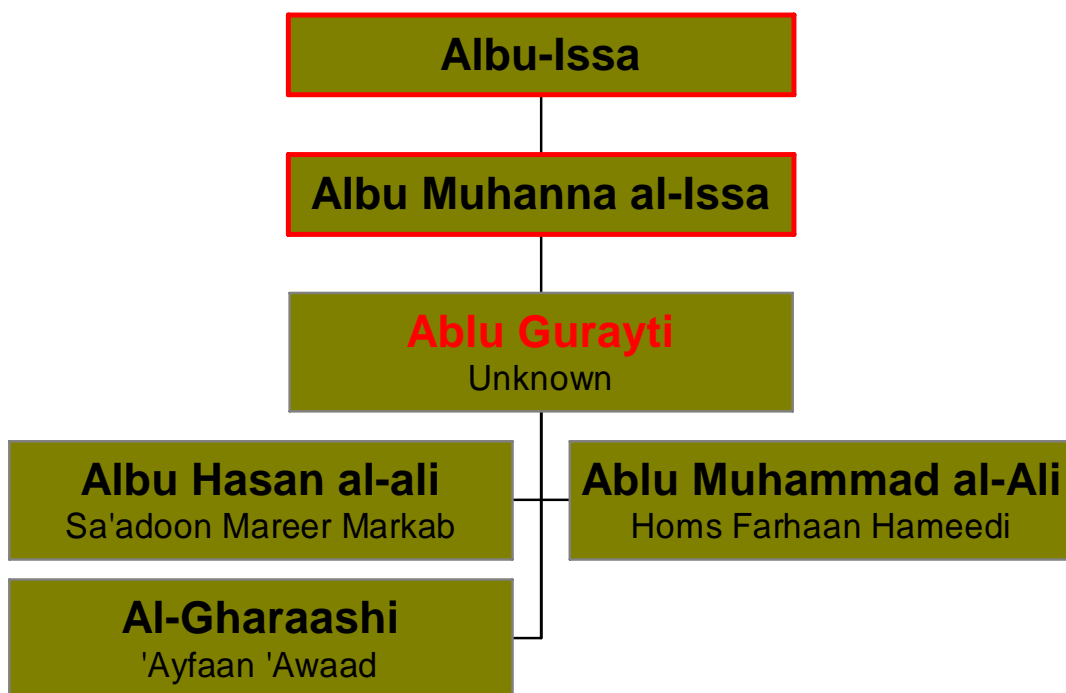
ALBU ISSA TRIBE APPENDIX: MCIA UNCLASSIFIED TRIBAL STRUCTURE CHARTS

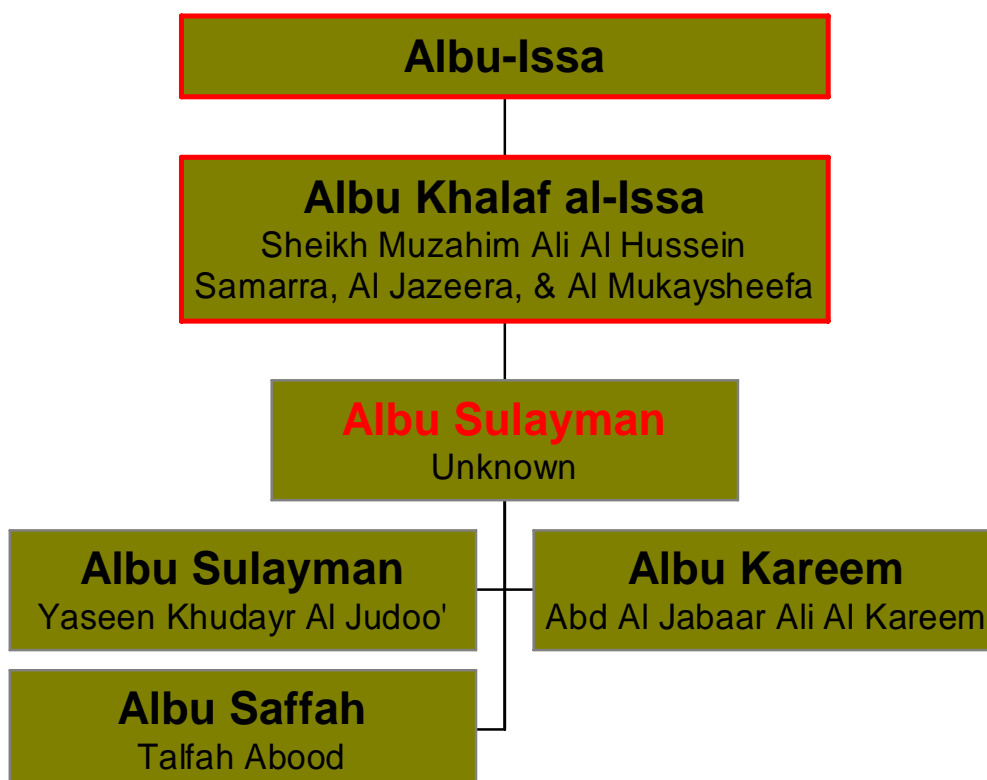
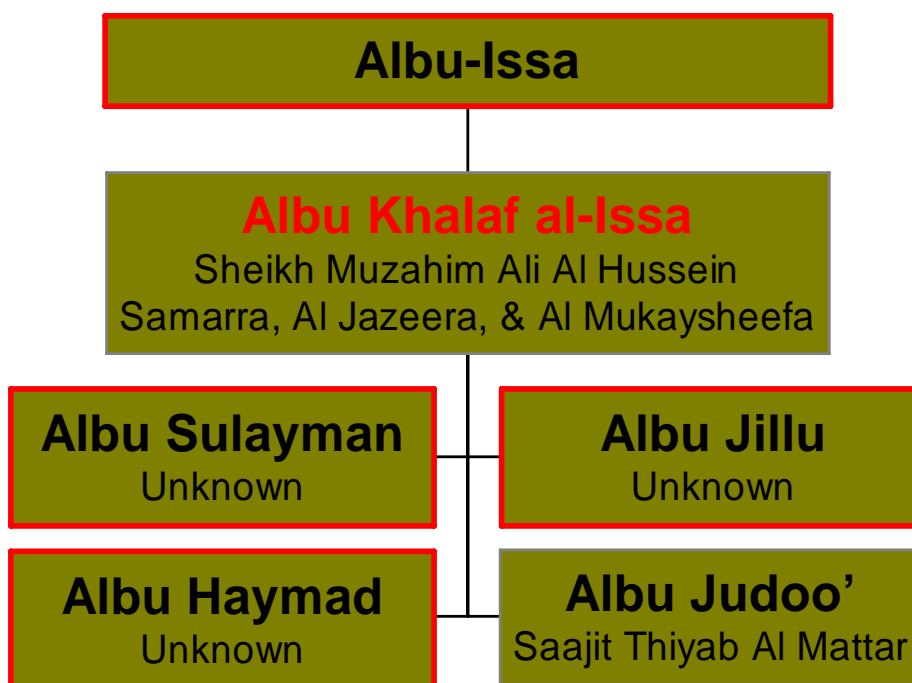
Note: This study was unable to determine the accuracy of the following tribal structures based on the information available and US government reporting provided.

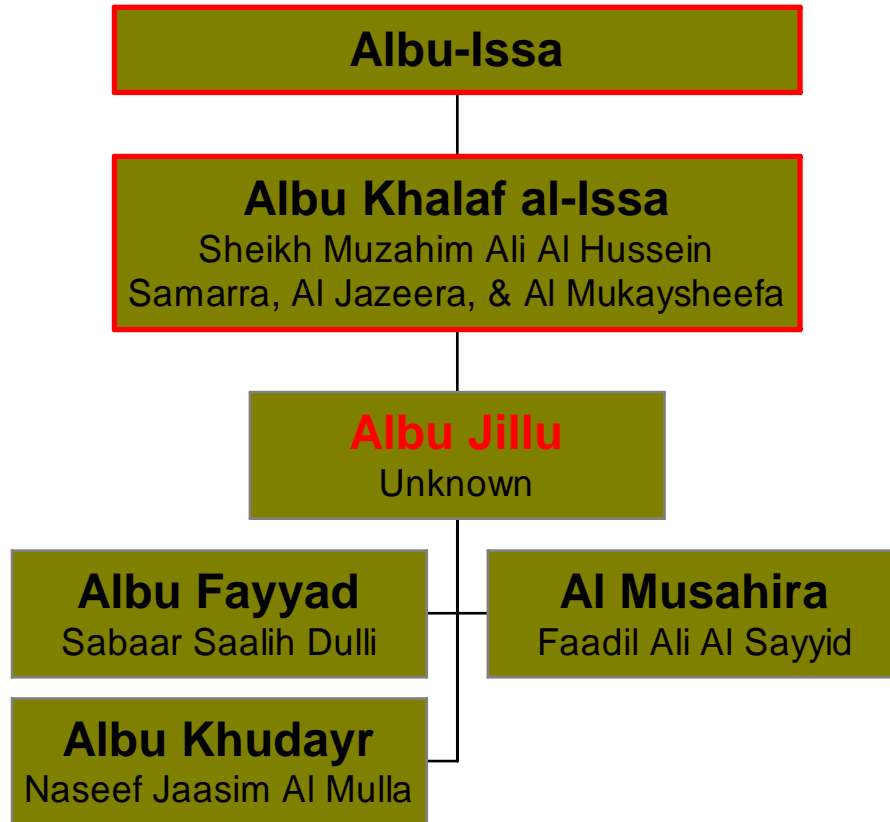


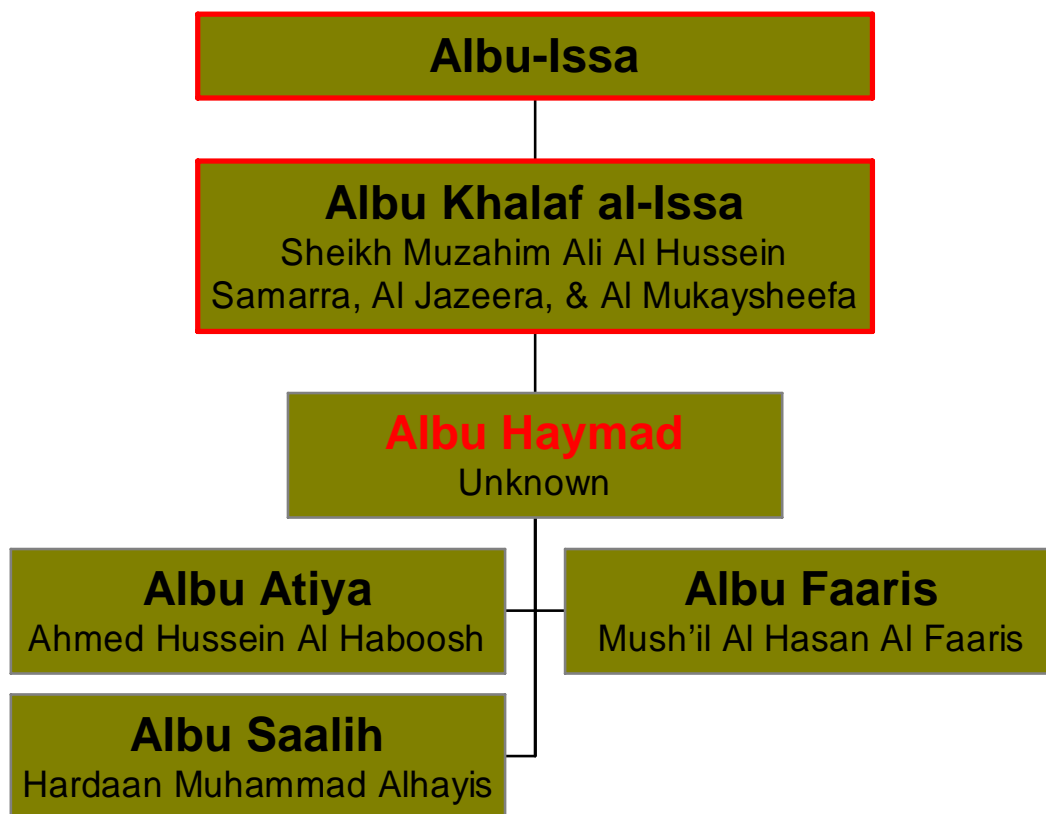














- 1 Khouri, R., 1991. Qabaail ul-'Iraq. Cairo: Sharikat Abu Naadir. p. 18-23.
- 2 Amatzia Baram, *Building Toward Crisis: Saddam Husayn's Strategy for Survival*, (Washington, DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1998), 26.
- 3 Which includes a sizable Shia complement.
- 4 See A. Dawisha, "Iraqi Politics: the Past and Present as Context for the Future," in *The Future of Iraq*, (Washington, DC: Middle East Institute, 1997). 7-16.
- 5 Ibid., 14.
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- 7 J. Anderson, J., *Arab Tribalism and Power*, (Dublin: Muintir na Tire, 1996), 119.
- 8 Durrani, N., 2001. 'Anaasir al-Kuwwa fil-Hukuuma al-Iraqiyya fil-qarn il-'ashrina. Cairo: Dar al-Mish'al. p. 8.
- 9 K. Karadaghi, K., *How to Build a New Iraq After Saddam*, (Washington, DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2002), 35.
- 10 For more details on tribal relations theory, see Anderson, 117-201.
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- 13 *Military Report on Mesopotamia, Area 2 (Upper Euphrates)*, Iraq: General Staff, British Forces in Iraq, 1923, 74.
- 14 Ibid., 74.
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- 20 Ibid.
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CHAPTER FIVE: TRIBAL INFLUENCE – HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

Introduction

Observations from the study of Iraq's history and geography can offer lessons for working with the tribes today. Iraq's geography positioned the territory on the axis of conflict between the Sassanid, Byzantine, Ottoman, and British empires. Iraq is located on the land route from Europe to Asia, on the fault line between Semitic and Indo-European languages, and on the fault line between Sunni and Shia Islam. The territory's geographic vulnerability to conquering empires and marauding nomads helped shape societal conditions, notably a reliance on immediate community loyalties, e.g. the tribe, and a mistrust of government authority and of foreigners. During the Mamluk period, a pattern of conflict was established between the tribal world and central government authority. This situation was exacerbated during the late Ottoman and British Mandate periods, as shaikhs were granted privileges and responsibilities they had not experienced, and which degraded their relationships with their tribesmen. This history of interaction between central governing authority and tribes in Iraq continued through the Monarchy and Republican eras of Iraq. Under the Baath, a complex relationship developed between the regime and Iraqi tribes because Baath ideology was centered on Arab socialism and, as a result, called for undermining the power of the tribes. However, Saddam Hussein relied on tribal relationships to consolidate and maintain his power in Iraq. As a result, a closer look at Saddam's relationship with the tribes reveals interesting observations about Iraqi tribes and how to influence them today.

If lessons can be learned from the Ottoman, British and Baath experiences, so too can they be learned from other instances of Arab tribal engagement and influence, as well as from counter insurgency campaigns in other lands, where some of the same issues – landholding inequity, ethnic cleavages, oppressive government policies, and popular aspirations – have played central roles.

Tribal and ethnic factors have played major roles in many intrastate conflicts, particularly insurgencies. Such conflicts are often waged over identity, with allegiances based on tribe or ethnic group, religion, or territory. An insurgent group may or may not be comprised solely of the minority population, but will seek to heighten and exploit cleavages between that population and the government. Insurgent groups appeal to popular grievances and seek to undermine government legitimacy.

Correspondingly, ethnicity is also a key component of counter insurgency campaigns. This section of the study will look at historical examples and attempt



to distill prescriptive lessons for engaging tribal and ethnic groups as part of a national government's comprehensive counter insurgency effort.

Ottoman Experience With The Tribes in Iraq

State/Tribal Relations During Mamluk Times

During the Mamluk period in Iraq, patterns were established that set the tone for state-tribal relations and shaped tribal structures. Patterns of intertribal and tribal-city conflict were also established. The Mamluks were a unique class of rulers/administrators taken as boys from Christian families in Ottoman-occupied Georgia and converted to Islam. The Ottomans sought to create a class of loyal political-military elites to manage the Empire's peripheries. The Mamluks were housed in barracks and trained in both administration and martial skills such as horsemanship. Their education and training emphasized *esprit de corps*, shared common identity, and loyalty to the Ottoman Sultan.

Eventually the Mamluks were sent from the Ottoman capital in Istanbul into the Empire as pashas to govern parts of provinces, called *pashaliks*. There they maintained appearances of loyalty to the Sultan, paying tribute to Istanbul, though irregularly. They were highly protective of their lucrative positions, presiding over tributary systems and keeping both the Janissary troops and appointees from Istanbul under their direct command.¹ The Mamluk pashas were primarily concerned with dominating and collecting taxes from the peoples in their territories, not in governance or making changes to the societies in their territories. In Baghdad itself, the Mamluks cooperated with local notables, frequently against Turkish influence.² These factors would later put them into conflict with Istanbul when pressures for reform grew.

The Ottoman regime was primarily interested in maintaining the flow of tribute from Baghdad to Istanbul and blocking Persian penetration into the Empire from the southwest.³ "Broadly speaking, the stability and continuity necessary for local process and the free development of private wealth necessary for the creation of a stable and strong local elite were absent."⁴

Far from Istanbul and Baghdad, and with limited resources, Mamluks in Iraq's countryside proved adept at co-opting local notables such as tribal shaikhs in collecting taxes. The state in Mamluk times was essentially a non-constructive power, concerned with military and financial affairs and resorting to methods such as exactions, monopolies, and forced loans, rather than improving livelihoods, production, or trade.⁵ In some cases, local elites proved too powerful,



and calling on military support from Baghdad was impractical, so local power-sharing arrangements were negotiated.⁶

With tax collection at issue, tension between Mamluks and shaikhly aristocracies was a constant, alliances frequently shifted, and tribal rebellions were directed against the representatives from Baghdad. The Mamluks enlisted Janissary troops to assist in tax collection, but since these troops were of limited effectiveness, the Mamluks also formed tribal armies, used Kurdish cavalry, and, in Baghdad, relied on the Georgian guard built up under Sulayman the Great.⁷ Dependent on the use of force in order to maintain their form of governance, the Mamluks found the effectiveness, discipline, loyalty, and ethnic composition of their military units a constant source of problems.

The tribal world the Mamluks encountered in Iraq was made up of various structures: nomadic, sedentary, and mixed. Tribal aristocracies, one of the four pillars of the old order in Iraq, were an important but highly unstable source of political and military support for the Mamluks, with uneasy forms of cooperation predominant.⁸ Some relationships were formed during the Mamluk period, and others existed before the 18th century. In exchange for supporting the Baghdad pashas in emergencies, paramount shaikhs were granted tax collection privileges and paid reduced amounts of tribute.⁹ Personal and logistical factors often intervened to prevent a shaikh from answering the pasha's call, however. The shaikhs were sometimes at odds with the pashas, often over taxes. Unlike the Kurds, they could not confront Baghdad with the aid of a large external power, although they could elude the Mamluk forces in the desert, steppes, or inaccessible marshes. Baghdad pashas often stoked divisions among the tribes as a way of offsetting potential threats. In an environment of constantly shifting alliances, rivalries between tribes often caused one of the rival tribes to embrace Baghdad, even if it had been fighting with Baghdad just before. The pashas' interaction with the tribes could provoke long periods of instability, affecting trade and revenue.

These conditions notwithstanding, one historian has concluded that compared with preceding Ottoman periods, many Mamluk pashas had better contacts with tribal aristocracies and were more successful in maintaining a degree of order in state-tribal relationships.¹⁰ This improved the Mamluks' revenue base and strengthened their position relative to local rivals and non-Mamluk pashas. Turkish pashas sometimes found that they lacked the required relationships, influence, and military dominance to keep strategic tribal areas under control, as strong Mamluk pashas were able to do.¹¹ While unstable, Mamluk-tribal relationships helped the Mamluks strengthen and consolidate their dynasty against rivals for power.



Baghdad's influence on the tribes was primarily by indirect methods, and did not make for a strong basis of power. Short of military action, the government would try to play one tribe off against another, or different members of a ruling clan off against each other. In general, the Baghdad pashas maintained an effective tributary system over the territories, and the tribes maintained extensive political sovereignty over the tribal world.¹² The balance of power fluctuated; strong pashas received higher tributes and maintained better control of trade routes, and could decide themselves which shaikhs to appoint as paramount shaikhs.

Periods of weaker regimes brought a return to uneasy relations, with state-tribal conflicts over appointments and tribute. Some tribes were independent enough to refuse to pay tribute for several years.¹³ At times, the government was forced to enter into an alliance with a tribal aristocracy to avoid losing all power in a particular area. This strengthened the shaikh, and power had to be delegated to him. This happened with the Muntafiq tribe during the time of Said Pasha and again around 1800, when the southwestern frontier was under attack by the Wahhabis from the Arabian Peninsula.¹⁴

Mutual Interests

In some situations, the presence of mutual interests could prevent violent conflict between the government and the tribes. Paramount shaikhs each profited from the other's support. This was especially true for shaikhs in riverine areas, where shaikhs' income depended on trade and production. At the same time, the economic welfare of government leaders and their support networks depended on these factors as well. Shaikhs wanted to avoid the damage caused by government campaigns, and the government's interest in order and safety on many occasions prevented it from attacking large nomadic tribes, such as the Shammar and Anaiza. Government action against the tribes invariably harmed the rural economic interests of urban elites, who often intervened to prevent military action.

As indicated above, the government-tribal relationship during the Mamluk period was not solely one of conflict. Mutual interests, primarily economic, bound the tribes, the governing pashas, and the urban elites who supported them and prevented or mitigated violent conflict on many occasions. Unfortunately, tribal oral narratives to this day downplay cooperation and emphasize instead a legacy of violent confrontation and triumph.¹⁵

If a shaikh was pro-government, his rival tended to be anti-government, and a shaikh in conflict with Baghdad often had a relative's faction trying to profit by offering its services to the government.¹⁶ Government policies of alliances and division could not be maintained for long in the tribal environment, mainly because the government's aims conflicted. The government's goal of higher



taxes and tribute, requiring strong pressure on the tribes, was at odds with its goal of greater tribal support for purposes such as keeping trade routes through remote areas open.¹⁷

Tribal - Mamluk Government Military Balance of Power

Both the government and the tribes had military limitations. The government could not maintain large standing armies, and the tribes had no standing armies beyond the tribal guards of the big shaikhs. Tribal cavalries of 10,000 or more could be assembled on a temporary basis, but lacked the ability to act as a single unit. As collections of small tribal groups, each loyal to its own leaders, tribal armies were not cohesive or disciplined. Tribal armies' strengths were intelligence gathering, familiarity with the terrain, fast movement, surprise attacks, and ambushes. In addition, the tribes had limited weaponry. Even in late Mamluk times, the spear remained the dominant weapon.¹⁸ The Muntafiq of the south were better armed, but no match for government forces equipped with field artillery.¹⁹

When the government marshaled its forces, it could defeat a tribe, but complications followed. Decisive government victories were rare, as the targeted tribe could disperse into the marshes, retreat into the desert or mountains, or seek refuge across the Persian frontier. Victories were difficult to consolidate and maintain due to the government's lack of an extended local power base. The defeat of one tribe would often strengthen a neighbor, causing more problems. With a weak Mamluk state in the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries, "...tribal areas could never be lastingly pacified, and the spirit of tribal rebellion and sovereignty remained alive."²⁰ Accounts of heroic victories over government armies became an enduring theme of tribal legends.

Violence and Instability

The Mamluk reign was unstable by Istanbul's design, and could not assert direct power over the countryside. Istanbul acted to prevent the Mamluks from becoming too powerful by instituting a shifting appointment system, encouraging rivalries between Mamluks, and encouraging tribal and other local power sources as counter forces.²¹ As a result, tribal aristocracies wielded significant power during the Mamluk period.

As in any weak state, lack of state control expressed itself in periodic violent repression.²² While state power was more stable in Mamluk times than in the preceding two centuries, economic and political instability were still such a problem that even strong Mamluk pashas could not maintain stable periods for long.²³ Structural political problems played a role in this, such as the lack of a succession system or well defined areas of jurisdiction.²⁴ A pasha presided as a



patron over a network of clients in a wealth generating apparatus where a change at the top disrupted the entire network. Strangulation was the method by which most Mamluk pashas left office; only Sulayman the Great had a peaceful end to his career. Traditionally, Ottoman provincial policy encouraged competing, weak, and unstable *pashaliks*, and tried to prevent concentrations of power by playing a balancing game with other sources of power, including tribal shaikhs when necessary.²⁵ The violence of political behavior during this period, which still characterizes Iraqi politics today, has its roots in structural aspects such as the lack of distinction between economic wealth and political power, and the difficulty of engaging in economic activity without direct involvement by the state.²⁶ The state was, in essence, the pasha's court, solidifying a pattern of patrimonialism that would endure. Those in the court enriched themselves – this was not distinct from tax collection. Many government functionaries received no salary; some bought their positions, which included the right to collect revenue.²⁷

Violence became embedded and systematic during the Mamluk reign. Sitting Mamluk pashas had to fear each other, machinations against them by Ottoman authorities in Istanbul, and the consequences of tribal leaders perceiving weakness. The latter concern often motivated pashas to use violence, usually a sign of weakness rather than strength, in merciless and seemingly exaggerated ways.²⁸ Tribes were quick to seize opportunities presented by pashas' perceived weakness, using methods such as ceasing to pay tribute, and blocking trade and pilgrimage routes. In 1814, Said Pasha, who had a reputation as a weak and indecisive man, experienced a revolt by the Shammar tribe. Other tribes quickly declared themselves independent and stopped paying tribute, and even Baghdad merchants stopped extending credit to the pasha.²⁹ Warfare between Baghdad and foreign powers had a similar effect of catalyzing tribal revolts. Natural causes hastened the end of the Mamluk reign in the form of the combined plague outbreak and floods of 1831.³⁰

Observations From The Mamluk Period

Observations from the Mamluk period reinforce the lesson of the linkage between perceived government weakness and instability and tribal revolt. Tribal leaders were quick to observe government vulnerability in one place and capitalize on it somewhere else. The Mamluk period helped establish an enduring environment of government-tribal opposition, and a historical pattern of calculation, intrigue, and violence in Iraq.

A positive lesson can be learned in that mutual interests can the bind tribe and the state and thus prevent conflict. This lesson can be applied by facilitating the expansion of economic ties between urban and tribal areas. Periods of stability during Mamluk reign can be attributed, in part, to two-way economic interests. Facilitating urban economic interests on the part of tribal leaders can help give



them a stake in stability. For example, some compensation paid to tribal leaders could be in the form of stock ownership in companies located in areas where the tribes have an impact on security.

Lessons can also be learned from the characteristics of the Mamluks that made them effective or ineffective. For example, the Mamluks were outsiders within the Ottoman Empire and depended on their on-the-ground knowledge of local areas for their survival. Having little backing from Istanbul necessitated resourcefulness and adaptability. Their martial spirit and training, which emphasized horsemanship, may have helped the Mamluks establish bonds with the shaikhs. The Mamluks understood the need to avoid perceptions of weakness and instability in the eyes of the tribes, and would make shows of force as needed.

State/Tribal Relations In Later Ottoman Times

The fundamental relationship between the state and the tribes did not change before the middle of the 19th century, and did not change significantly before the 20th century.³¹ The Ottoman government remained unable to sustain a presence beyond the administrative centers, and authority had to be delegated to the tribal shaikhs, who then structured politics according to their own culture and traditions. At the same time, the tribal world remained fragmented. Having numerous power centers to deal with put Baghdad at a disadvantage. On the other hand, fragmentation ensured that the government could maintain a basic level of influence. Weak government and tribal fragmentation combined to hinder state formation in Iraq.³²

Several aspects of state-tribal relations were shaped in Mamluk times, solidified during the late Ottoman period, and continued to hold back national development in the British period and beyond. The tribesmen experienced Baghdad's growing strength in the 19th century first as a military instrument, strengthening their opposition to the state.³³ A cultural divide was also at play. The rural tribesmen's way of life, political traditions, and values contrasted with those of the urban elites. Ottoman pan-Islamic ideology and Sunni dominance clashed with the tribesmen's localism and predominantly Shia religious orientation.³⁴ Nomadic tribesmen, a major force in the Mamluk period, saw their way of life as superior and looked with contempt at the sedentary world. This viewpoint was reciprocated by urban elites. The British later exaggerated these divides in forming their policies, thereby ensuring the divides' enduring impact.

Ottoman grasp on the three Mesopotamian/Iraqi provinces of Basra, Baghdad, and Mosul was historically tenuous and fluctuating. Ottoman policy had a significant impact in shaping tribal society. The post-Mamluk era was especially important. In a short period of time beginning in 1831, the Ottomans oversaw the occupation of Baghdad, the removal of the last Mamluk governor, the elimination



of Kurdish principalities in the north, and the deposition of the governing Jalili family of Mosul.³⁵ Subsequent Istanbul-appointed governors of Baghdad were instructed to break the power of tribal confederacies and increase state revenues. However, Istanbul was unable to develop a consistent policy beyond divide and rule, sowing dissention among shaikhs in tribal confederations, and inducing shaikhs to compete for auctioned tax collection rights. Direct Turkish rule imposed in 1831 also coincided with the beginning of British influence in Iraq. Turkish policy subsequent to 1831 sought to degrade tribal shaikhs' power (the British would later act to restore the big shaikhs' powers).³⁶

Midhat Pasha's governorship (1869-1872) was instrumental in transforming tribal society.³⁷ His introduction of the *vilayet* (or *wilayet*) system of administrative and provincial government turned independent tribal fiefdoms into districts with appointed governors. An example is the Muntafiq region, which Midhat made into a district reporting to Baghdad, which ended the independence of the Sadoun principality.³⁸ This involved splitting the Sadoun family itself. In dealing with the Muntafiqs, Midhat deftly disabled a power center that had thwarted the Mamluks for generations.

In enacting the Ottoman Land Code of 1858, Midhat sought to reform the system of land tenure by weakening shaikhs' hold on cultivators, tying the cultivators to the land, and giving them a direct relationship with the government. Historically, tribal land possession was based on tribal claims and not grants or written documents. Individual cultivators held land by virtue of their tribal membership and according to their tribe's customs. Midhat's regime set out to enforce its view that tribal lands were state-owned and that the government was entitled to two layers of tax. This would be done by granting cultivators title deeds of possession while keeping final land ownership in the hands of the government.

Social change followed when tribesmen predictably rejected land registration and continued to farm as usual, while those better acquainted with the law, such as city dwellers and Sadoun shaikhs, secured title deeds to many tribal lands.³⁹ This created a new class of absentee landlords and put great strain on relationships between tribesmen and the shaikhs who had accepted title deeds. Tribesmen could take less pride in tribal membership, as they perceived themselves becoming mere tenants, and the role of shaikhs shifted from that of tribal champion to landlord.⁴⁰ The Land Code did not prevail, however. Neither title deed holders, nor the government were able to enforce their claims without resorting to traditional tribal structures.⁴¹ While Midhat's reforms succeeded in breaking up tribal confederations and degrading the power of paramount shaikhs, tribal custom continued to govern most land related issues, and serve as the basis for rural order.



Compared to the British, the Ottomans seem to have more accurately assessed the characteristics and interests of Iraq's urban and rural populations, and interacted more deftly with tribal leaders. Ottoman administrators noted differences from region to region in the relationships between shaikh and tribe, and modulated their approach as necessary. Ottoman administrators relied on notables such as tribal shaikhs to provide information, maintain order, and collect taxes and, in return, the administrators recognized and enhanced the notables' social position.⁴² Furthermore, the Ottoman Sultan consulted Iraqi notables, appointed them to high positions, and relied on them to resolve disputes, indicating a more nuanced relationship between state and society than under the British.⁴³

In addition, Ottoman law was enlightened in some aspects. Iraqi notables involved in the 1922 drafting of the British-sponsored Organic Law awkwardly pointed out this law was less liberal than the Turkish Constitution enacted after the Young Turks' revolution. The British developed many of their policies in Iraq based on their perception of corruption in the Ottoman Empire. However, corruption may have been more of a problem at the lower levels of administration than endemic to the Empire, as indicated by Istanbul's 1901 investigation into the misdeeds of Namik Pasha, and subsequent order to remove him from his post in Baghdad.⁴⁴

From the British viewpoint, the reforms of Midhat Pasha, the Ottoman governor of Baghdad from 1869 to 1871, were out of character with Ottoman rule in general, and could be attributed to Midhat's disposition and strength of character.⁴⁵ Midhat set out to overhaul the Ottoman governing system, imposing the *vilayet* (governorates) system, unifying Basra, Baghdad, and Mosul, and reforming the administration of land and revenue. Before Midhat's reign, the Ottoman hold on the three provinces was never very strong, and most power was in the hands of tribal shaikhs. He was able to shift the balance of power away from the shaikhs, but without much violence. He enacted the Ottoman land decree of 1858, making it easier for land to be granted to private individuals. Midhat's aims were to improve law and order and settle the nomadic population, relying on a balance of financial incentives and negotiation. He was successful in increasing the amount and consistency of tax revenues, improving infrastructure, and strengthening governance. Viewing Midhat Pasha's reforms through the prism of "Oriental despotism", the British concluded that the reforms were not designed so much to increase government efficiency, but rather to degrade tribal power and increase urban elites' control of rural land.⁴⁶

Contemporary historians believe that Midhat's reforms were not out of character with the general patterns of Ottoman rule of the period. Ottoman governors in the late 1800s were aware of the Empire's crisis and the need for reform at both the center and the periphery, and worked to modernize governance, improve



agricultural production, and improve law and order.⁴⁷ Late Ottoman policies in Iraq, beginning with Midhat's tenure, succeeded in increasing productivity and prosperity. While the British shared the Ottoman rulers' goals of landholding reform and enhanced agricultural output, British methods were flawed, a notable indicator of which is the degree to which the British resorted to the use of force in Iraq, relative to the amount used by the Ottomans.

The Ottomans noted the increasing British influence from the 1830s up to the eve of the British landing at Basra. British activities prompted deep Ottoman concern over shore patrols, gifts to and contacts with shaikhs, proliferation of firearms, English lessons to youth, and traveling officials and businessmen.⁴⁸ The Ottoman response included a policy of coastal defense in the Fao strait and below Basra, the extension of the *vilayet* system to poorly governed areas, the establishment of a new network of Ottoman political officers, and renewed efforts to win Arab sympathy.

Observations From The Late Ottoman Period

Midhat Pasha's reign demonstrated the effective use of economic incentive and disincentive in dealing with tribal leaders. Though producing unintended consequences, land grants proved to be a powerful tool in securing shaikhs' cooperation. Midhat's reign also demonstrated the power of administrative reforms and expanded government presence as a counterbalance to tribal power. Midhat was noted for his skillful use of non-violent, indirect policies of divide and rule, as seen with the Muntafiq grouping.

A cautionary lesson can also be drawn from the late Ottoman experience with the tribes. This is that an overly aggressive legal and administrative approach can place tribal leaders in unsustainable roles, leading to unintended consequences. By granting shaikhs title deeds to land they had no previous involvement with, the Ottomans created a new class of landlords and promoted divisions between shaikh and tribesman.



The British Experience with the Tribes

Introduction

The British experience in Iraq between 1914 and 1932 offers important lessons, mostly of a cautionary nature. One of these lessons is the contrast between some British officers' keen sense of the Iraqi environment and policy missteps often directed by those outside the area of operations. Several historians contend that British policy in Iraq was seriously flawed because it:

- was based on a misunderstanding of Iraqi society;
- forcibly imposed unfamiliar and unsustainable relationships between groups;
- helped institutionalize Shia and Kurd marginalization; and,
- contributed to the militarization of the Iraqi state.

As a result, it set the stage for the decades of violence and instability that followed Iraq's independence in 1932. Studying the British experience brings to light the importance of good judgment based on accurate information about Iraq, and the danger of unintended consequences.

The British Decision to Occupy Iraq

The British decided to intervene in Iraq because they saw a strategic necessity in establishing a presence to protect the land route to India, secure oil supplies, and check German influence in the region. The British landed at Basra in October 1914 and established a foothold in response to the Ottoman alliance with Germany in WW I. At the time, however, it was not immediately clear how far the British would advance. The decision to take Baghdad after several initial battlefield successes was misguided, resulting in the haphazard, poorly planned Mesopotamian campaign. The first battle of Kut alone cost the British 23,000 killed and 8,000 captured, many of whom died in captivity.⁴⁹ The idea of advancing on Baghdad "exerted its fascinating, fatal spell" on sections of the British and Indian governments, despite the report of the De Bunsen Committee in 1915, which concluded that Ottoman "devolutionary control" over Mesopotamia was preferable to the annexation of any territory beyond the Basra *vilayet*.⁵⁰ The Mesopotamian campaign was a costly disaster for the British, and reinforced the lesson of the dangers of "mission creep."

Iraq in the British Worldview

British interactions with the tribes should be viewed in the context of the overall British effort in Iraq, which can be divided into four phases.⁵¹ From the time of the Basra occupation until 1918, it was anticipated that Basra, Iraq's most strategic and economically important area, would be annexed to the British Empire after



the war. However, the rise of American power during WW I and the international impact of President Wilson's liberal vision made this option increasingly unlikely. From 1919 to 1923, British policy was guided by the terms of the League of Nations Mandate that had been negotiated. Widespread Iraqi opposition to the Mandate, crystallized in the 1920 Revolt, led the British to modify their approach. From 1923 to 1927, the British adopted an advisory approach, hastening the delegation of governing responsibility to Iraqis. By 1927, continued domestic British and Iraqi opposition to the British presence led to a policy shift where the goal became to remove British troops from Iraq as soon as possible and govern through the British-imposed Iraqi monarchy. To this end, the British gave up on trying to shepherd into existence a legitimate, effective Iraqi government, and instead deliberately falsified progress reports to the League, setting the stage for full "disengagement" in 1932.

The British presence was marked by several major failures of vision that contributed to negative outcomes. British officials were deeply divided over virtually all aspects of policy and strategy concerning Iraq as divisions emerged between British institutions dealing with Iraq; for example the British military versus the Colonial Office. British offices in London, Cairo, and Simla, India handled Iraq policy, and each office had a different vision. The Cairo and Delhi offices had a more colonial perspective and were out of touch with the new currents in international relations in the aftermath of World War I, namely President Wilson's vision for a liberal world order with newly granted self-determination for colonies. Cut off by geography and experience, Baghdad-based officials such as A. T. Wilson missed these developments and advocated direct rule and a paternalistic approach.⁵² London-based officials, meanwhile, pushed for building up local institutions and rapidly delegating power into Iraqi hands.

In addition, British officials in Iraq fell victim to careerism, where their fortunes became linked to a single policy initiative or Iraqi notable. This often put junior officers in competition with one another and hampered overall efforts to govern and improve the country. Even worse, the British interacted with Iraqi society based on what the British thought the country should look like, rather than the society's actual nature.⁵³ British assessments of conditions on the ground were flawed by two related factors. First, due to a lack of resources in the wake of a devastating war and pressures on the British Empire at many points, the British effort in Iraq lacked the analytical depth that characterized other colonial endeavors.⁵⁴ Second, British assessments suffered from what intelligence agencies today would call mirror imaging, where analysts' own worldviews and biases shape their perceptions. In the British case, deeply held cultural stereotypes became prisms through which British officers consistently misinterpreted and misrepresented Iraqi society.⁵⁵



Some historians argue that the British were predisposed to rely on cultural stereotypes due to “Orientalism,” or the sense that all things Eastern are exotic, sensual, and corrupt. Another was the British tendency, against a backdrop of world war and the Industrial Revolution, to romanticize the notion of rural life and demonize urban life as a Dickensian horror. British officers imagined an exaggerated divide between what they saw as simple, hardworking rural Iraqis and scheming, corrupt city dwellers. Misunderstanding Iraqi society resulted in judgment errors, such as the British miscalculation of sentiment against the military imposition of tax gathering, which led to the tribal uprising of July 1920.⁵⁶

Early Missteps

Politically, the British got off to an unfortunate start in Iraq in the aftermath of WW I. The League of Nations Mandate for Iraq was awarded to Britain at the San Remo Conference in April 1920. The terms of this Mandate were not clearly communicated to the population, and Iraqis assumed the outcome would be oppressive colonial control. The British themselves were divided over what they wanted for Iraq. The 1920 Revolt in Iraq was the product of how the British were perceived, and although they put down the revolt decisively, in its aftermath they had no choice but to appoint an Arab ruler, King Faisal.

Faisal was not accepted by the Shia and received only limited acceptance from the Sunnis because he was not an Iraqi. Furthermore, in addition to relying on primarily Indian imperial troops to garrison Iraq, the British brought in Indian civil servants to help govern, alienating the Ottoman-trained, educated Iraqis in the cities. The British also acted to perpetuate the Sunni dominance of Ottoman times by relying on Sunnis for government posts and the officer corps. The British then decided to pull out their imperial troops too early, leaving a sectarian (Sunni dominated) and immature army in a power vacuum with weak state institutions. Iraqi elites resented the terms of the Mandate, did not fully accept Faisal’s legitimacy, and resented the treaty between Britain and Iraq that formalized the Mandate relationship. The British also alienated the Kurds.

The British instituted changes almost immediately upon taking control of Iraq. The British used Midhat Pasha’s Land Code and reformed administrative system as a basis for imposing their policies on the countryside. Backed by aircraft and armored cars for enforcement and coercion, in 1920 the British were able to generate tax revenues three and a half times greater than in 1911.⁵⁷ Revenues in the Muntafiq district alone increased fifteen-fold between 1916 and 1919. Government services, however, did not keep pace with this taxation, and much of the revenue went to paying inflated British salaries and other costs of the occupation of Iraq.



In trying to standardize and codify land tenure practices, the British made the mistake of relying on recent Ottoman practice – itself out of character with most of Iraq's history – and simplifying it further. The British actions strengthened selected shaikhs' positions as landlords, leading to increased cleavages in their relationships with their tribesmen. When selecting paramount shaikhs and granting land, in many cases the British sought to reward those who sided with the British in World War I and punish those who sided with the Turks. The resulting oppressive situation helped motivate the 1920 Revolt, which was directed not only against the British, but also against shaikhs and *sarkals* (the *sarkal* was the tenant or foreman in charge of organizing farming operations; he worked for the *mallak*, or landlord, who had the right to demand *mallakiyah*, or rent)⁵⁸ who had exploited the situation for their personal benefit.⁵⁹

British-designated shaikhs comprised 34 of the 99 members of the new legislature, and sided with landlords' interests over those of other parties. A 1933 law prohibited an indebted cultivator from leaving his land, eroding the distinction between tenant and serf and marking a sharp contrast to cultivators' former status as proud tribesmen. Leaving the land and tribe was now the only escape for many tribesmen, and thus began a rural migration to the cities.⁶⁰ This prompted a disrupted social order in the countryside, and the emergence of slums, unemployment, and unrest in the cities. Urban migration increased dramatically in the 1950s, setting the stage for the leftist revolution of 1958.

The British were dealing from a position of mistrust and hostility. Iraqi elites, and subsequently the shaikhs, viewed the Mandate terms as thinly veiled colonialism. The Arab peoples of the region had expected independence, and were disappointed when realities on the ground diverged substantially from what they had been led to believe. The McMahon – Hussein correspondence, Wilson's 12th point, and the 18 November 1918 British-French joint declaration shaped Arab expectations. Significantly, British General Sir Stanley Maude promised self-determination for Arabs upon entering Baghdad in March 1917.⁶¹

The British had promised the Arabs independence after the war, in exchange for their participation in the Arab revolt against the Ottoman Turks (a promise they also made to the Kurds), and then proceeded to rule Iraq under a thinly veiled League of Nations Mandate. The British snubbed Prince Faisal at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, where he expected to join in the planning for independent Arab lands. The straight lines drawn by the French and British for the borders of Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Kuwait, Arabia, Lebanon, and Palestine at the San Remo conference bore no resemblance to the region's religious, tribal, cultural, and trading realities. Tribes were split, and rival tribes were grouped together, while trading relationships, such as between Basra and Kuwait, were severed.



Historian Toby Dodge argues that the British failure to successfully transition Iraq to a viable sovereign state can be attributed to five factors. First, British prejudices caused them to misunderstand the nature of Iraq's Ottoman legacy. The British romanticized rural tribal leaders and vilified the educated, town-dwelling elites left over from Ottoman rule. While disenfranchised by the British, these elites formed the core of Iraqi political movements from independence onwards. Second, and for related reasons, the British exaggerated urban-rural divisions in Iraqi society, and thought the urban populations were unjustly exploiting the rural populations. Third, the British misunderstood the role of the shaiikh in rural society, imposing new and unfamiliar authoritative responsibilities on the shaiikhs instead of building up government institutions. Fourth, the British made the mistake of implementing European-style land tenure, which disrupted traditional relationships among shaiikhs, tribesmen, foremen, and landlords, and backfired when the shaiikhs proved inadequate in their new roles. Fifth, the British use of "air policing" reinforced Iraqi perceptions of British despotism and undermined British effectiveness in influencing the culture.⁶²

How the British Viewed Iraq

British perceptions of the Ottoman Empire influenced how they interacted with Iraqi society and their reform of Iraqi government structures.⁶³ In the British worldview, the Ottoman Empire constituted a type of Oriental despotism: stagnant and inherently corrupt, violent, and superstitious.⁶⁴ Nowhere was the Ottoman influence more pervasive than in the cities, which the British saw as populated mostly by *effendis*⁶⁵, who were viewed as Ottoman remnants who could only hold back progress. Consequently, The British saw country-dwellers as "true" Iraqis, untainted by corrupting urban influences.

In addition to cultural biases, the British suffered from a profound lack of empirical data on Iraq.⁶⁶ None of the four British High Commissioners conducted a detailed examination of the three Ottoman governorates that constituted the new Iraq. Financial constraints contributed to this problem, as did the Indian General Staff's failure in 1914 to collate and distribute what information it had the area.

Some historians argue that the British, as a legacy of the war, also held a negative stereotype of "the Turk." The British romanticized the Arab revolt and saw the Arab tribes as potential allies and worthy of tutelage leading to a state of their own. As a result, the British consciously and subconsciously separated Iraqi society into pure Arab and Turkish influenced Arab categories. In the British mind, the pure Arabs were the more worthy citizens of an emerging liberal Iraqi state, and were to be championed. The British decided that the building blocks of rural organization were the tribal shaiikhs. Urban influences threatened to derail British plans for Iraq and introduce a new form of despotism, so the tribes and



rural society, less touched by Ottoman influence, were to be reinvigorated and become a bulwark against a centralizing state.⁶⁷

If the tribal shaikhs were to be society's building blocks, their roles would have to be defined. In a case of mirror imaging, the British drew a parallel between the Iraqi shaikhs and the feudal landlords in English history.⁶⁸ In reality, the shaikhs lacked the authority and control over their constituencies that landlords would be expected to have, and instead had a nebulous relationship with their tribal members. The British imposed a landlord-subject relationship more familiar to England than Iraq, and resorted to violence to enforce these arrangements. The Ottoman administration focused in the cities was seen as oppressive and corrupt, while rural Iraqi society was viewed as oppressed and immature, but traditional and virtuous. For their part, the shaikhs had centuries of experience calculating self-interest and manipulating, resisting, and accommodating foreign imperial powers. The tribal leaders could sense opportunity in the British unfamiliarity with Iraqi landscape.

The British saw the need to delineate and impose roles and relationships on Iraqi social groupings in part because the British felt that Ottoman governance had failed the Arab population in every respect.⁶⁹ According to officers such as Stephen Longrigg, Ottoman rule in Iraq had been static and stagnant for 400 years. Longrigg, who arrived in Iraq early in World War I and left in 1931, wrote an account of Ottoman influence in Iraq while he was a political officer stationed in Hilla.⁷⁰ This publication, influential and widely cited by British administrators in Iraq, argued that the Ottomans failed to deliver liberty, progress, or rights to the population. Longrigg and many of his contemporaries saw the Ottoman regime in Iraq purely in terms of Oriental despotism..⁷¹

The British discounted the presence of local Ottoman governing elites and saw no lessons to be learned from them. The British viewed these elites, or *effendis*, as a parasitic middle class, eager to adopt modern culture, both Western and Turkish, and consequently detached from society. Neither landlords, merchants, nor religious figures, the *effendis* were viewed as corrupt and devoid of any spirit of public service.

According to contemporary historians who have researched Ottoman archives in Istanbul, Ottoman rule in Iraq was not static but, in fact, dynamic and flexible, adapting and changing according to local conditions.⁷² Ottoman initiatives directed from Istanbul "were both reactive, attempting to counter or meet local events, and proactive, attempting to integrate Iraq fully into the governing structures and economy of the Empire while increasing its security and productivity."⁷³



The 1920 Tribal Revolt

The seemingly spontaneous revolt of predominantly Shia tribes in the Middle Euphrates region in the summer of 1920 quickly spread throughout much of the country. This revolt caught the British by surprise. While the British plans for Iraqi state formation were already underway, the revolt forced the British to hurriedly enact a solution that would provide the window dressing of supposed democratic institutions and pave the way for indirect British rule. The British solution, “an artificial and outmoded system that was barely capable of holding primordial sentiments in check,” lacked adequate foundations and had to be maintained through force for thirty-seven years.⁷⁴

It took approximately four divisions, of which 90% of the troops were Indian, six months of hard fighting to stamp out the nationwide revolt. This was the largest British-led military campaign of the interwar period. The 1920 Revolt took place against a turbulent background - the British had put down a number of tribal rebellions in Kurdistan in 1919.⁷⁵ The 1920 Revolt spread from one section of Iraq to another like wildfire. Tribes and city-dwellers quickly acted on information that the British were indecisive or under siege, even if the location of British misfortune was some distance away. Conversely, a decisive British victory in one area could lead to a negotiated settlement nearby. For example, following the British rout of tribesmen at Kufa in October 1920, insurgent representatives in Karbala surrendered and traveled to Baghdad, where they agreed to pay fines of rifles and ammunition.⁷⁶

As the revolt spread, a select few British political officers were successful in negotiating agreements with the tribes to stand down. For example, the political officer in the Hay River area reached an agreement with the Muntafiq confederation in which the Muntafiqs would secure the Tigris and keep two adjacent tribes in line.⁷⁷ A similar agreement was reached with the Shattri tribe in the region between the Muntafiqs and the Diwaniya Division. In addition, in the Middle Euphrates region, two tribes agreed to neutrality in exchange for the return of lands the Turks had transferred to tribal rivals, who were now rebels. Having something to offer the tribes was critical to reaching accommodation, and where the political officers had already used up their credit and influence, the British had to resort to military force.⁷⁸ Lieutenant General Sir Aylmer Haldane, commander in chief of the British forces in Iraq during the 1920 Revolt, found a powerful source of leverage against the tribes in control of irrigation canals that watered tribal lands. Tribes who did not submit to British rule, risked having their canal heads and pumps seized or destroyed by British forces, resulting in considerable loss of crops and revenue.



During the revolt, the tribes focused their attacks on the most visible symbols of the British presence: railways, revenue offices, and telegraphs.⁷⁹ The tribes found a powerful British weak point in the railways, which were primary lines of communications for the British. As was the case in the April 2004 uprising in Iraq, the severing of lines of communication between Basra and Baghdad caused the occupying power much grief. The British depended on the railway system to sustain their advances; columns were incapable of carrying enough water and other supplies. To defend the railways, Haldane fell back on the Boer War tactic of building blockhouses within rifle range of one another and manning them with troops⁸⁰. In their final offensive that would put down the rebellion, Brigadier Coningham would assemble a column in diamond formation around six trains carrying laborers, engineers, and 60,000 gallons of drinking water. This column, four miles long and three miles wide, moved northward from Nasiriya in October, rebuilding the railway and defeating tribal positions as it went. At Samawa on 13 October, a combined arms assault involving bombing and strafing by four RAF aircraft defeated a force of 3,000 tribesmen entrenched in a line across the railway.⁸¹

This “striking success” prompted surrenders elsewhere. Four days later, the provisional government in Najaf surrendered. In the final phase of putting down the revolt, the British concentrated on punitive operations, burning villages and holding livestock hostage when they encountered resistance. The now reinforced RAF was heavily involved in punitive strikes, bombing rebel tribal camps and villages, often in combined operations with infantry columns. The British directed night bombing during full moon periods towards the tribes south of Diwaniya that were less inclined to surrender and pay fines.⁸²

To put down the revolt decisively, the British sought to disarm the tribes, but lacked the resources to do so. Under Sir Percy Cox, the new Civil Commissioner who replaced A.T. Wilson in October, the approach taken was to disarm those tribes that had taken part in the rebellion. Full disarmament would be the responsibility of a subsequent Arab government. Cox’s plan notably excluded most of the Muntafiq and Kurdish tribes.⁸³ Disarmament took the form of fines payable in rifles and ammunition, which as many as 12 separate columns, backed up by the RAF, set out across Iraq to collect. Unfortunately, disarming the tribes was a futile effort in the end. Disarming one tribe and not its rivals would result in the disarmed tribe being attacked and forced off its lands, leading to considerable disruption in rural areas as well as other long term effects. In addition, the tribes easily replaced weapons that were seized by the British. LTG Haldane recognized this himself when, having returned to London in 1921 he wrote:

The punishment which had been inflicted on the insurgent tribes had consisted mainly of fines in rifles and ammunition, for except



sheep and cattle they possessed little more of value. But even the imposition of such fines was unsatisfactory..., the day of disarmament by force in Mesopotamia had departed when the mass of troops left after the Armistice. As I write these words nearly a year after the insurrection was at its height, and am aware that those whom we deprived last year of their most valued possession have already not only rearmed themselves but acquired weapons of more modern type than those they handed in, I perceive the vanity of what we undertook, necessary and unavoidable as it was.⁸⁴

The British suffered 426 men killed, 1,228 wounded, and 615 missing. They estimated that 8,450 insurgents had been killed. The steady influx of troops into Iraq proved decisive, with 4,883 British and 24,508 Indian troops having reached Iraq by the revolt's end.⁸⁵

Causes of the 1920 Tribal Revolt

Historians today still disagree over the revolt's causes. The British also disagreed on what was behind the revolt, but they generally discounted the role of nationalism. A.T. Wilson, the senior British official in Iraq in 1920, saw "a chaotic insurrection by anarchist tribes incited by Hashemite agents."⁸⁶ Underlying this assessment was the British reluctance to see the tribes as capable of political motivation or organized corporate action. The British saw the tribes as outside politics, and did not acknowledge the *modus vivendi* that regulated interaction between the tribal world and the cities.

Other interpretations emphasize to varying degrees the indigenous motivations for the revolt. The tribal groups, predominantly Shia tribes in the south of Iraq between the two rivers, were opposed to heavy taxes, foreign rule, and Sunni domination. One scholar argues that nationalism is exaggerated as a motivation. Rather, he writes, the revolt was simply a form of political jockeying by middle-ranking Shia chieftains (as opposed to shaikhs) of the Middle Euphrates, who were motivated solely by self-interest and who rejected British attempts to integrate their territory into the rest of Iraq.⁸⁷

Shia religious leaders played a major role in calling most of the tribes to arms. This was not necessarily a jihad against the Sunnis, but possibly reflected Shia anxiety about political developments in other Arab countries and possible Christian rule.⁸⁸ The Shia ulama called for revolt in the name of Arab self-determination and Iraqi independence.⁸⁹ Additionally, secret political societies, both Sunni and Shia, among elites in the cities played a role.⁹⁰ As a result, the conditions for turmoil were in place.



The main secret society opposed to British rule was the Ahd al-Iraqi, a group of former Turkish Army officers advocating rule by Amir Faisal, son of Sharif Hussein of Mecca.⁹¹ A delegation of Arab notables met with A.T. Wilson on June 2, 1920 to learn what the Mandate meant, Wilson, lacking direction from his superiors, stonewalled, with results the British did not predict:

Meeting such a brick wall, the Iraqi nationalists took matters into their own hands. What now developed was a rapprochement between the Sunni and Shiite clergy, Islam politicized against Western dominance. Accustomed as they were to treating tribesmen as simple brigands, the British missed the extent to which the tribes could understand wider political movements and, in their own fashion, participate in politics.⁹²

A contemporary historian describes the revolt as a national reaction to the political and socio-economic dislocations experienced by tribally organized rural Iraqis during the social changes of the previous forty years. The dislocations emerged through the direct and indirect encroachment of the West, and the British occupation brought tribal grievances to a head. Local grievances were put into the context of an emerging national consciousness by political developments in Egypt, Syria, and Hijaz. New newspapers reflected elite opinion on issues such as the French actions in Syria and Iraqi displeasure at Britain's distancing itself from promises made in the Arab Revolt. In this historian's view, the 1920 Revolt marked the debut of modern Iraqi nationalism.⁹³ Many of these dislocations had their roots in Midhat Pasha's land and education reforms. By declaring all land to be state owned and that rights could only be acquired through title deeds from the government, Midhat had introduced a system in direct conflict with tribal notions of land ownership. The result was to replace collective tribal land ownership with large-scale private property and a new class of landlords, many of whom were tribal shaikhs.

In a failure of insight, the British consistently discounted nationalism as a motivation. Throughout the revolt, generals and officers never doubted that the source of their troubles lay outside Iraq.⁹⁴ Assessing the uprising in Samawa, Haldane and Wilson blamed "Bolsheviks," while Winston Churchill dismissed similar events at Rumaitha as "purely local in character...probably the outcome of religious agitation."⁹⁵ Haldane stated, "I am convinced that the rising is anarchical and religious though initiated on political basis, and peace can come only by the sword."⁹⁶ Gertrude Bell, another key administrator in Iraq, had a more nuanced understanding of the revolt's causes:

The end in view was an Islamic Government, but apart from the wave of nationalist feeling, which was a world-wide consequence of the war and should not be discounted, it made a different appeal to



different sections of the community. To the Shia mujtahids it meant a theocratic state under Sharia law, and to this end they did not hesitate to preach Jihad; to the Sunnis and free-thinkers of Baghdad it was an independent Arab State under Amir Abdullah; to the tribes it meant no government at all.⁹⁷

Observations from the 1920 Tribal Revolt

At the strategic level, the revolt clearly demonstrated to the British that Iraq could not be held as a dependent state. The only alternative was to abide by the terms of the mandate and hope that rule by Arabs amenable to Britain would succeed.⁹⁸ The 1920 Revolt both facilitated the transfer of power to Faisal and the Sharifans, and weakened these groups at the same time. The transfer of power to Faisal continued the Ottoman policy of allowing Sunni dominance.

Historian Mark Jacobsen summarizes the revolt's lessons at the tactical and operational levels:

1. Avoid defeat. Per C.E. Callwell's admonitions, Haldane's actions were governed by caution and determination to avoid defeats, which were likely to spread the rebellion.
2. Seize the initiative. Callwell's principles also guided Brigadier Coningham's tactical emphasis on seizing the moral initiative, as in the attack on defended positions at Samawa.
3. Cavalry forces remained effective as late as 1920. Equipped with light automatic weapons, the cavalry demonstrated unprecedented combined speed and firepower.
4. Armored cars performed well due to their ability to carry large quantities of ammunition, but their success was qualified by vulnerability to breakdown and ambush.
5. The RAF's contribution was modest. RAF successes were limited to reconnaissance and rudimentary close air support, and it was clear that airpower alone was no substitute for ground forces.
6. The Indian Army could be put to only limited use as an imperial force, especially in Muslim lands.⁹⁹



British Policy During the Post-WW I Mandate Period

The British views of Ottoman rule in Iraq, shaped by their cultural prejudices, prevented them from deriving lessons for their own policies.¹⁰⁰ The British believed that Ottoman policies sought to fracture Iraqi society by dividing and weakening tribal structures. The British saw Iraq's population as largely tribal, but divided into competing interests at the hands of Ottoman rule. As noted earlier, as a result of their view of the Ottoman Empire, the British believed that the Iraqi state they were building needed a rural counterbalance to the corrupting influence that urban elites were sure to wield. Projecting notions from their own history onto Iraq, the British decided that tribal shaikhs – playing the role of rural aristocracy – would provide the necessary check on the state.¹⁰¹ One contemporary historian calls the British conception of Iraq “an unsustainable dichotomy between town dwellers and rural society built on a misrepresentation of both.”¹⁰²

In India and other territories, the British demonstrated a systematic and ordered approach to colonialism, relying heavily on mapping and census taking. This approach was absent in Iraq, owing to factors such as a lack of resources, the Indian General Staff's failure to collate and distribute what information it had, and the fact that retreating Ottoman officials took with them as many records as they could.¹⁰³ As a result, British colonial officials charged with creating an Iraqi state did not have much reliable empirical data to work with.

To get a sense of Iraq's social landscape, the British constructed elaborate tribal lists, which detailed each tribe's origins, history, splits, claimed geographic area, and historic agricultural output.¹⁰⁴ The only individuals named in the lists were the key shaikhs in each tribe. The lists emphasized the tribes' “purity,” based on their lineages and number of splits, and gauged the character of each tribe based on the character of its leaders.¹⁰⁵ Colonial officials divided shaikhs into the categories of “nominal” and “recognized,” according to their presumed level of social authority.¹⁰⁶ In reality, the tribe was just one organizing principle of Iraq's “complex and ambiguous social, political, religious and cultural reality.”¹⁰⁷

Not all rural groups or individuals fit into the category of tribe, and the very definition of tribe was based on what the British thought it should look like. The British, exemplified by colonial officials such as Sir John B. Glubb, romanticized tribes and tribal leaders as noble, simple, and strong of character.¹⁰⁸ When tribal organizations broke down, their members became lesser beings. The British saw environments of solidarity and cooperation inside the tribes amid a Hobbesian external environment devoid of order. For the British, the tribe and not the individual was the unit of analysis with which to interpret Iraqi society. The shaikhs were central, and those below or not connected to them were not acknowledged as targets of policy.¹⁰⁹ The British viewed the tribes as inherently



democratic, with leaders emerging based on strength of personality and natural intelligence. By imposing their policy through the authority of the shaikhs, the British inadvertently, but radically changed Iraqi society.¹¹⁰

The Case of the Muntafiq Tribe

The British experienced protracted instability in the region of southern Iraq between the Tigris and Euphrates – an area historically dominated by the Muntafiq tribe and the Sadoun family to whom they owed their allegiance. The Mamluks, Ottomans, and British all had to contend with the Muntafiq tribe, and each power chose a different approach. The British blamed the problems on the Ottomans' approach prior to the British arrival. The British contended that the Ottomans deliberately fragmented longstanding tribal structures that had preserved order by introducing city-based landlords into the rural status quo.¹¹¹ Contemporary historians looking at both British and Ottoman archives have judged that the Ottomans were comparatively more deft and successful in their approach to dealing with this contentious situation.¹¹²

Engaging the Shaikhs: British Successes, Failures, and Lessons

There are many successes, failures and lessons that can be observed by examining how the British engaged tribal shaikhs in Iraq. Convincing the shaikhs that the British were the dominant force (or superior tribe) had a powerful effect, according to the British. Subsidies and land grants bought loyalty. For example, many large landholding shaikhs declined to join, and actively countered, the 1920 Revolt. Land was a key lever, and the power to collect taxes was an inducement, but only to the extent that this authority was sustainable (for some shaikhs, it was over this issue that their shallow foundations for authority became apparent). Controlling water (irrigation canals), the economic lifeline of the shaikhs' constituencies, was a powerful lever as well. It may be useful to examine the tribal landscape for modern parallels to the irrigation canals of the Mandate period. Development funds immediately come to mind, but there are certainly others. The key lies in putting into the shaikhs' hands the ability to improve their peoples' livelihoods, and thereby the shaikhs' own status.

To a certain extent, the British were successful in their use of force against the tribes. The 1920 Revolt collapsed when British decisiveness in countering it became apparent. The British successfully conveyed that they were the superior force, or the superior tribe, and that they would not be deterred easily. Punitive assaults, both by infantry column and with air strikes, on the villages of shaikhs judged uncooperative brought about short-term cooperation and long-term enmity. Enabled largely by airpower, the British were able to stay in Iraq – with minimal resources – through its independence in 1932 and beyond.



The British proved inept at the information and intelligence aspects of counter insurgency. The 1920 Revolt caught them largely by surprise. This revolt had been in the works for a significant period of time, with planning and communication among Sunni and Shia tribesmen across the territory and across sectarian lines. Urban nationalist elites played a role as well, forming secret societies that crisscrossed the country. The British misjudged tribal grievances, particularly the degree to which the British presence offended the tribesmen's sense of honor. The British thought that they were the tribesmen's best advocates – standing up for their interests against those of the town-dwelling elites – and this blinded the British to the tribesmen's genuine feelings.

The British also allowed success at the micro level to obscure and prevent success for the Iraqi state as a whole. By romanticizing the tribes and discounting the Ottoman-educated elites in the cities, the British overestimated Iraq's urban-rural divide, and the resulting British policies undercut national development. British success in using force can be narrowly defined as allowing the British to stay in Iraq with very limited financial resources and low numbers of imperial troops. Beyond that, the British use of airpower as a tool of collective punishment caused the Iraqi countryside to hate both the British and the fledgling Iraqi government, retarding the development of civil society and institutions of government. The resulting instability set the stage for the next British invasion of Iraq in 1941.

British interaction with the shaikhs can be observed in four categories: political participation, legal structure, land tenure and revenue, and the enforcement of order. In the political sphere, the British found that international pressure, the Mandate's terms, and domestic financial and public opinion pressures converged to force the British to rapidly build state institutions and transfer power to Iraqis. A significant tension developed between British officials and urban Iraqi politicians over whether to politically enfranchise shaikhs and tribesmen. The British wanted to only involve the shaikhs and top tribal leaders in the new legislature, effectively denying a direct voice to individuals not in those categories. The British felt that the tribal system worked, and that urban Iraqi government influence could only have a corrupting effect. To ensure the shaikhs' continued role, the British oversaw the creation of a weak legislature that had some seats reserved for shaikhs. Having both a weak legislature and monarchy paved the way for enduring British influence over Iraqi affairs.

On the legal front, the status and authority granted to the shaikhs was codified in a separate legal code for what were considered rural tribal areas. This new code was called the Tribal Civil and Criminal Disputes Regulation (TCCDR), and was based on a similar code enacted in India. To impose the new code, the British counteracted existing civil law institutions such as the rural Municipal Councils established by the Ottomans.¹¹³ In contrast, city dwellers were governed by a



civil code with roots in Ottoman law, thus creating a dual polity. The TCCDR shaped tribal hierarchies and units, imposing a new and unfamiliar role for the shaikhs as powerful arbiters of rural life, with the power to resolve all disputes within the tribe, and the responsibility to collect taxes on behalf of the government.¹¹⁴ Disputes were to be resolved, and criminal behavior sanctioned, according to historical tribal custom as applied by the shaikhs. Tribal custom, however, was not codified and remained open to interpretation. The TCCDR also called for collective punishment should the shaikhs fail in their responsibilities.¹¹⁵ The laws had the effect of putting the majority of Iraq's rural population under the shaikhs' judicial authority.

Urban Iraqis, and some British officials, argued that to divide Iraqi society into two groups subjected to two different legal codes would be regressive and dangerous. Nationalist Iraqi newspapers protested that for the Iraqi people not to be equal under the law would be an obstacle to Iraq becoming a progressive and modern state.¹¹⁶ The TCCDR's critics further noted that the law had increased crime because it did not deter murder – instead merely requiring small fines to be paid – and put too much power in the hands of tribal administrators. The law's critics, prominently British and Iraqi lawyers, were not successful and the law remained in force.

In the area of land tenure and revenue, the British imposed their own view of how Iraqi land ownership and agriculture should be organized. Faced with declining revenues with which to fund their Iraq presence, the British needed to raise tax revenues by first improving agricultural productivity. As a legacy from Ottoman times, land policies and laws were not consistent, and land disputes were endemic. The British had two competing visions for how rural society should work. The first vision, which in the end prevailed, emphasized central roles for shaikhs, allocating land to their tribesmen and collecting taxes. The second vision called for the system to be organized around *sarkals* (foremen, or organizers of agricultural labor), *mallaks* (landlords), and *fallahs* (tenant farmers). Neither vision would have fit perfectly, because the landlord/foreman/tenant and shaikh/tribesman relationships overlapped, and – most importantly – roles and relationships varied across the territory based according to geographical, economic, and historical differences.¹¹⁷ The resulting policy was to grant land, in some cases seized from non-tribal landlords or minor shaikhs, to designated shaikhs and make them responsible for allocating it to tribal farmers, ensuring productivity, and collecting taxes.

The British land policies enacted during the 1920s had far reaching effects. Enfranchising townsmen with landholdings in exchange for loyalty cemented power relationships and led to increased numbers of peasants in debt, falling productivity, and tax collection shortfalls.¹¹⁸ Land grant policies degraded agriculture. "Natural conditions...would have taxed sound agricultural institutions,



but the shaikhly system was intrinsically unsuited for such an environment.”¹¹⁹ British land policies exacerbated an already inefficient tribal system of agriculture: “Endemic, then, in the shaikhly system was the state of thriftlessness, the limited ability to reinvest in agriculture, the concern for immediate returns, the resistance to innovations, the wasteful methods of cultivation, and the general impoverishment of the land.”¹²⁰

However, by supporting the tribal chiefs, the British sought to counter-balance both King Faisal and his associates, and the cities, which the British saw as centers of opposition to their rule.¹²¹ As Hanna Batatu comments, in many cases the British secured the shaikhs’ loyalty, however shallow:

...the pliancy of the tribal chiefs to British policies...were often at bottom no more than bids for the support of their private ambitions in land...The big Tigris shaikhs of Kut and Amara stood aloof from the 1920 uprising; backed the British Mandate; voted for the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930; were apathetic to the military movement of 1941 because the British government confirmed them in their large landholdings, granted them special privileges in the matter of land taxes, and assured them a virtual autonomy over their peasant tribesmen.¹²²

The effects of British manipulations were long lasting. These tribes continued to support the monarchy in the 1940s and 1950s, and opposed the upheavals of 1948 and 1958.¹²³

Putting the shaikhs at the heart of the new system, in addition to disrupting many existing arrangements, had the effect of quantifying and institutionalizing what had been a nebulous relationship between shaikh and tribe, and gave unprecedented amounts of power to the shaikhs.¹²⁴ This was done at the expense of individual cultivators, who neither had security of land tenure, nor a direct relationship with their government. As predicted by British officers who opposed the shaikh-centered plan, growth in tribal strength was linked to weak government. The imposition across Iraq of rigidly defined categories of rural actor set the stage for instability, which the British later addressed through the use of force. Issues such as failure to pay or collect taxes were punished through aerial bombing.

It was in the area of law and order that the British experience offers the most cautionary lessons. From 1914 to 1932, the British were never able to transition from “wholesale” to “retail” politics in rural Iraq.¹²⁵ With the shaikhs as intermediaries, the British dealt with the population collectively and not individually in the imposition of order. The British dictated terms to the shaikhs, and when the British judged that the tribal populations had not met these terms,



villages were collectively punished, frequently by aerial bombardment – also called “government by aircraft.” Winston Churchill conceived the central role of the Royal Air Force in maintaining order in Iraq as a way to continue the British presence, while, at the same time, reducing costs and reducing troop levels in an effort to mollify domestic opposition in Britain. A key reason for this was the fact that the British defense budget was cut in half each year from 1919 to 1923.¹²⁶

Throughout the Hashemite period, Iraqi politicians and elites built on changes made by the British in ways that heightened social divisions. On one level, the political system was characterized by tensions between the Sunni elites and the Kurds and Shia. On another level, a growing divide emerged between the conservative Sunni elites and tribal landowners on one side and the nationalist *effendiyya*, the Westernized middle stratum that arose as a result of Ottoman educational reforms, on the other.¹²⁷ These divisions had the effect of marginalizing the relatively progressive *effendiyya*, whose energies and talents could have been channeled towards social and economic development.

This came about as officials of the new Iraqi government sought to counteract a) the centrifugal forces represented by the Shia and Kurdish communities, and b) the Sunni, Shia, and Kurdish tribes’ desire to preserve their autonomy.¹²⁸ Land grants integrated the tribal leaders into the Iraqi state and made them clients of Baghdad politicians. Tribal leaders became conservative social forces as a result, with vested interests in preserving the new sociopolitical status quo. Sunni and Shia tribal leaders joined elite politicians, such as King Faisal’s associates, in exploiting their status to acquire landholdings. From the government’s perspective, the increased landholdings of Shia tribal leaders reduced the Shia tribal threat by neutralizing their traditional leadership.¹²⁹

As a result, the political elite could now call on the tribes to help maintain the status quo. In the winter of 1948, riots against a recent treaty with the British shook Baghdad, and politicians encouraged Shia tribal leaders to threaten to bring their tribes into Baghdad to restore order.¹³⁰ Marginalization of the *effendiyya* continued, and this group, along with the urban poor, became a force behind the leftist revolution of 1958. Historian Michael Eppel writes:

The intensification of the socio-economic gaps within Iraq, the weakened support of the tribal land-owners due to alienation between them and their tribesmen who had become serfs and laborers, and the reinforcement of radical social trends among the *effendiyya* and the urban poor all weakened the elite and prepared the ground for a military coup d’etat and a socio-political revolution led by Qasim in 1958.¹³¹



Examples of British Influence on the Tribes

The British used many techniques to engage with and influence the Iraqi tribes, with varying degrees of success.

Land Grants. The British recognized and subsidized designated tribal leaders by granting land and the authority to collect taxes. Land proved to be a key lever for the British; it is notable that shaikhs granted significant landholdings failed to join the July 1920 Revolt.¹³²

Legal Authority. The status and authority granted to the shaikhs was codified in a separate legal code for what were considered rural tribal areas. This new code was called the Tribal Civil and Criminal Disputes Regulation (TCCDR), and was based on a similar code developed for India. To impose the new code, the British abolished Ottoman-era elected municipal councils.¹³³ In contrast, cities were governed by a civil code with roots in Ottoman law. The TCCDR shaped tribal hierarchies and units, imposing a new and unfamiliar role for the shaikhs as powerful arbiters of rural life, with the power to resolve all disputes within the tribe, and the responsibility to collect taxes on behalf of the government.¹³⁴

Indirect Confrontation. Short of punitive actions, the British followed Ottoman traditions by playing tribal leaders of against one another, often by reallocating landholdings. The degree to which the tribes were armed made it necessary for British and Hashemite leaders to play them off against each other rather than confront them directly. King Faisal complained in a March 1933 memorandum that “in this kingdom there are more than 100,000 rifles, whereas the government has only 15,000.”¹³⁵

Status and Prestige. The British conferred status and prestige on tribal shaikhs in several ways. One way was by formalizing and enforcing their role as rural leaders. Another was by dealing with them directly, bypassing other rural notables such as the *sarkals*. Shaikhs were authorized to collect a *mashaikha*, or tax, of 10 to 12.5 percent of the crops produced in their areas.¹³⁶ Some shaikhs indicated that they valued the prestige the arrangement with the British granted them - a role and status in Iraqi society they had not experienced in Ottoman times or earlier - more than the financial incentives.¹³⁷ In contrast, many shaikhs resented British intrusions on their traditional autonomy.

Coercion By Force. The British staged punitive assaults, both by infantry column and with air strikes, on the villages of shaikhs judged uncooperative.

Shaikhs' attitudes toward the British depended on factors such as intertribal relations, especially over land ownership rights; taxation and water rights issues; and the nature of their personal interactions with British officers.¹³⁸ Government



recognition clarified and strengthened shaikhs' positions, bringing responsibility, reward, and prestige.¹³⁹ Under threat of state intervention, rivals would have to submit to the authority of the designated shaikhs, and could only gain status and recognition themselves if they did this. Reward came in the form of monthly subsidies, the authority to regulate the movements of Bedouins, and the right to collect taxes.

Short of force, demonstrations of British strength could be effective. Since most influential Iraqis resented the Mandate, the British decided to put the terms of the Mandate into a treaty to be signed by Britain and Iraq. Many similar treaties would follow during and after the Mandate period. The first treaty, signed in October 1922, was to give the appearance of a normal relationship between sovereign states. King Faisal encouraged political party leaders in their opposition to this treaty, putting himself into direct confrontation with the British. At this moment, the king developed appendicitis, and Cox seized the opportunity to impose direct rule, suppressing opposition parties and newspapers, and ordering the bombing of rebellious tribes. The result was striking. For Faisal and the political leaders, "...there could be no clearer expression of British determination to see the treaty and their plans for the Iraqi state carried through."¹⁴⁰ When Faisal returned to the throne in September 1922, he reinstated the prime minister and affirmed his support for the treaty.

Observations from British Experiences with the Tribes

The British experienced some success in dealing with the shaikhs, but this was outweighed by the resulting failure to develop state institutions and civil society. British officials' engagement with the shaikhs provides a lesson in unintended consequences. With power concentrated in the hands of the shaikhs, the state was too weak to deal directly with rural individuals.¹⁴¹

Of the many problems the British faced – cultural biases, dissent on the home front, a contentious and fragmented society, hostile neighbors, etc. – one of the largest was lack of resources. Not having enough funds drastically limited policy options and forced the British into situations there was no recovery from, such as collective punishment through aerial bombing.

The British worried about the effects of state building on their idealized tribal order. They wanted to bypass urban-based government institutions, not wanting intermediaries between the central government and the tribes. This lies in stark contrast to Coalition-led state building efforts, which have been top-down in nature and have been criticized for neglecting grassroots civil society. The British and their Iraqi proxies, in ruling through what they saw as indigenous institutions, changed them by replacing nebulous relationships with rigidly defined ones: the



shaikh became an authority figure with power and control over his people that he had not possessed under the later Ottoman Empire.¹⁴²

These newly imposed roles and relationships were not sustainable. Individuals and groups were left out, and many tribal members rejected shaikhs' authority. Tribal groupings without clearly defined leaders were seen as objects of mistrust and sources of instability. The British replaced shaikhs when they became troublesome, or "de-recognized" their tribes and distributed their lands to others.¹⁴³

Land grants replaced subsidies in buying the support of tribal leaders as the Iraqi state became more established and financial constraints increased.¹⁴⁴ Shaikhs adapted by manipulating British concerns to extract maximum benefit, making representations of their authority that later proved hollow. This occurred after the 1920 Revolt when some shaikhs were unable to collect taxes or deliver on rifle levies as they had promised. In general, the British found to their dismay that shaikhs' authority had shallow foundations. Still, when shaikhs' positions weakened, as when they were unable to collect taxes from *sarkals*, senior British officials did not want the police or other government agents to step in as enforcers, fearing that the shaikhs' authority would be irrevocably undercut.¹⁴⁵ Urban Iraqi politicians opposed this, and increasingly attacked the British policy of paying subsidies to shaikhs. This clash in perspectives stemmed from the British officials' collectivist social vision that exaggerated the urban-rural divide.¹⁴⁶

An observation from the British period is that tribes can be enfranchised and drawn into the power structure. Mutual economic interests can shape tribal interests in the direction of stability and prosperity. The modern equivalent of land grants might be equity shares in Iraqi companies or payments tied to oil production metrics.

These events provide cautionary lessons as well. The present-day equivalents of the *effendiyya* are the educated and secular professional classes that have been devastated by the insurgents and sectarian militias. In formulating and executing tribal policies, it is important to be conscious that the tribes are among the most conservative social forces, and to avoid exacerbating social divisions.



Counter Insurgency in Oman: The Dhofar Rebellion, 1962-1975

Oman is an example of a successful counter insurgency campaign that required influencing Arab tribes. The Omani government and its British supporters integrated all aspects and principles of counter insurgency, used force appropriately and discriminately, addressed popular grievances, and won over the civilian population by putting forth and delivering on a legitimate political vision.

Background

The current ruling family of Oman, the Albu Said, established an independent dynasty in 1744.¹⁴⁷ Coastal Oman has a strong maritime heritage, with influence extending to East Africa and West Asia by late 17th and early 18th centuries.¹⁴⁸ Zanzibar was Oman's most prized overseas possession until the British forced Oman to abandon it.¹⁴⁹ Oman developed relations with the British in the 18th century, as British colonial imperialism expanded to the Middle East. Oman's sultans depended heavily on British advice, loans, and assistance, but never surrendered their independence.

The inhabitants of the interior of Oman's Dhofar Province, the *jebali* ("mountain people") tribesmen, are historically tied to southern Arabia and ethnically linked to the people of eastern Yemen, and speak a language distinct from modern Arabic.¹⁵⁰ Comprising 12% of Oman's population, Dhofaris are ethnically distinct from coastal Omanis, and follow the *Ibadhi* sect of Islam, which is distinct from *Sunni* Islam. The Ibadhis form the majority of Oman's population.¹⁵¹ The Dhofaris have historically been governed by temporal and spiritual leaders known as Imams, who have frequently been in conflict with coastal Oman's Sunni sultans. Sultan Said ibn Taymur's reign lasted from 1932 to 1970. The sultan's rule was erratic, despotic, and detached, exacerbating the longstanding social cleavage between the Sunni rulers in the coastal region of Muscat and the conservative Ibadhis of the interior.¹⁵² The sultan's autocratic rule provided no outlet for the Dhofaris' growing grievances.

The Insurgency

The Dhofar insurgency began in the early 1960s against a backdrop of internal conflict dating to the 18th century.¹⁵³ There had been major clashes between the regime and its coastal supporters and the people of the interior during the 1910s and 1950s. The insurgency began as a nationalist movement led by the Dhofar Liberation Front (DLF), but initially the leadership appeared more interested in secession from the sultanate.¹⁵⁴ The Dhofari population supporting the revolt wanted reform, economic opportunity, an end to discrimination, and autonomy,



but were not particularly motivated by Arab nationalism or the Marxist ideology that would come to dominate the movement.

The September 1968 DLF congress marked the movement's consolidation by a Marxist faction, which expanded the objective to include unification of all Arab emirates into a single socialist state.¹⁵⁵ The DLF was renamed the Popular Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arabian Gulf (PFLOAG).¹⁵⁶ In 1974, it would refocus its efforts on Oman and rename itself the Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman (PFLO), the name to be used henceforth in this study. At its peak in 1968-69, the insurgency fielded about 2,000 active fighters and 3,000 part time militia.¹⁵⁷ The Sultan's Armed Forces had deployed approximately 10,000 troops in Dhofar by 1974, and at peak the British had about 500 men in the country.¹⁵⁸

Backed by South Yemen (the PDRY) and other Marxist states, the PFLO adopted a strategy of Maoist protracted warfare. The success or failure of this multi-stage strategy is dependent on the variables presented in O'Neill's framework for the analysis of insurgency, namely popular support, organization and unity, external support, the environment, and government response.¹⁵⁹ The insurgents, known to government forces as the *adoo*, or enemy fighters, achieved early successes, and met with only an intermittent, military-focused response from the government of Sultan Said. Once an effective government response was launched, however, the PFLO made significant mistakes in each framework category.¹⁶⁰

In terms of popular support, the insurgents misidentified the center of gravity as the Omani government and military, relied on coercion to maintain insurgent and civilian loyalty, and attempted to replace the Dhofari tribesmen's Islamic faith with Marxist ideology. In a major misstep, the PFLO tried to indoctrinate Dhofar's traditionally inclined population with Marxist ideology and imposed harsh, centralized rule in their liberated areas, undercutting popular support.¹⁶¹ The movement's Marxist egalitarian ideology diverged from the Dhofaris' motivations for joining the movement, and far exceeded what the conservative Dhofari population would accept.

In terms of the organization and unity of the insurgency, the insurgents' failure to extend their parallel hierarchy beyond Dhofar meant that there was no nationwide structure for a protracted insurgency, creating a disconnect between a nationwide goal and a localized movement. In addition, poor vertical cohesion was evidenced by the gap between Marxist cadres and the tribally oriented rank and file, the defections of whom could not be stopped by brutal PFLO internal security squads.



External support was also critical to the PFLO and proved another key weakness because the movement depended on a weak supply line that government forces were able to substantially cut..

In terms of the physical environment, the PFLO operated in a mountainous area conducive to guerrilla warfare, but its isolation was an impediment to a nationwide strategy as was its reliance on tribal minorities.

Government Response

The British played a major role in the Oman counter insurgency effort from June 1965 to December 1975, but it was only during the latter half of this period that real progress was made, owing to a change in Oman's leadership.¹⁶² In July 1970, Sultan Said's Sandhurst-educated son, Sultan Qaboos, deposed his father in a bloodless palace coup supported by the British.¹⁶³ While many of the PFLO's weaknesses were self-inflicted, the decisive factor in turning the conflict around was Sultan Qaboos' energetic counter insurgency program.¹⁶⁴ This effort represented a successful mobilization of the population and the extension of government authority into Dhofar by way of "bringing modern economic planning and techniques (especially with respect to animal husbandry) to the jebal, building schools, increasing health care, strengthening local administration, and promising the jebalis greater participation in running their own affairs."¹⁶⁵ Supporting a "clear and hold" strategy, Civic Action Teams (CATs) moved into newly secured areas and established a government presence, conducted pacification activities such as drilling wells and operated government centers. The Omanization program gradually staffed military and administrative offices with Omanis.

These reforms enacted by Sultan Qaboos undercut the *jebali* population's support for the PFLO, and encouraged a wave of defections among its fighters and cadres.¹⁶⁶ The PFLO responded to government inroads with increased coercion in the areas it controlled, prompting even more defections.

The British were the counter insurgency campaign's architects, accepting overall military command responsibility and supplying field officers, engineers, pilots, and a Special Air Services (SAS) unit. Jordan, Iran, Abu Dhabi, and Saudi Arabia provided political, financial, and military support, with Iran supplying 3,000 troops.¹⁶⁷ The British-developed military strategy, which was never substantially altered, had three elements: to cut off the insurgents' supply lines from Yemen; conduct small search and destroy operations to secure the province for the sultan, while driving the enemy from east to west and out of the country; and to work out a pacification plan and longer term development program.¹⁶⁸



A gradual shift of the military initiative from the insurgents to the government, as well as a huge increase in the revenue from Oman's oil exports, between 1972 and 1974 facilitated shifting the emphasis of counter insurgent efforts to social and economic development.¹⁶⁹ The military aspects of the counter insurgency program stressed police and intelligence work, aggressive small-unit counter guerrilla tactics, barriers to cut off supply lines and sources of foreign support, and artillery and aerial bombardment of insurgent-held zones.¹⁷⁰ Government forces consolidated control of cleared areas through the use of *firqats*, or local militias. An estimated one half of the *firqats* consisted of PFLO defectors – these units were instrumental in attracting more defectors.¹⁷¹

British Army Training Teams (BATTs) trained and led the *firqats*. The British found that trying to overcome tribal feuds by putting men from different tribes into a single *firqat* did not work.¹⁷² Rather, the units needed to be organized along tribal lines. Under SAS leadership, they fought well alongside the Sultan's Armed Forces. While somewhat volatile and unpredictable, the *firqats'* reliability was enhanced when they were made responsible for the selection of the territory they would defend – most chose the area of their home villages.¹⁷³

Within a year of a pivotal 1972 defeat at Mirbat, where an SAS BATT and a force of *firqats* successfully defended their post against an assault of more than 200 *adoo*, the insurgency lost political and military initiative to the government side. By early 1976 the PFLO had lost control over most of its areas of operations, and its forces were bottled up against the western Oman border with the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY).¹⁷⁴ At this point, the government declared the war all but over. One scholar commented that in the final analysis, "The insurgents faced insurmountable odds with a charismatic sultan, oil income, civil action team development projects, the *firqat*, the multinational military force, and the lack of appeal to their cause."¹⁷⁵ Sultan Qaboos continues to preside over Oman's government, which remains, in effect, a patrimonial monarchy.

Observations

Bard O'Neill notes that the Omani experience demonstrates that government response is the most critical variable in determining the outcome of an insurgency.¹⁷⁶ This can be seen from the fact that Sultan Qaboos was only able to capitalize on the numerous insurgent weaknesses – e.g., geographical isolation, inappropriate Marxist values and structures, and vulnerable supply routes – when he "devised and implemented new and enlightened political, economic, and military policies" that exemplified the principles of counter insurgency.¹⁷⁷ The sultan's civil-military strategy recognized the population as the conflict's center of gravity.



In Iraq, the Omani case illustrates that ad hoc accommodations with the tribes will not work if they do not take place in the context of a grand political agreement that the Sunni communities perceive as equitable. The government of Sultan Qaboos put politics at the center of its response. All military and economic initiatives were subordinated to and congruent with a policy of reconciliation. The government's strategy aimed at rectifying popular grievances that the government accurately perceived to be legitimate.

The Omani case demonstrates the potential effectiveness of amnesty measures and using former insurgents to provide local security. In Oman, many such young men were absorbed into a well-structured amnesty program, consisting of amnesty, security, honor, and material benefits. They were given full pardons by the sultan, trained by the elite British SAS, and deployed in *firqat* units with centralized command and control.¹⁷⁸ These units defended their home areas against returning insurgents and were highly effective at intelligence gathering. The counter insurgents found that the most effective psychological operation in encouraging defections was word of mouth from previous defectors.¹⁷⁹ The amnesty lessons are applicable to western Iraq, where a primary security concern is how to employ large numbers of young men who are either idle or actively involved in insurgent activities.

Like the other case studies, the Oman example underscores the importance of communication and perception, which can inordinately affect the relative strength or weakness of either side. For example, the battle of Mirbat in July 1972 resulted in the defeat of several hundred *adoo* by a small *firqat* force and its British SAS advisors. The battle had a strategic impact far in excess of its tactical significance by degrading insurgent morale and marking a turning point in the movement's fortunes. In Iraq, small but unequivocal successes can have a multiplier effect on the overall conflict. Furthermore, Sultan Qaboos communicated effective messages to the target population, turning insurgent propaganda on its head by contrasting Marxism's atheist ethic with traditional Islamic faith. The sultan's message sought to link Islam, freedom, and the government, as reflected in the government slogan, "Islam is our way, freedom is our aim."¹⁸⁰ Similarly, in Iraq the case can be made that extremist Salafi, or more appropriately Takfiri, ideology is contrary to the country's pluralist traditions. Parallels can be drawn between today's foreign jihadists and the raiding extremist Ikhwan and Wahhabis of the past.

Oman also provides a cautionary lesson in the form of the vulnerability of closed systems to popular discontent. Patrimonial monarchies, like that of Oman, have been under constant attack from within in the modern era.¹⁸¹ While slowly liberalizing in the political sphere, Oman still does not permit political parties, and new participatory bodies such as the Consultative Council lack binding legislative powers.¹⁸² Over the long term in Iraq, it is critical that Sunni tribal communities



feel that that the government is accountable to them and that they have sufficient participatory outlets.

A contrary example to Oman can be found in the next case study addressing Yemen. Britain's largely unsuccessful experience in Yemen was characterized by discordance between the political and military aspects of its counter insurgency strategy.

Strife in Yemen: British Counter Insurgency Operations in Aden, 1955-1967

Britain's experience in Yemen from the 1950s through its hasty exit in 1967 demonstrates what can happen when a counter insurgency campaign is not anchored to sound government policy. Britain's conflict with the National Liberation Front (NLF) and other insurgents in the town of Aden and the surrounding protectorates was the least successful of its counter insurgency campaigns in the Middle East. The conflict ended in 1967 with British military withdrawal, the defeat of Britain's local allies, and the establishment of a Marxist republic in South Yemen – the PDRY.¹⁸³

Background

British policy from 1955 was to defend its colonial presence in Aden, specifically its continued access to the Aden naval base which was seen as critical to maintaining Britain's supply of oil from the Persian Gulf due to Aden's location on the Bab al-Mandab.¹⁸⁴ Defending the Aden base necessitated defending the surrounding protectorates against Egyptian President Nasser-inspired nationalist movements, which sought to displace the British.

To counter this, the British policy that evolved was to unite the territories under its protection into a federation and prepare it for an orderly transition to independence, after which it could be expected to behave as an ally and guarantee continued British access to the naval base. In 1959, the British formed six of the West Aden Protectorate states into the Federation of Arab Emirates, to which nine other states were subsequently added.¹⁸⁵ The process of incorporating states into the Federation continued during the 1960s, in some cases against the wishes of the populations, as was the case with the State of Aden. The remaining states that declined to join, mainly in Hadhramaut, formed the Protectorate of South Arabia.¹⁸⁶ The British initiated a gradual policy of constitutional reform to ease the transition to independence.

The Yemeni Republican government to the north, which deposed the monarch and took power in a 1962 coup, was supported by Egypt. The Yemen Civil War began as the deposed monarch, Imam Muhammad, rallied tribes in support of his



return to the throne.¹⁸⁷ Egypt supplied nearly 70,000 troops to this conflict by 1966, while Saudi Arabia supported the royalist side.¹⁸⁸ Seeking to defend the south, from 1962 the British played a covert role in this conflict, providing various forms of assistance to the opponents of the Republican and Egyptian forces.

In 1963 the National Liberation Front (NLF) was founded in Sanaa with the goal of liberating south Yemen from British control. Hostilities began when the NLF launched a grenade attack on the British High Commissioner in December 1963, and a state of emergency was declared. In 1964, the British began a counter insurgency campaign in the Radfan hills border region to confront Egyptian-backed guerrillas, which were later reinforced by the NLF.¹⁸⁹ Suppression of these guerrillas prompted the NLF to switch to a vicious campaign of urban warfare in Aden.

In 1964, the Wilson government in Britain announced its intention to hand over power to the Federation in 1968, but the British military would remain. In 1966, the government announced that British forces would be withdrawn at independence, causing the security situation to deteriorate.¹⁹⁰ Mass riots, internecine fighting between nationalist groups, and a revolt of local armed forces followed, making the situation untenable for the British. The timeline for independence was brought forward to 1967 and the British attempted to complete an orderly withdrawal.

On November 30, 1967 the British withdrew, leaving Aden under NLF control. The Federation of South Arabia collapsed and Southern Yemen became independent as the People's Republic of South Yemen.¹⁹¹ A state of near anarchy followed, with an estimated half million people fleeing to neighboring countries, as the new government conducted a purge of its opponents.¹⁹²

British Policy And Strategy

Britain's political goal of preserving unconditional access to the naval base at Aden put the country in a situation where there were no easy options to address the growing anti-British feelings in south Yemen.¹⁹³ This inflexible goal forced Britain to fight a rising tide of nationalism. The combination of ineffectual British political approaches and heavy-handed military tactics fueled the nationalists' progress.

Contributing factors to Britain's failure to achieve its policy goals can be found in 1) regional political developments, mainly the explosion of Arab nationalism; 2) the rise of anti-colonial sentiment in Britain and internationally; and 3) the transformation of Southwest Arabia into a Cold War battleground.¹⁹⁴ Nonetheless, one historian has identified the nature of British military operations,



which escalated in response to political developments, as particularly significant in bringing about the disaster.¹⁹⁵

In an effort to create strategic space around Aden, the British intervened in tribal conflicts in the protectorates and consequently enmeshed themselves in an attempt to pacify much of the region.¹⁹⁶ The NLF capitalized on this and used nationalist propaganda to unify many of the tribes against the British. Their traditional powers undercut by the British policies, Yemeni Imams found themselves in the unlikely position of supporting the nationalist opposition in alliance with the Egyptians and Soviets. Punitive actions along the long Yemeni border hastened the creation of the Yemeni Republic, which became the southern rebels' most effective sponsor.

Observations

The British experience in Aden offers cautionary lessons, all of which are applicable to Iraq. Britain's failure to achieve its policy objectives in Yemen can be attributed to the damage caused by detached, vacillating policymakers in London, according to one scholar.¹⁹⁷ The scholar suggests that a lack of political will was the most prominent factor contributing to British failure. Other important factors were a lack of intelligence, under-funding for economic development programs, and the existence of external support for the insurgents. The scholar suggests that political ineptitude played a key role in determining the circumstances of the British exit from Yemen, and he identifies the Wilson government's refusal to offer a defense treaty to any future government as a devastating blow to Britain's allies in the region. London's indecision contrasted starkly with the remarkable individual heroism – and optimism – displayed by British forces on the ground.

However, Britain's use of force was heavy-handed, indiscriminate, and produced unintended consequences such as undercutting the northern Imams upon whose support the British depended. For example, Britain relied on an inappropriate military doctrine of proscription, which was put into practice primarily through punitive action such as aerial bombardment. This punitive action proved counterproductive in that tactical victories – beneficial to Britain's radical opponents – produced political defeats.¹⁹⁸

The legacy of Britain's counter insurgency campaigns and eventual disengagement from Southwest Arabia was a radicalization of the region's politics and a society divided along new lines of conflict.¹⁹⁹ In the northern part of the region, the indigenous Republican movement capitalized on the British policy of undermining the Imams by taking over in their wake, and once in power turned their attention towards deposing the British presence in Aden.²⁰⁰ In the south,



resistance to British military action pushed much of the population into the arms of the NLF, its radical ideology, and its outside supporters.

One lesson applicable to Iraq is that military power proportionately and in concert with a viable political strategy. If the political strategy is not viable, i.e., continued “occupation” of parts of the country such as the Aden naval base, other components of a counter insurgency strategy are unlikely to succeed. In addition, if counter insurgency operations intentionally or unintentionally undermine the power of one group in a country, another group will attempt to move into the power vacuum with possible negative unintended consequences. Another lesson applicable to Iraq is that when a major power is enmeshed in a complex conflict, the consequences of disengaging precipitously can be long lasting and devastating for the local society.

Tribal Warfare in Saudi Arabia: Ibn Saud’s Consolidation of Power, 1902-1924

Abd al-Aziz ibn Saud's conquest of rival tribal territories and consolidation of power on the Arabian Peninsula in the 1920s and 1930s is an example of harnessing Arab tribal characteristics and channeling them into military and political effectiveness. With few resources available, ibn Saud used every strategy and technique at his disposal, notably the unifying force of religion and ideology, to dominate and unify the disparate tribes of the Arabian Peninsula. One historian described ibn Saud's effectiveness as follows:

With consummate skill, the king utilized force, negotiation, marriage alliances, religious values, and the powerful appeal of his personal example to forge a territorial state out of warring tribal factions. He was a tall and imposing figure, a warrior-king out of an earlier, more heroic era. As astute as he was brave, he proved to be a fair and judicious ruler whose piety, dignity, and accessibility won him the allegiance of his subjects. He was a masterful tribal politician, ruling less as an absolute monarch than as a first among equals.²⁰¹

Background

The origins of Arabian political order can be found in the 18th century partnership of Muhammad ibn Saud, a chieftain from the Najd desert of Arabia, and Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1792), an extremist Muslim scholar from Central Arabia.²⁰² Educated in Mecca, Medina and Iraq, al-Wahhab preached an uncompromising version of Islam, featuring the affirmation of *tawhid*, or the oneness of God. He labeled Sufism and Shiism heretical, and insisted that the Quran and the *hadith* were the only reliable sources through which divine will



could be comprehended.²⁰³ Using Wahhabism as a unifying politico-religious force, ibn Saud's power expanded throughout Arabia, and he succeeded in capturing Mecca in 1803. The Ottomans requested the assistance of Muhammad Ali, who ruled from Cairo, to dispatch his Egyptian troops to quell this uprising, which they did. However, the Wahhabi ideals had become ingrained in the tribes of Arabia.²⁰⁴

The rough beginning of the modern Saudi state can be dated to the revival of the Wahhabi movement under the warrior-statesman Abd al-Aziz ibn Saud (1881-1953).²⁰⁵ The political revival of Wahhabism began around 1902 when Ibn Saud seized the city of Riyadh in the province of Najd. This city was the stronghold of ibn Saud's principal rivals, the Rashidis. The capture launched a twenty-year epic of conquest and consolidation, transforming ibn Saud from a minor tribal chieftain to a ruler of international stature. From 1902 through the end of World War I, ibn Saud established his authority over most of the tribes of Najd, with his success attributed to his ability to combine his secular authority as victorious tribal commander with his religious status as head of the Wahhabi order.²⁰⁶

While tribal loyalty to the victorious leader was inherently tenuous, the puritanical Wahhabi doctrine provided a higher level of commitment that bound the tribesmen to ibn Saud. To shape the tribes into a force for conquest, ibn Saud first had to address the problem of their nomadic nature. He settled the tribes in small agricultural oasis communities, which would provide the setting for religious indoctrination and alliance building.²⁰⁷ Ibn Saud supplied the communities with agricultural equipment and arms, and built mosques for them. To these mosques he sent Wahhabi clerics to disseminate the doctrine. Wahhabism became the basis for communal loyalty stronger than that of traditional tribal alliances. The men of the communities became the *Ikhwan* ("Brethren"), a military force at the beck and call of ibn Saud. Unified to an extent not seen on the Arabian Peninsula since the early expansion of Islam, the *Ikhwan* were deeply committed to ibn Saud's expansion of power, as well as to maintaining the Wahhabi creed and extending it to new areas.

Following World War I, ibn Saud became alarmed at the possibility of British-installed Hashemite rulers surrounding his kingdom and, in 1924, led his *Ikhwan* forces to seize the holy cities of Mecca and Medina in the Hijaz, driving Hashimite leader Sharif Hussein into exile. In 1927, the British recognized the new reality on the ground in Arabia and negotiated an agreement with ibn Saud. This was known as the Treaty of Jiddah, which recognized ibn Saud's hegemony over the Hijaz and the Najd Regions of the peninsula. In 1932, the state name was officially changed to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Major petroleum exploration commenced in 1933, setting in motion the state's emergence as a regional power.²⁰⁸



Observations

The lessons that can be drawn from ibn Saud's experience include the power of a compelling narrative, the importance of alliances, the effectiveness of momentum, and the potential pitfalls of strengthening tribal authority. Ibn Saud was a master at understanding tribal psychology and communicating unifying messages that affirmed tribal values and the tribesmen's place in society. In Iraq, it may be possible to encourage tribal leaders to convey similarly unifying messages based on themes other than religious fundamentalism. One of this study's recommendations is to work with tribal leaders to develop narratives that resonate with their constituencies. Such narratives would emphasize the positive aspects of Iraqi nationalism and pride in Iraq's cultural heritage.

Ibn Saud's consolidation of power using non-violent techniques demonstrates the importance of carefully crafted tribal alliances created through a variety of means. Ibn Saud had an effective command of the four tools of political competition: coercive force, economic incentive and disincentive, legitimating ideology, and traditional authority.²⁰⁹ While ibn Saud's approach cannot be replicated in Iraq, a prescriptive lesson could be the imperative of understanding the available tools and making use of them to the fullest.

Ibn Saud's use of the *Ikhwan* as an agent of conquest shows what can be accomplished when efforts are made to first create critical mass and then move forward. A parallel application in Iraq could be to secure the cooperation of one tribe first, and to then leverage that tribe's influence with the others.

Cautionary lessons can be observed as well in the form of tradeoffs between state and tribal authority. Ibn Saud created the *Ikhwan* as a political and social force separate from the central government, over which he was not prepared to share control. The result was the Saudi state developed "two contradictory and competing systems: the centralizing Saudi government and the *Ikhwan* tribal version."²¹⁰ The *Ikhwan* became a pressure group that ibn Saud was forced to balance and eventually confront. The *Ikhwan* openly challenged the modernizing Saudi state between 1927 and 1929, - in response, ibn Saud defeated them in a series of battles between 1929 and 1930.²¹¹ The duality between central and tribal authority continued, and the legacy of a convoluted process of state formation, generating challenges to governance and civil society, remain to this day.



Saddam and the Tribes: A Closer Look

In the three-and-a-half decades of Baathist rule in Iraq, there appear to have been many ups and downs in tribal relations with the state. This record of the last 35 years is consistent with the last 1,800 years of state-tribal relations in Iraq. From the 3rd century AD when the Persian Sassanids controlled modern Iraq, to their replacement by the Abbasid caliphate in 750 AD, to the reign of the Mongols beginning in 1258, to the ascent of the Ottoman Turks, to the takeover by the British in 1918, the tribes have been a central but complex unit of society in Iraqi history. Whatever the government or social system, the tribal organizations have persisted in what Faleh Abdul-Jabar calls "cultural tribalism."²¹²

After the Baath Party took power in July 1968, it used the Sunni tribes to build and consolidate its power base. Saddam Hussein used contradictory language and policies to alternately coerce and entice Sunni tribes to support him. Hussein used tribal rivalries and coalitions to his political advantage, despite the fact that tribalism contradicted official Baathist ideology, which advocated the elimination of "tribal feudalism."²¹³

One such apparent contradiction was evident in the 1970s, when the Baathists, in accord with their orientation toward a strong, central government, and a socialist orientation, passed laws on land reform,²¹⁴ which went a long way toward weakening the power of the tribal chieftains, and eroding the cohesion of the Iraqi tribes. What at first appear to be contradictions, however, beneath the surface point to Saddam's attempts to manipulate the support and status of Iraqi tribes by strengthening the tribes that supported him and weakening the tribes that might oppose him. In addition, these contradictions are an indication of Saddam's moves to push aside the Baath Party platforms and political structures in favor of the cult of personality dictatorship he eventually established for himself in Iraq.

Another example of this was reported by Judith Yaphe in 2000, "In 1976, the government ordered Iraqis to drop their tribal/family names.... The change was intended primarily to mask how many Tikritis, Dulaymis, and others close to Saddam's clan were in key positions."²¹⁵ Yaphe notes that Amatzia Baram, an expert on Iraqi tribes, believes that this measure succeeded to the extent that many Iraqis, especially those who were urbanized, did not know their tribal roots, but Yaphe believes that the majority of Iraqis continued to have strong family, clan, and tribal identification despite the decree.²¹⁶

Power and Prestige in Harmony: The Baathist Hierarchical System

The stability and longevity of Saddam Hussein's regime depended on the distribution of power and wealth to a select few. The purpose was to ensure that



Hussein had a support base with a vested interest in the regime, which had granted it power and wealth. All Sunnis in Iraq, to some extent, benefited from the Baathist regime. Sunnis were readily granted senior government and military posts. Residents of the Sunni triangle received a superior primary education and were serviced by higher-caliber universities. At the same time, the Sunni triangle as a whole profited from government development funds, and enjoyed a superior transportation, electric, and water infrastructure.²¹⁷

The tribes that were geographically and genealogically closest to Saddam Hussein benefited most from the Baathist regime. Members of the Tikriti tribes, especially Saddam's own Albu Nasir, and other largely Sunni Arab tribes held the highest positions in government.²¹⁸ The core tribes of Hussein's support base gained prestige and power from their association with the regime, and the many tribesmen recruited into the military and security forces quickly rose through the ranks. A member of one of these core tribes could amass power quickly through their membership in the Republican Guard, the *Himaya*, or the Special Security Organization. Nearly all of the ministers serving under Hussein hailed from these few tribes, as well as a disproportionate number of high-ranking military officers.²¹⁹

Most invested in the regime was the core clan of the Albu Nasir, Saddam's tribe. Members of the al-Beijat clan of the Albu Nasir tribe enjoyed the greatest access to power and wealth. The tribe itself is no more than 30,000 people. The Presidential Guard (*Himaya*) was made up almost exclusively of members of the Albu Nasir. The Special Security Organization (*jihaz al-amn al-khass*, SSO), which monitored the loyalty of all security and military personnel, was controlled by the Albu Nasir. Republican Guard members with access to Hussein were all invariably members of the Beijat clan, as were his most key advisors and ministers.²²⁰ In fact, three strategic posts could be filled only by members of this clan: the Minister of Defense, the Chief of the Baath Party Military Bureau (*al-maktab al-askari*) and the head of the National Security Bureau (*maktab al-amn al-qawmi*).²²¹

Power and Prestige in Discord

Hussein's system of "state tribalism" was not a fixed hierarchy of privilege and power, but constantly changed depending on the relationships between tribes and between individual tribes and the regime. Saddam cultivated the image that resources in Iraq were scarce and subject to intense competition. He controlled the outflow of funds to individual tribes, and made it clear that he would increase or decrease stipends to tribes based upon their relative favor with the regime. Such favor, and the resulting accumulation of wealth, was made to seem as a zero-sum game; the gain of one tribe necessarily meant another's loss.²²²



When seeking regime favor, tribal leaders often went to great lengths. Pro-regime demonstrations were staged by tribal sheikhs, who ordered their tribesmen to attend. Lavish gifts were sent to Hussein, and, in several cases, the Iraqi leader's image was incorporated into tribal flags, an honor that had not been bestowed on any ruler before him. Sheikhs would lead, in cooperation with the regime's intelligence apparatus, "hunts" for tribesmen disloyal to the regime, sometimes executing disloyal members of the tribe themselves to seek Hussein's approval. Coalitions and cooperation between tribes and tribal leaders was limited by this spirit of competition, a spirit that the regime actively fostered. Tribes were made to seem as rivals to one another, rather than social units with similar objectives and goals.²²³

Regime Stabilization Tactics and the Sunni Tribes

From the time that Hussein took power, he recruited young tribesmen into his internal security force and into key positions in the military.²²⁴ This served two purposes. First, young Sunni tribesmen were widely seen to have retained the Bedouin code of honor and as uncorrupted by city life. This group was unlikely to surrender in battle, especially to Iraq's perennial opponent Iran.²²⁵ Second, Hussein inserted Sunni tribesmen, most often members of his own Albu Nasir, into the highest positions of military power. This ensured that individuals in positions with the greatest ability to launch a coup had the least incentive to do so, as they had a vested interest in regime stability.

Hussein also recruited Sunni tribesmen into the state intelligence agencies, who were promoted rapidly to the top positions of power. In populating the intelligence apparatus with those closest to the regime, Saddam made certain that information on plots for coups, assassinations, and uprisings would be accurate. He ensured that information on the activities of the Sunni tribes, a potential anti-regime social network, was accurate and thorough.²²⁶

Neo-Tribal Power Culture

However, despite intense security measures, the concentration of a large number of tribesmen in key security and political positions made it easy for networks of tribesmen to plot coups against the regime. The first such coup attempt by the Juburi tribal members was reported in January 1990. When Hussein learned of the plot, he is reported to have executed nearly half of the Juburi officers in the army and Republican Guard, and reassigned the remainder to less powerful positions.²²⁷ Tribal loyalties had overcome loyalty to him and to the regime, and Hussein sought to make an example of the Juburi tribe.



Throughout the 1990s, key posts of the Iraqi military and government were frequently rearranged, as tensions developed between Hussein and the Ubayd tribe in 1993 and as the Albu Nimr tribe of the Dulaymi federation revolted against the regime in 1995.²²⁸ Hussein manipulated the dynamics within tribes in the interest of regime stability and sought to keep the tribes off balance so that they could not work together to overthrow him.²²⁹

The Example of the Tikriti Tribes

The tremendous wealth and power held by the Albu Nasir and the confederated tribes of Tikrit caused divisions within tribes.²³⁰ The unique status of the Albu Nasir as the most favored tribe altered its internal dynamics, agitating the natural tendency of sub-tribes and families within a tribe to compete.²³¹ Like other tribes, the Albu Nasir are bound by a code of tribal honor. In the rare case in which a tribesman vied for power and wealth to the general detriment of the tribe, the repercussions against him could be swift and severe.²³² There are several examples that illustrate the balance between competition and tribal honor in the Tikriti tribes under the Hussein regime, the consequences of violating that balance, and the aftermath of tribal animosity.

Amatzia Baram and Faleh Abdul Jabar both point out that inter-tribal splits in Iraq are long standing. Abdul Jabar claims that the first split goes back to 1970, when defense minister Hardan Abdul Ghaffar al-Tikriti was ousted from his post, and then assassinated, allegedly by Saddam Hussein's assassins in Kuwait in 1971. Another Tikriti, ex-oil minister Murtadha al-Hadithi was killed with another kinsman, under torture in 1976.

Ultimately, given the nature of Saddam's brutal regime and uncontrollable paranoia, it is not surprising that there are many other individuals and clans among the Albu Nasir who are alienated, if not deeply hostile to him and his nuclear family. One disgruntled house within the Albu Nasir was the *bayt* of Abd al-Munim, which includes Saddam's in-law, Lieutenant General Maher Abd Rashid, a hero of the Iran-Iraq War. The fact that Saddam's son Qusay was married to General Rashid's daughter did not prevent Saddam from placing the general under house arrest at the end of the Iraq-Iran War. Two of General Rashid's brothers remained important officials in Saddam's regime, but the family suspected that Saddam was involved in planning a helicopter accident in which their brother, Brigadier General Tahir, died in the last stage of the Iraq-Iran War – one of several such unexplained, fatal helicopter crashes at the end of the Iran-Iraq War.²³³

Another alienated branch of the Albu Nasir was the *bayt* of Major General Umar al-Haza. In 1986, Saddam tortured and executed him for slandering Sabha,



Saddam's mother. According to some sources, in response, General Umar's son provided the information that enabled a group of oppositionists to badly wound Saddam's son Uday in an assassination attempt in December 1996. Still another sub-tribal unit, the Albu Latif, harbored resentment against Saddam for the death of one of their favorite sons, Brigadier General Adnan Sharif Shihab. Shihab's helicopter was shot down "accidentally" by an Iraqi surface-to-air missile at the start of the Iran-Iraq War, although members of his *bayt*, and many others, believe that it was done on the orders of Minister of Defense Adnan Khayr Allah, Saddam's cousin and, at the time, oldest friend. Another member of this *bayt*, Major General Thabit Sultan Ahmad Shihab, was executed in 1993 after several years of tension with the president.²³⁴

Even within Saddam's own clan, he had numerous enemies. Many among the Hasan al-Majid branch of the family – the branch that included Husayn and Saddam Kamil Hasan, gunned down with their father and sister in February 1996 after they foolishly returned to Baghdad after having defected to Jordan – bear a deep grudge against Saddam for the deaths after he had promised them amnesty. Saddam's mother's side of his family suspects that he had Adnan Khayr Allah – who was not only minister of defense and his oldest friend, but also was his maternal cousin and brother-in-law – killed in another suspicious helicopter crash in 1989. Most deeply hurt by this apparent assassination has been Saddam's first wife (and maternal cousin) Sajidah.²³⁵

Another well-known example of tribal feuds is the long-standing conflict between the Beijat clan and the Jawaina, an Albu Nasir sub-tribe close to Saddam Hussein in the early years of the regime. In 1993, Hussein found that General Raji Abbas al-Tikriti, the commander of the army's medical corps, and Jasim Amin Mukhlis, both influential members of the Jawaina, had been planning to launch a coup against him. Both were immediately executed, as were members of their families, their friends, and members of the army suspected of sympathizing with them. Other military personnel from the Jawaina were demoted or dismissed from service. For the next ten years, the Jawaina were systematically marginalized in the military and sensitive political bodies, and removed entirely from Saddam's inner circle.²³⁶

Among the Tikritis beyond the Albu Nasir, there are also many disgruntled tribes. One tribe, the al-Shayaisha, had problems with Saddam and his family because two prominent members of the tribe were Generals Tahir Yahya and Hardan al-Tikriti, both of whom were purged under Saddam's orders soon after the Baath regained power in 1968. Hardan was assassinated in Kuwait in 1971 by Saddam's agents, and much of the tribe was gradually excluded from power during the 1970s. The only well-known member of this tribe who was still in uniform in 2003 was General al-Hakam Hasan Ali, commander of army aviation,



in 1991. He lost his command in the mid-1990s and was made an anonymous advisor to the president – effectively promoting him out of power.²³⁷

“Overall, Saddam has put to death scores of his Tikriti colleagues and yet, Tikriti support for him has not seemed to wane. The privileges enjoyed by Tikritis are so great, and the fear of retribution against them so overwhelming that, generally speaking, the people of Saddam’s hometown and its environs are still supportive of his regime”

- Amatzia Baram, January 2003

Two other tribes collectively called the Hadithiyyin, the Rifaiyyin, and the Jawaina also bear grudges against Saddam. The latter were hostile to Saddam and his family because he executed some of their most prominent members: Jasim Amin Mukhlis and Raji Abbas al-Tikriti in 1993 and General Husayn Hiyawi in the early 1970s. Even within tribes that had suffered at Saddam’s hand, one may find many individuals who preferred their personal interests over those of the tribe and remained loyal to him. Still, some are very likely to be bitterly against the fallen leader.²³⁸

Other Friendly Tribes

As mentioned earlier, under Saddam’s dictatorship, many of Iraq’s Sunni tribes beyond the Tikriti tribes enjoyed considerable perquisites and privileges that ensured at least some degree of loyalty to the regime. Many tribal shaikhs received payments, access to weaponry, and a blind eye from Baghdad to smuggling and other illegal activities. Overall, these tribes benefited in multifarious ways from Saddam’s rule.

In the Sunni Arab areas practically all of the tribes enjoyed this kind of preferential treatment, but some were more privileged than others. These tribes included principally those neighboring Tikrit (mostly in the Salah al-Din Governorate): the Jubur in Sharqat, the Ubayd in al-Alam and Tarmiya, the Mushahadah in Tarmiya, the Luhayb in Sharqat, and the al-Azza in Balad. A bit farther afield, there were the Harb in ad-Dur, the Tayy in Mosul (the former minister of defense, General Sultan Hashim, hailed from that tribe), the Khazraj from south of Mosul, and the Maghamis from Khalis. Finally, while the large Sunni Arab tribal federation of the Dulaym west of Baghdad collaborated with the regime rather closely, the Shammar Jarba northwest of Baghdad in the Jazira collaborated somewhat less enthusiastically.²³⁹

Nevertheless, too much can be made of the loyalty of these tribes to Saddam’s regime. In fact, coup attempts by members of some of these tribes suggest less than complete loyalty to the dictator. For example, at the end of the Iran-Iraq War, members of the Jubur tribe attempted a coup that resulted in arrests



and executions. Many Juburi officers whose sympathies to the regime were uncertain were retired.²⁴⁰ Similarly, in the early 1990s, a number of Ubaydis were labeled by the regime as potential revolutionaries. Demotions and arrests followed, splitting the tribe into factions with varying loyalty to the regime. While many members of the tribe were purged from important posts, others scrambled to demonstrate their loyalty to Saddam, often executing “disloyals” on their own initiative. As of early 2003, the Minister for Oil, Amir Rashid al-Ubaydi, had remained in power by these means. The conflict between segments of the Ubaydi still exists, occasionally resulting in violence.

In spite of the constraints of honor and tribal loyalty, the pressure to rise against the regime for the sake of one’s family or sub-tribe was great, particularly during the UN sanctions period. Saddam angered many tribes when he cut tribal stipends to even the most loyal tribes. Tribal leaders, most of whom were appointed to their positions through Hussein’s influence, were forced to choose between their sub-tribe and the regime.²⁴¹ When Saddam reduced funding for Shaikh Machann al-Juburi’s tribe, he closed ranks with the wealthy members of his immediate family and joined in a plot to assassinate Saddam. When the plot was discovered, only Juburi managed to escape execution by fleeing to Damascus where he assisted a number of groups to hatch plots to overthrow the government.²⁴² Each attempt ended with executions, arrests, and rifts within the tribe.

Saddam’s Increased Dependence On Tribes Following the 1991 Gulf War

An important social consequence of both the Iran-Iraq and Gulf Wars was the growth in the role of tribalism in Iraqi society. Since it had become increasingly difficult to maintain control over the country, the Saddam began to rely on the tribes for help in certain areas. The regime’s propaganda increasingly relied on tribal poetry and myths to mobilize public opinion. Saddam dressed in traditional tribal clothing when addressing tribal areas of the country and tribal shaikhs competed with the traditional Baathist elites for favors.

This new relationship with the tribes is undoubtedly what Saddam Hussein had in mind, in March 1991, when he assembled the tribal leaders at the Presidential Palace.

For the first time in Iraq’s modern history, a major delegation of tribal chieftains was received at the presidential palace on 29 March 1991, shortly after both the defeat of Iraq in the second Gulf War and the demise of the uprisings which erupted thereafter. At that occasion, one delegate after another, representing many tribal groups came forward to vow loyalty (*baya*), an Islamic oath of



allegiance for rulers, or to vow a covenant (*ahd*), a word of tribal honor, to support and obey the ruler. Each delegation hoisted aloft its tribal banner (*bayraq*) and gave it to the palace as a sign of total obedience.²⁴³

According to those in attendance, tribal banners were lowered and thrown at the feet of the President of the Republic. The banners bore the symbols of each tribe, and were expression of their autonomy as if they were mini-states. Giving Saddam the banners was akin to presenting their diplomatic credentials to another, although higher, state. The symbolic action in this ceremony is important and merits examination. It has many elements to it to include the *husa* (chanting war couplets) and the lowering of the *iqal* (male headwear).

The *husa*, or war chanting, is a tribal tradition usually undertaken by the *hamula* (clan, or sub-clan of a tribe), which expresses small group solidarity within a larger unit, the clan. It functions as a marker of this group from the rest of the clan and refers to a legendary feat, or a daring deed on the part of the group; nevertheless, loyalty to the clan is preserved. The *husa*, in this case, is directed from a lower or smaller group to a higher or larger group. Shaikhs are usually the objects of veneration in such *husa*. In the case of the *husa* at the Presidential Palace, the shaikhs and their entourage placed themselves at a lower position by elevating the president to the highest post of *shaikh al-mashayikh*, the “shaikh of shaikhs” or paramount shaikh.

Another aspect of the symbolic tribal deference toward Saddam was the lowering of the *iqal*. This tribal headwear is a thick, black cord woven in the shape of two rings and fixed over the head-covering *kufiya*. When the headwear is forcibly removed, one's honor is tainted, and blood has to be shed to remove the shame involved (*ghasl al-'ar*). But if the *iqal* is removed voluntarily, the actor is signifying that he (for it is always a male) accepts the challenge to defy humiliation. Again, blood should be spilled to cleanse honor. This is the traditional representation inherent in both acts.

At the Presidential Palace, however, the shaikhs and their entourages willingly, and without any challenge to their honor, lowered their *iqals*. By this act, they signified their readiness to shed their honor before the president and for his sake, and that by this performance they gained rather than lost greater honor. Through this act, they accepted his presence is a source of honor that far exceeds the minor loss they willingly accepted. This loss/gain was a mutual honor-preserving bond, forged in public, not before the tribal community, but before cameras and videotapes, i.e., before a nationwide audience. In short, it was their publicly stated word of honor to give total allegiance.



This recognition of the president as the supreme shaikh created a fictitious egalitarian space, a covenant of tribal equals, and a unity of honor and purpose. On the other hand, this symbolic action exhibited a fictive and real hierarchy of power. It established and justified the procedural arrangement according to which the tribal shaikh serves the state as an extension of central power, drawing from the state his meaning and reality.

Together, these acts indicated a change of direction by Saddam from reliance on modern party forms of mobilization and control, such as those under the Baath, to recognition of a new-old social actor: the shaikh and his tribesman. This was an extremely significant change. Along with the ceremonial event with symbolic acts, important social changes were made, and former tribal functions including the shaikh's authority to resolve disputes were restored, even in the cities. In addition, the land reform measures imposed by the Baath party were rolled back, allowing the tribal leader to be restored to his role as "landlord-shaikh." The shaikh also became a source of jobs for his tribal members, resulting in greater loyalty from them.²⁴⁴ This period also saw a surge of black market smuggling activities organized around tribal and kin-based links.

Another process, the emergence of "fake" tribal chieftains, largely created through Saddam's favor, became an object of disdain in the 1990s. Abdul Jabbar writes that a long process of urbanization, migration, and change in social status caused the disintegration of many actual tribes and clans. The authentic tribal chieftains continued to be esteemed, but new, "false tribal creatures" became known as "shaikhs made in Taiwan." This referred to the fact that the wealthy in Iraq were able to buy Japanese imports, cars and electronics, while the poorer classes settled for what were considered to be cheaper products from Taiwan.

Still, as with real tribes, the new tribes were allowed to set up mechanisms for law and order, and to solve disputes, ranging from commercial and criminal offenses to "the settlement of blood money."²⁴⁵

Changes to Traditional Tribal Structure Under Saddam Hussein

The typical Sunni Iraqi tribe is governed by a single leader, known as the shaikh, in consultation with a council of respected tribesmen. Each member of the council, as well as the shaikh, is traditionally chosen by the tribe to lead, based on their loyalty, knowledge and practice of tribal values, character, and leadership abilities.²⁴⁶ The choice of tribal leaders occurs by 'tribal consensus', a process in which members consult and negotiate with one another, and come to a decision that is acceptable to most tribesmen. The process takes more time than a simple election - sometimes years,. This process of selection lends itself to tribal unity, ensuring that at the end of the process, the majority of members are satisfied with the result.²⁴⁷ Once selected, tribal leaders traditionally hold



their positions for life.²⁴⁸

The structure and choice of tribal leadership was altered in many tribes in Iraq, however, when Saddam Hussein made tribal power structures subordinate to the Baath party structure. Hussein used a propaganda campaign to associate the regime with the traditional values of the Arab people of Iraq. His message was that if the Iraqi people were tribal and Sunni Muslim, so too was the regime. This campaign included the payment of stipends to tribal leaders and the endorsement of tribal customs nominally in conflict with Iraqi laws, including blood money and marriage traditions.²⁴⁹ In the course of the regime's quest for tribal legitimacy, it acquired a great deal of power over the Sunni tribes through propaganda and patronage.

There are two results of this altered power dynamic. First, the traditional tribal power structure, with the shaikh at the apex of a pyramid of leadership, was modified with the shaikh being under the influence of the regime leadership. Shaikhs were held accountable to Hussein in the same manner as tribesmen were accountable to the shaikh. The new tribal power structure changed the way that tribes made decisions. As shaikhs increasingly became responsible and obliged to the regime, decision making by consensus and negotiation was replaced by a more top-down decision making, with the tribal leader no longer seeking tribal approval for his decisions. The Hussein regime purchased obedience from the tribes in exchange for preferential status in the Baath Party, public works funds, and tribal prestige.²⁵⁰

Second, as the regime came to hold financial power over the shaikhs with stipends and funding, Hussein gradually began to appoint tribal leaders directly, overruling the traditional method of selection by the tribe. In a number of cases, Hussein simply began to transfer tribal stipends to a tribesman of his choosing. The tribe was left to choose to accept that tribesman's status as the shaikh or to lose out entirely on government funds. Almost invariably, the tribes accepted the leadership imposed upon them.²⁵¹ Buying the support of Sunni tribes and sub-tribes was an effective tactic for Hussein when he had resources to distribute, but the practice had negative consequences in leaner times. Saddam mitigated this by closely watching the tribes nearest to him. The threat of repercussions from being found out and shaming the larger tribe meant that it was rare for Tikriti sub-tribes and clans to plot against the regime.²⁵²



Implementation of Saddam's New Tribal Strategy

Saddam's new tribal strategy featured a greater effort to win over the support of tribes, especially in the rural areas. Saddam soon formalized tribal laws and incorporated tribal customs and values into the state.

In May 1996, the tribal relations with the Saddam Hussein government were meticulously defined through a draft plan that included:

- The creation of A High Council of Tribal Chiefs with direct access to the president;
- The decree that shaikhs have the duty of:
 - (a) absolute allegiance to the president;
 - (b) ensuring security and stability in their designated districts (some 50 shaikhdoms were nominated);
 - (c) judicial powers to settle disputes; and,
 - (d) financial powers to exact taxes and penalties on behalf of the government.'
- A commitment from the government to provide the shaikhs with the necessary things to support their new roles, including light arms and ammunition, electronic communications devices, vehicles, tracts of land, special government rations, diplomatic passports, and exemption from military service.

However, with these new powers and logistical capabilities, also came problems. Tribal gangs developed and preyed upon "detrified" elements of society and overall crime increased. One example was that the Baghdad-Amman route was terrorized by segments of the Dulaym tribe in Western Iraq (al-Anbar Governorate).

Abdul Jabar believes that it is erroneous to think that it was necessarily the Iraqi state that stage-managed and controlled the reconstruction and re-strengthening of tribes. He believes that the tribes themselves, when given a little encouragement by the Iraqi government, took matters into their own hands and began to greatly expand their activities on their own. Abdul Jabar warned that such a development could become a "Frankenstein-like" evolution for the country in the future. This position is supported by Hosham Dawood, who believes that the large, cohesive tribes such as the Dulaym, Jubur, Ubayd, and Shammar, in Iraq have maintained important positions, and remained close to power, regardless of regime changes in the country. He claims that their independence over a long period of history has presented a problem for the regime of Saddam Hussein as it did for other governing powers. If nothing else, Saddam's increased dependency on the Iraqi tribes demonstrates the continued strength of tribal culture and structures in Iraq.



Observations

Resilience of Tribes. Overall, tribes have proved to be resilient social structures, enduring through the advent of Islam—which encourages all Muslims to think of themselves as part of a single community and opposes some traditional tribal practices—as well as concepts of modern nationalism. The Baath regime fostered competition between tribes in a “divide and rule” campaign. This method was, and remains, effective because it exploits tribal honor and competition over limited resources. Competition between tribes can be a compelling way to secure the cooperation of one tribe at the expense of another. A tribe is likely to cooperate to keep another tribe from getting the benefits.

Leveraging Tribal Disputes. Sunni tribes north and west of Baghdad (the Sunni triangle area) have the greatest number of and most intense internal tribal conflicts. In 1989, when Saddam sought tribal support for his regime, he increased the funds for public works in Sunni tribal regions and sent the funding directly to the tribal leaders, so they could distribute it to their tribes. This had two effects on intra-tribal relations in the Sunni triangle. First, by quickly investing such a great deal of wealth and power in the shaikhs, it destabilized tribal leadership. Ambitious members of the tribe began to compete for power, to the point of attempting to assassinate rivals to gain control of government funds. Second, Sunni tribes became more and more stratified, as the shaikh delegated wealth and responsibility to those close to him, who, in turn, entrusted individuals in their social circle with funds and responsibility. The increasingly hierarchical nature of the tribes meant that tribesmen outside the shaikh’s circle began to see violence as the only means of social mobility.²⁵³ Saddam Hussein’s manipulation of the tribes disrupted their internal power dynamics.

Power conflicts within tribes have resulted in more than a few long-standing feuds. In the Aqaidat tribe, a conflict over leadership of the tribe between the shaikh and his second cousin erupted in 1991, resulting, in the course of the ongoing conflict, in the death of over 120 tribesmen.²⁵⁴ In another case, the Khazraj tribe split in two, after a member of the shaikh’s council challenged the shaikh’s fitness to lead the tribe. For the next ten years, to the present, the two tribal factions have been political rivals, and marriage between members of the two is nearly non-existent.²⁵⁵

Establishing New Tribes and Replacing Shaikhs. Saddam established the Office of Tribal Affairs and categorized shaikhs into A, B, or C categories based on their influence. Through these categories, Saddam paid shaikhs monthly salaries. There are many disputed rights to tribes today because of the appointments of “Fake Shaikhs” during Saddam’s regime. Giving tribal leaders



money and significant autonomy over their areas in exchange for their allegiance helped Saddam control the countryside and force recruitment for the Iraqi army.

Tribal Cohesion When Under Threat. In spite of internal rivalries and conflicts over power and wealth, the Sunni tribes almost invariably pull together at the sign of a threat from outside. At the core of each tribe's and tribesman's identity is a consciousness of their Bedouin roots in the harsh desert culture. The Baathist regime skillfully manipulated the image of the Bedouin tribe as united against adversity throughout the Iran-Iraq War. State propaganda cultivated a consciousness among the tribes that they were a key front against the Persian threat, and that tribesmen must be prepared to sacrifice for the state and for the tribe, or face terrible shame.²⁵⁶

When US-led troops entered Iraq in March 2003, Saddam again used the ideal of tribal unity to remind Iraqis of the importance of one's honor in the fight to defend tribal lands. The image of tribal unity against outside forces remains powerful even after the capture of Saddam Hussein. Tribal honor plays a role in the violence against coalition forces.²⁵⁷ Continued loyalty to the tribe, even in the face of hopeless defeat, still often trumps pragmatic acceptance of political realities, as individual tribesmen seek distinction for their loyalty to the tribe.²⁵⁸



¹ Tripp, 8-9.

² Nieuwenhuis, 63.

³ Ibid., 169.

⁴ Ibid., 179.

⁵ Ibid., 46. Dina Rizk Khoury presents an alternative perspective on the Mamluk period in her study, *State and provincial society in the Ottoman Empire: Mosul, 1540-1834*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press) 1997. Khoury argues that, contrary to the established view, links between the central state and provincial social groups in Mosul were strengthened rather than weakened throughout the period.

⁶ Nieuwenhuis, 30.

⁷ Ibid., 35, 37-38.

⁸ The other three pillars were the Kurdish emirates, crushed by Ottoman armies between the 1830s and 1850s; the Mamluk dynasty, which ended in 1831; and the dominance of the Jalili family aristocracy in Mosul. Nieuwenhuis, 44.

⁹ Ibid., 44-45.

¹⁰ Ibid., 45.

¹¹ Ibid., 45.

¹² Ibid., 158.

¹³ Ibid., 158-159.

¹⁴ Ibid., 162.

¹⁵ Ibid., 163.

¹⁶ Ibid., 161.

¹⁷ Ibid., 161.

¹⁸ Ibid., 160.

¹⁹ The military-government balance of power was to change dramatically toward the end of WWI, when large numbers of modern rifles found their way into tribal hands.

²⁰ Nieuwenhuis, 161.

²¹ Ibid., 169.

²² Ibid., 177.

²³ Ibid., 87.

²⁴ Ibid., 87.

²⁵ Ibid., 97.

²⁶ Ibid., 96.

²⁷ Ibid., 173-174.

²⁸ Ibid., 97.

²⁹ Ibid., 88-89.

³⁰ Ibid., 175.

³¹ Ibid., 167.

³² Ibid., 167.

³³ Ibid., 168.

³⁴ Ibid., 168. Some predominantly Shia tribes had Sunni leaders, such as the Muntafiq.

³⁵ Jwaideh, 163-164.



³⁶ Nieuwenhuis, 181.

³⁷ Jwaideh, 164.

³⁸ Ibid., 164.

³⁹ Ibid., 164.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 164.

⁴¹ Ibid., 164.

⁴² Toby Dodge, *Inventing Iraq: The Failure of Nation Building and a History Denied*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 50.

⁴³ Ibid., 50.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 50-51.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 54-55.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 54.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 56-57.

⁴⁸ Gokhan Cetinsaya, "The Ottoman View of British Presence in Iraq and the Gulf: the Era of Abdulhamid II," *Middle Eastern Studies*, 39.2 (Apr. 2003): 194-204.

⁴⁹ Wikipedia, *Siege of Kut*, (accessed May 10, 2006); available from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Kut

⁵⁰ Stuart Cohen, "Mesopotamia in British Strategy," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 2. (Apr., 1978), 171, 179.

⁵¹ Dodge, 9.

⁵² Ibid., 9.

⁵³ Ibid., XI.

⁵⁴ Ibid., XI.

⁵⁵ Ibid., XI.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 8.

⁵⁷ Jwaideh, 165.

⁵⁸ Dodge, 109.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 165.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 165-167.

⁶¹ Mark Jacobsen, "Only by the Sword: British Counter-insurgency in Iraq, 1920," *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 2, 1991.

⁶² This summary of Dodge's points draws from William D. Casebeer, "The Importance of Treating Culture as a System: Lessons on Counter-Insurgency Strategy from the British Iraqi Mandate," *Strategic Insights*, Volume IV, Issue 10 (October 2005).

⁶³ Dodge, 43.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 43.

⁶⁵ *Effendi* was a Turkish title meaning a lord or master. It was a title of respect, equivalent to the English "sir", in Turkey and some other Eastern countries. It was generally given to members of the learned professions, and to government officials who had no higher rank, such as Bey or Pasha.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 43.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 45.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 46.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 47.

⁷⁰ See Stephen Helmsley Longrigg, *Four Centuries of Modern Iraq*, (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1925).

⁷¹ Dodge, 47-48.



⁷² Ibid., 47.

⁷³ Ibid., 47.

⁷⁴ Amal Vinogradov, "The 1920 Revolt in Iraq Reconsidered: The Role of Tribes in National Politics," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 2. (Apr., 1972), 123.

⁷⁵ Jacobsen, 3.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 24.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 16.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 16.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 17.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 17.

⁸¹ Ibid., 17.

⁸² Ibid., 26.

⁸³ Ibid., 26.

⁸⁴ Aylmer L. Haldane, *The Insurrection in Mesopotamia, 1920*, London: The Imperial War Museum, 1922, 304.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 27.

⁸⁶ Vinogradov, 123-124.

⁸⁷ Thair Karim, "Tribes and Nationalism: Tribal Political Culture and Behaviour in Iraq, 1914-1920," in *Tribes and Power: Nationalism and Ethnicity in the Middle East*, ed. Faleh Abdul-Jabar and Hosham Dawod, (London: Saqi Books, 2003), 283, 302.

⁸⁸ Vinogradov, 124.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 124.

⁹⁰ Vinogradov argues that while the revolt had significant Shia participation, evidence does not support the contention that the Shia joined the revolt only because they sought to reverse Sunni domination and install a theocratic Shia state.

⁹¹ The British supported Sharifian rule for Syria, but they did not understand the Sharifian desire for a "Greater Syria" that would include Palestine and Mesopotamia. Jacobsen, 6.

⁹² Jacobsen, 6.

⁹³ Vinogradov, 125.

⁹⁴ Jacobsen, 20.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 12.

⁹⁶ Haldane to War Office, 30 Aug. 1920, circulated to the Cabinet as CP 1815, 31 Aug. 1920, CAB 24/11. Cited in Jacobsen, 20.

⁹⁷ G. Bell, Review of the Civil Administration of Mesopotamia," Cmd. 1061, p. 143. Cited in Jacobsen, 21. Bell's views underwent a transformation during 1919. She had previously dismissed Arab nationalist movements but, during the course of 1919, came to believe that Sharifian-led Arab self-rule in Iraq was a necessity. See also Elie Kedourie, *England and the Middle East: The Destruction of the Ottoman Empire 1914-1921*, (London: Mansell Publishing Limited, 1987), 201-204.

⁹⁸ Jacobsen, 28.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 27-28.

¹⁰⁰ Dodge, 57.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 6.

¹⁰² Ibid., 71.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 73-74.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 74-75.



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- ¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 74-75.
¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 83.
¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 75.
¹⁰⁸ See, for example, John Bagot Glubb, *Arabian Adventures*, (London, UK: Cassell Ltd., 1978).
¹⁰⁹ Dodge, 78.
¹¹⁰ Ibid., 83.
¹¹¹ Ibid., 86.
¹¹² This conclusion is stated implicitly in Dodge.
¹¹³ Tripp, 37.
¹¹⁴ Ibid., 37.
¹¹⁵ Dodge, 95
¹¹⁶ Ibid., 97.
¹¹⁷ Ibid., 109.
¹¹⁸ Tripp, 69.
¹¹⁹ Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq*, (London: Saqi Books, 2004), 147.
¹²⁰ Ibid., 152.
¹²¹ Ibid., 93.
¹²² Ibid., 116.
¹²³ Ibid., 116.
¹²⁴ Dodge, 128-129.
¹²⁵ Ibid., 132.
¹²⁶ Ibid., 134.
¹²⁷ Michael Eppel, "The Elite, the Effendiyya, and the Growth of Nationalism and Pan-Arabism in Hashemite Iraq, 1921-1958," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (May, 1998), 242.
¹²⁸ Ibid., 242.
¹²⁹ Ibid., 242.
¹³⁰ Ibid., 243.
¹³¹ Ibid., 246.
¹³² Tripp, 44.
¹³³ Ibid., 37.
¹³⁴ Ibid., 37.
¹³⁵ Batatu, 90.
¹³⁶ Dodge, 112.
¹³⁷ Ibid., 112.
¹³⁸ Tripp, 42.
¹³⁹ Dodge, 84.
¹⁴⁰ Tripp, 52-53.
¹⁴¹ Dodge, 83.
¹⁴² Ibid., 84.
¹⁴³ Ibid., 85.
¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 86.
¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 87-89.



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- ¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 88-89.
- ¹⁴⁷ Cleveland, 468.
- ¹⁴⁸ Lt Col Robert R. Sarnoski, "The Fight for Oman 1963-1975: Analysis of Civil-Military Operations in Low-Intensity Conflict and its Relevance to Current World Conflict," (Air War College, Air University, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, April 1995), 6.
- ¹⁴⁹ William L. Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, Third Edition (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2004), 468.
- ¹⁵⁰ Sarnoski, 6.
- ¹⁵¹ Sarnoski, 6, 30. Cleveland, 468.
- ¹⁵² Bard E. O'Neill, "Revolutionary War in Oman," in *Insurgency in the Modern World*, eds. Bard E. O'Neill, William R. Heaton, and Donald J. Alberts, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1980), 214.
- ¹⁵³ Ibid., 215-216.
- ¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 216.
- ¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 216-217.
- ¹⁵⁶ Subsequent name changes are detailed in Ibid., 217-218.
- ¹⁵⁷ Ian F. W. Beckett, *Modern Insurgencies and Counter-Insurgencies: Guerrillas and their Opponents since 1750*, Reprinted 2003 (London: Routledge, 2001), 218.
- ¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 218.
- ¹⁵⁹ O'Neill, "Revolutionary War in Oman," 218-228.
- ¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 218-228; Sarnoski, 35.
- ¹⁶¹ Bard E. O'Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism: From Revolution to Apocalypse*, 2nd ed., Revised (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2005), 30.
- ¹⁶² Beckett, 217.
- ¹⁶³ Sarnoski, 26.
- ¹⁶⁴ O'Neill, "Revolutionary War in Oman," 225.
- ¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 225.
- ¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 225.
- ¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 226.
- ¹⁶⁸ BDM Corporation, "Oman 1962-1975, Appendix E," E-5.
- ¹⁶⁹ O'Neill, "Revolutionary War in Oman," 225-226.
- ¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 226.
- ¹⁷¹ Ibid., 226.
- ¹⁷² BDM Corporation, "Oman 1962-1975, Appendix E," E-8.
- ¹⁷³ Beckett, 228.
- ¹⁷⁴ O'Neill, "Revolutionary War in Oman," 218.
- ¹⁷⁵ Calvin H. Allen, *Oman: The Modernization of the Sultanate*, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987), 74. Quoted in Sarnoski, 37.
- ¹⁷⁶ O'Neill, "Revolutionary War in Oman," 228.
- ¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 228.
- ¹⁷⁸ Sarnoski, 32.
- ¹⁷⁹ BDM Corporation, "Oman 1962-1975, Appendix E," E-10.
- ¹⁸⁰ Sarnoski, 31.
- ¹⁸¹ O'Neill, "Revolutionary War in Oman," 214.



- ¹⁸² “Oman: Reform, Security, and U.S. Policy,” *CRS Report for Congress*, RS21534, Updated June 28, 2005.
- ¹⁸³ Spencer Mawby, “Aden Insurgency: The Savage War in South Arabia 1962-1967” (Book Review), *The Middle East Journal* 59.3, (Summer 2005).
- ¹⁸⁴ Spencer Mawby, “From Tribal Rebellions to Revolution: British Counter-Insurgency Operations in Southwest Arabia 1955-67,” *Electronic Journal of International History*, December 2000 (Accessed May 20, 2006). Available from <http://www.history.ac.uk/ejournal/art5.html>, 3.
- ¹⁸⁵ Wikipedia, “History of Yemen,” (Accessed May 28, 2006). Available from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Yemen#Former_South_Yemen.
- ¹⁸⁶ Ibid.,
- ¹⁸⁷ Cleveland, 454-455.
- ¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 454-455.
- ¹⁸⁹ Wikipedia, “History of Yemen.”
- ¹⁹⁰ Ibid.,
- ¹⁹¹ Ibid.,
- ¹⁹² Mawby, “From Tribal Rebellions to Revolution: British Counter-Insurgency Operations in Southwest Arabia 1955-67,” 1.
- ¹⁹³ Ibid., 40.
- ¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 1.
- ¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 1-2.
- ¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 40.
- ¹⁹⁷ Jonathan Walker, *Aden Insurgency: The Savage War in South Arabia 1962-1967*, (Staplehurst, UK: Spellmount Limited, 2005), quoted in Spencer Mawby, “Aden Insurgency: The Savage War in South Arabia 1962-1967” (Book Review), *The Middle East Journal* 59.3, (Summer 2005).
- ¹⁹⁸ Spencer Mawby, “From Tribal Rebellions to Revolution: British Counter-Insurgency Operations in Southwest Arabia 1955-67,” 40-41.
- ¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 41.
- ²⁰⁰ Ibid., 41.
- ²⁰¹ Cleveland, 232-233.
- ²⁰² Ibid., 123.
- ²⁰³ Ibid., 123.
- ²⁰⁴ Ibid., 123.
- ²⁰⁵ Ibid., 231.
- ²⁰⁶ Ibid., 231.
- ²⁰⁷ Ibid., 232.
- ²⁰⁸ Ibid., 233.
- ²⁰⁹ McFate and Jackson, 13.
- ²¹⁰ Joseph Kostiner, “Transforming Dualities: Tribe and State Formation in Saudi Arabia,” in *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East*, ed. Philip S. Khoury and Joseph Kostiner, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990), 235.
- ²¹¹ Kostiner, 235.
- ²¹² Faleh A. Jabar, “Sheikhs and Ideologues: Deconstruction and Reconstruction of Tribes under Patrimonial Totalitarianism in Iraq, 1968-1998”, in *Tribes and Power: Nationalism and Ethnicity in the Middle East*, (London: Saqi Books, 2003), 69-71.
- ²¹³ Amatzia Baram, *Building Toward Crisis: Saddam Husayn’s Strategy for Survival*, (Washington, DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1998), 25.



- ²¹⁴ Faleh A. Jabar, "Sheikhs and Ideologues: Deconstruction and Reconstruction of Tribes under Patrimonial Totalitarianism in Iraq, 1968-1998," 75-76.
- ²¹⁵ Judith Yaphe, "Tribalism in Iraq, the Old and the New," *Middle East Policy*, June, 2000.
- ²¹⁶ Ibid.
- ²¹⁷ Durrani, N., 2001. 'Anaasir al-Kuwwa fil-Hukuuma al-Iraaqiyya fil-qarn il-'ashrina. Cairo: Dar al-Mish'al. p. 48.
- ²¹⁸ F. Stone, "Tribe and Social Mobility in Iraq," *Journal of International Ethnic and Power Relations*, Vol. 23.4 (2001), 56.
- ²¹⁹ Ibid., 59.
- ²²⁰ Amatzia Baram, "Neo-Tribalism in Iraq: Saddam Husayn's Tribal Policies, 1991 – 1995," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 29 February, 1997, 1-31.
- ²²¹ F.A. Jabar, "How Saddam Keeps Power in Iraq," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, October 2002, 4.
- ²²² A. Dawisha, "Iraqi Politics: the Past and Present as Context for the Future," In, *The Future of Iraq*, (Washington, DC: Middle East Institute, 1997), 12.
- ²²³ Durrani, N., 2001. 'Anaasir al-Kuwwa fil-Hukuuma al-Iraaqiyya fil-qarn il-'ashrina. Cairo: Dar al-Mish'al. p. 23-25.
- ²²⁴ Coup-proofing measures, as classically defined by James Quinlivan, include "the effective exploitation of family, ethnic, and religious loyalties for coup-critical positions balanced with wider participation and less restrictive loyalty standards for the regime as a whole; the creation of an armed force parallel to the regular military; the development of multiple internal security agencies with overlapping jurisdiction that constantly monitor the loyalty of the military and one another with independent paths of communication to critical leaders; the fostering of expertness in the regular military; and the financing of such measures." See: J.T. Quinlivan, "Coop-proofing: Its Practice and Consequences in the Middle East," *International Security* 24(2) (Fall 1999), 133.
- ²²⁵ Baram, "Neo-Tribalism in Iraq: Saddam Husayn's Tribal Policies, 1991 – 1995," 24.
- ²²⁶ Al-Bayaan Al-'Iraaqiyy. December 16, 1998.
- ²²⁷ For an in-depth discussion of the events in questions, see Amatzia Baram, *Building Toward Crisis: Saddam Husayn's Strategy for Survival*, 27.
- ²²⁸ Al-Jumhuriyya, June 20, 1995.
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CHAPTER SIX: ANALYTIC AND OPERATIONAL TOOLS IN COUNTER INSURGENCY

Introduction

Since the purpose of engaging and influencing the tribes of al-Anbar Governorate is to assist the US in conducting successful counter insurgency operations in Iraq, it is important to briefly review the nature of insurgency and counter insurgency operations and to identify useful analytic and operational tools for use in the counter insurgency in Iraq.

An Overview of Insurgency

“This is another type of war, new in its intensity, ancient in its origins – war by guerrillas, subversives, insurgents, assassins; war by ambush instead of by combat; by infiltration, instead of aggression, seeking victory by eroding and exhausting the enemy instead of engaging him . . . It requires in those situations where we must counter it . . . a whole new kind of strategy, a wholly different kind of force, and therefore a new and wholly different kind of military training.”

President John F. Kennedy, in a
speech to the graduating class at
West Point, June 1962¹

An insurgency is a type of unconventional warfare. While there are many definitions of unconventional warfare, the use of the term in this paper simply means a conflict within a country where one or both belligerents fight with irregular (i.e. paramilitary forces, semi-trained popular forces or former conventional military units that have been reconstituted to fight in small lightly armed units and out of uniform), rather than conventionally constituted military forces. It thus applies to a wide-range of conflicts and a spectrum of violence that falls short of regular force on regular force engagements.

Insurgency has ancient roots. Ian Beckett notes that the first written reference to guerrilla warfare appears to be in a 15th century BC Hittite parchment called the *Anastas*.² The Bible contains references to guerrilla warfare, and Imperial Rome experienced numerous guerrilla campaigns directed against it in North Africa, Britain, Gaul, Spain, and Germany. Mao Tse-Tung's writings on guerrilla tactics are not noticeably different from the principles Sun Tzu set out in his book, *The Art of War*.³ The word *guerrilla*, or “little war,” was used to describe the activities



of Spanish irregulars resisting Napoleon's occupying forces between 1808 and 1815.

Beckett contends that prior to the 1930s and 1940s, guerrilla warfare was viewed as a purely military form of conflict, e.g., the "hit and run" tactics of a disadvantaged force facing a superior foe, or the "weapons of the weak." It was during this latter period that "guerrilla warfare became revolutionary in both intent and practice, with social, economic, psychological and, especially, political elements grafted on to traditional irregular military tactics in order to radically alter the structure of a state by force."⁴ When married with revolutionary ideology, political mobilization of the population, and – in some cases – a strategy of protracted conflict, the concept of guerrilla warfare evolved into that of insurgency.

Insurgency does not necessarily have a guerrilla warfare component, but can be waged through political means supplemented by varying types and levels of violence. The definitions of insurgency discussed below emphasize its political nature.

Definitions of and Approaches to Analyzing Insurgency

A look at several definitions of insurgency can be helpful in constructing a framework for evaluating the unfolding situation in Iraq. Terrorism should also be defined and distinguished from insurgency, and the areas where the two overlap should be highlighted.

The Central Intelligence Agency's *Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency* contains the following definition of insurgency:

Insurgency is a protracted political-military activity directed toward completely or partially controlling the resources of a country through the use of irregular military forces and illegal political organizations. Insurgent activity – including guerrilla warfare, terrorism, and political mobilization, for example, propaganda, recruitment, front and covert party organization, and international activity – is designed to weaken government control and legitimacy while strengthening insurgent control and legitimacy. The common denominator of most insurgent groups is their desire to control a particular area. This objective differentiates insurgent groups from purely terrorist organizations, whose objectives do not include the creation of an alternative government capable of controlling a given area or country.⁵

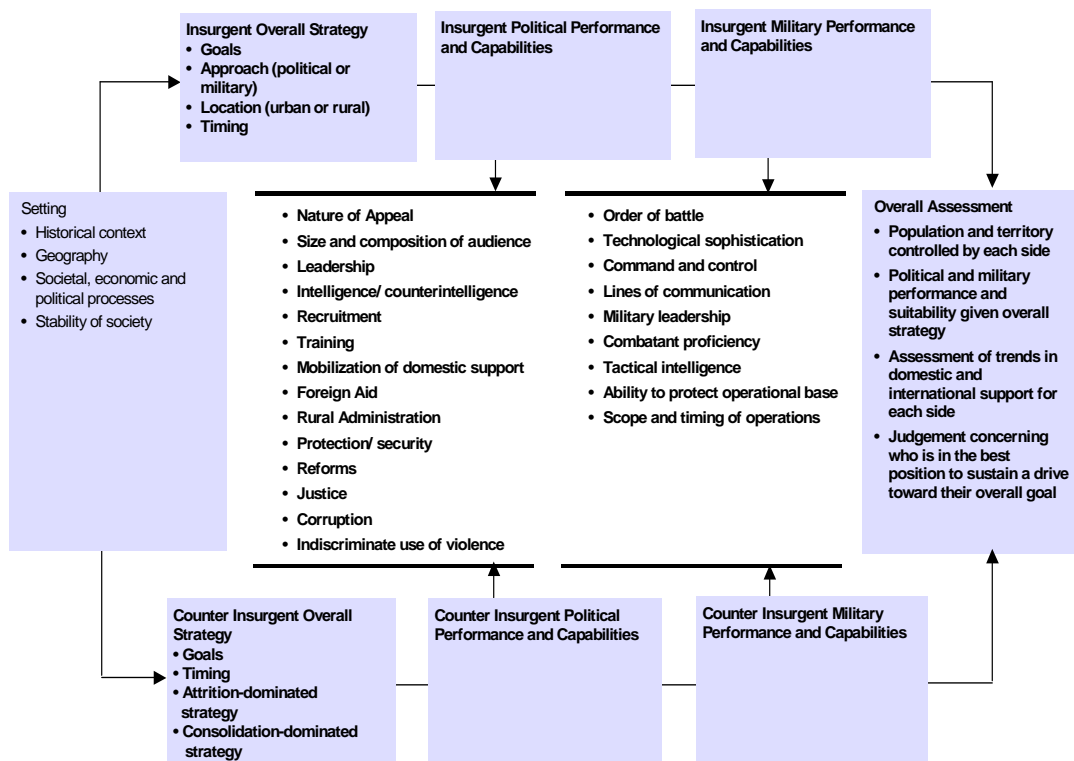


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The CIA framework sets out four broad categories of insurgency – politically organized, militarily organized, traditionally organized, and urban – each primarily defined by organizational strategy. The first category, politically organized, is marked by having an extensive political structure in place before undertaking military operations, and by the objective of establishing a shadow government. Protracted warfare is the strategy, political consolidation precedes military consolidation, and such movements are often characterized by excessive revolutionary zeal.

CIA Analytic Process



In a militarily organized insurgency, military consolidation precedes political consolidation in contested areas, and insurgents hope that military action serves as a catalyst in mobilizing opposition to the government. The strategy seeks to avoid the burden of protracted warfare and extensive political organization, and instead achieve results with a small, decentralized structure of armed insurgents (as reflected by the Cuban *foco* strategy).

A traditionally organized insurgency is based on existing tribal or religious structures and has no unique strategy, but will adopt one of the three other



insurgency types' strategies. This type of insurgency recruits on the basis of ethnic exclusivity, and its leaders often lack discipline and military experience.

An urban insurgency seeks to threaten a regime's legitimacy through urban disruption, and is organized in a cellular structure in an urban environment. An urban insurgency is often a supporting component of a wider insurgency in rural areas (as is the case with the New Peoples' Army in the Philippines). Urban insurgents are restricted to small areas and must hide amongst the populations.

In his book *Insurgency & Terrorism: From Revolution to Apocalypse*, Bard O'Neill notes that insurgency dates back to Roman times and has probably been the most common type of armed conflict since the development of organized political communities.⁶ O'Neill sets out a comprehensive framework for analyzing insurgencies, illustrated with material from case studies. He defines insurgency as:

[A] struggle between a non-ruling group and the ruling authorities in which the non-ruling group consciously uses *political resources* (e.g. organizational expertise, propaganda, and demonstrations) and *violence* to destroy, reformulate, or sustain the basis of legitimacy of one or more aspects of politics.⁷

O'Neill identifies nine types of insurgent movements: anarchist, egalitarian, traditionalist, apocalyptic-utopian, pluralist, secessionist, reformist, preservationist, and commercialist.⁸ The first five types seek to completely change an existing political system and are thus classified as revolutionary. Several of O'Neill's types are or have at times been represented by elements of Iraq's insurgent movements, namely the traditionalist and commercialist varieties. Additionally, Kurdish groups have formed secessionist insurgencies at various times during Iraq's history.

Traditionalist insurgents seek to replace the existing political system with one based on primordial, sacred values rooted in ancestral ties and religion. The systems these insurgents seek to impose are marked by low autonomy, with political power concentrated in the hands of an autocratic leader, often in the pattern of a system that existed in the recent or distant past. Moderate Islamic groups in Afghanistan would fall into this category.

A zealous subset of traditionalist insurgents that O'Neill calls *reactionary-traditionalists* seek to reestablish what they idealize as a golden age in the form of an ancient political system. Examples include the Muslim Brotherhood, Egyptian Islamic Jihad, Hizballah, and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's party in Afghanistan. Iraq's Shia Sadrist movement and al-Dawa al-Islamiyya party subscribe to the ideology of reactionary-traditionalist insurgents, although both groups hold power in the Iraqi government. The foreign Salafi jihadist and Iraqi



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Sunni Islamist elements of the Iraqi insurgency are examples of the reactionary-traditionalist subtype because they seek to institute an ancient political and social system of the Islamic caliphate, which – although their vision may be distorted – they idealize as a golden age.⁹ In contrast, the secular-leaning Sunni former regime elements in Iraq could more appropriately be called restorationists, seeking to return to their privileged status.

Commercialist insurgents are motivated by money, aiming for little more than to acquire material resources through the seizure and control of political power. Examples of commercialist insurgents include the Revolutionary United Front in Sierra Leone and the organized crime elements of the Iraqi insurgency.

Secessionist insurgents reject the political community to which they belong and seek to withdraw from it and establish a new and independent order. Examples include the Eritrean movement in Ethiopia, the LTTE, the Polisario in the Western Sahara, and the Baluchistan National Liberation Front in the tri-border region of Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan. The classic secessionist movement was the Confederacy in the U.S. Civil War. While the groups seek to impose different types of systems, secession is their unifying goal. The Kurdish groups in Iraq have at times fought for secession.

O'Neill highlights five problems that make it difficult to identify insurgent types.¹⁰ *Goal transformation* occurs when leaders replace each other or recalculate their goals in light of their situations. *Goal conflicts* occur when insurgent factions have different or mutually exclusive goals, often leading to internecine fighting. *Misleading rhetoric* is the result of a leader masking his true objectives with democratic rhetoric. *Goal ambiguity* occurs when insurgent groups have competing aims, but one does not clearly predominate. *Confusion of ultimate and intermediate goals* occurs when observers focus on, for example, an apocalyptic-utopian group's short-term aims of fomenting disorder, while losing sight of the group's desired outcome.¹¹

Addressing the means of warfare, O'Neill highlights the wide range of political activities insurgent movements engage in – such as propaganda, soliciting outside support, and creating front groups – and stresses the importance of effective organization. He differentiates between selective organizations and mobilizational organizations. In the former, small groups of elites carry out violent acts, as in the case of the Red Brigades in Italy or the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria. In a mobilizational organization, for example the Vietnamese and Chinese movements, insurgent elites try to involve large segments of the population in support of their cause. This type of insurgency is the most organizationally demanding.



O'Neill writes that the violent aspect of an insurgency is manifested in different forms of warfare. He defines a form of warfare as "one variety of organized violence emphasizing particular armed forces, weapons, tactics, and targets."¹² The three forms of warfare associated with insurgencies have been terrorism, guerrilla warfare, and conventional warfare. In the next chapter, O'Neill describes the four main insurgent strategic approaches: the conspiratorial strategy, the strategy of protracted popular war, the military-focus strategy, and the urban-warfare strategy. O'Neill then identifies a fifth potential insurgent approach, the transnational strategy as exemplified by al-Qaeda.

Terrorism Versus Insurgency

In contrast to insurgency, which is a revolutionary activity using politico-military means, terrorism is a tactic. Insurgent groups utilize terrorism to varying degrees according to their ideology, environment, and the stage of conflict they have reached. Terrorism, however, can be relied on to such an extent that it comes to define the group. Noting the complexity of defining terrorism, Shultz, Farah, and Lochard propose the following operationally focused, or value neutral, definition:

Terrorism is the deliberate creation and exploitation of fear by an armed group through the threat and/or use of the most proscribed kind of violence for political purposes, whether for or in opposition to an established government. The act is designed to have a far-reaching psychological effect beyond the immediate target of the attack and to instill fear in and intimidate a wider audience. The targets of terrorist groups increasingly are non-combatants, and large numbers of them, who under international norms have the status of protected individuals and groups.¹³

Shultz, Farah, and Lochard write that terrorists differ from insurgents in several ways, notably in tactics and targeting. While insurgents rely on a range of political and paramilitary tactics, one of which is terrorism, terrorist groups, on the other hand, "have a more narrow operational approach that increasingly focuses on targeting non-combatants."¹⁴ During the 1990's, this approach increasingly emphasized mass casualties and indiscriminate targeting, frequently of protected persons and groups. The authors write that both insurgents and terrorist groups were increasingly motivated by ethnicity and religion in the 1990s, noting both the religious focus of approximately half of all known terrorist groups, and the fact that the vast majority of such groups are located in the Islamic world.¹⁵

Shultz, Farah, and Lochard emphasize the political nature of insurgency as a struggle for control and legitimacy, utilizing a range of political and military activities including political mobilization, political action, propaganda, and



psychological warfare, all aimed at weakening the state's political power while strengthening that of the group.

The definitions of insurgency place more emphasis on the ends aspect (overthrowing an established order), while terrorism definitions focus on terrorism as a means (deliberate targeting of protected persons in order to generate terror for political purposes). Terrorism is of course a political activity as well, but Shultz, Farah, and Lochard note that:

Terrorists differ from insurgents in several ways. Important distinctions can be seen in tactics and targeting. Insurgents use a number of political and paramilitary tactics, of which terrorism frequently is only one. Terrorist groups, on the other hand, have a more narrow operational approach that increasingly focuses on targeting non-combatants."¹⁶

The Nature of Insurgency¹⁷

As noted above, an insurgency is an organized, armed political struggle whose goal may be the seizure of power through revolutionary takeover and replacement of the existing government. In some cases, however, an insurgency's goals may be more limited. For example, the insurgency may intend to break away from government control and establish an autonomous state within traditional ethnic or religious territorial bounds. The insurgency may also only intend to extract limited political concessions unattainable through less violent means.

To undertake an insurgency against the armed power of the state is a bold act, but the success of past insurgencies clearly demonstrates that the effort can be successful. Insurgencies generally follow a revolutionary doctrine and use armed force as an instrument of policy. At first, they usually have few resources other than the dedication of their members and the strength of their cause. Successful insurgents devise means to convert their own weaknesses into strengths and to turn the government's strengths into weaknesses.

Causes and Dynamics

While causes of insurgency are vary greatly, and all insurgencies have multiple causes, Anthony James Joes has identified what he calls "wellsprings," which are often the predominant factor in provoking, justifying, or providing an opportunity for an outbreak.¹⁸ Five wellsprings are rigged or suppressed elections; a tradition of internal conflict; the aspirations of former, marginal, or would-be elites; defeat in war; and a response to genocide.



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Rigged or suppressed elections have closed off peaceful roads to change in 1790s France, 1920s Mexico, the 1920s Philippines, 1970s El Salvador, and 1990s Kashmir. Multi-generation traditions of internal conflict have plagued Northern Ireland, Yugoslavia and its successors, Angola, Sudan, Mozambique, Algeria, and, most notably, Colombia. Insurgencies tend not to erupt out of oppressive conditions alone. Rather, especially in Latin America, they tend to be led by educated but marginalized elites. Examples where defeat in war weakened the ruling authorities' foundations of power include the Philippines, Malaya, Indonesia, and Vietnam – all of which were invaded by Japan. The recent Chechen conflict and the Polish uprising against Nazi occupation are examples of insurgency in response to policies of genocide.

Beyond the wellsprings, Joes cites an additional prime motivator for insurgency: perceived outrages against religious institutions and sentiments.¹⁹ Religious issues played a major role in insurgencies in Spain (1808-1815), Mexico (1920s-1940s), Tibet (1950s), Sudan (1950s-present), Afghanistan (1970s-present), and Chechnya (1990s-present), among others. Several wellsprings, as well as religious motivations, are present in Iraq today.

Insurgencies succeed by mobilizing human and material resources to provide both active and passive support for their programs, operations, and goals. Mobilization produces skilled workers and fighters, raises money, and acquires weapons, equipment, and supplies of all kinds. Mobilization grows out of intense popular dissatisfaction with existing political and social conditions. The insurgency's active supporters consider these conditions intolerable. They are willing to risk death in violent confrontation with their government to effect change. The insurgent leadership articulates their dissatisfaction, places the blame on government, and offers a program to improve conditions. The insurgent leadership then provides organizational and management skills to transform disaffected people into an effective force for political action. Ultimately, the insurgents need the active support of a plurality of the politically active people and the passive acquiescence of the majority.

The insurgent leadership stresses and exploits issues that key social groups support. At the same time, it neutralizes groups supporting the government and seeks at least passive support from the society at large. The government, on the other hand, must convince key groups that its policies are reasonable, while keeping the passive support of the majority. The contest is for legitimacy. Each side seeks to demonstrate that it can govern better. Neither side needs to gain active popular support from the majority of the population as long as it gets more effective support than its opponent. This dynamic may take place within any political system, including a democracy.



Insurgency arises when the government is unable or unwilling to redress the demands of important social groups, and these opponents band together and begin to use violence to change the government's position. Insurgencies are coalitions of disparate forces united by their common enmity for the government. To the extent that these coalitions find common ground, their prospects improve. As these groups evolve, they compromise and negotiate their differences. To be successful, an insurgency must develop unifying leadership, doctrine, and organization, and a vision of the future. Only the seeds of these exist when an insurgency begins; the insurgents must continually review and revise them.

Elements Common to All Insurgencies

This section discusses seven elements that are common to all insurgencies:

- Leadership
- Ideology
- Objectives
- Environment and geography
- External support
- Phasing and timing
- Organizational and operational patterns

These elements provide a framework for analysis that can reveal the insurgency's strengths and weaknesses. Although the counterinsurgency planners examine them separately, they must understand how they interact to fully understand the insurgency. They can use the knowledge gained from this analysis to devise and implement effective measures to counter the insurgency.

Leadership. Insurgency is not simply random political violence; it is directed and focused political violence. It requires leadership to provide vision, direction, guidance, coordination, and organizational coherence.

The leaders of the insurgency must make their cause known to the people. They must gain popular support. Their key tasks are to break the ties between the people and the government and to establish their movement's credibility. They must replace the government's legitimacy with that of their own. Their education, background, family, social connections, and experiences shape how they think, what they want, and how they will fulfill their goals. These factors also help shape their approach to problem solving.

Leadership is both a function of organization and of personality. Some organizations de-emphasize individual personalities and provide mechanisms for redundancy and replacement in decision-making; these mechanisms produce collective power and do not depend on specific leaders or personalities to be



effective. They are easier to penetrate but more resilient to change. Other organizations may depend on a charismatic personality to provide cohesion, motivation, and a rallying point for the movement. Leadership organized in this way can produce decisions and initiate new actions rapidly, but it is vulnerable to disruption if key personalities are removed or co-opted.

Ideology. To win, the insurgency must have a program that explains what is wrong with society and justifies its actions. It must promise great improvement after the government is overthrown. The insurgency accomplishes this through ideology. Ideology guides the insurgents in offering society a goal. The insurgents often express this goal in simple terms for ease of focus. The insurgency's future plans must be vague enough for broad appeal and specific enough to address important issues.

The insurgent leader can use ideology:

- To provide an overview of the perceived social and political inequities in historical terms;
- To justify the use of violence and extralegal action in challenging the current social order; and,
- To form the framework of the program for the future-the road map for accomplishing the insurgency's goals.

Ideology is useful evidence for the counter insurgency analyst. It identifies those sectors of society that the insurgency targets. The ideologies of groups within the movement may indicate differing views of strategic objectives. Groups may have ideological conflicts which they can resolve or which an opponent can exploit. Ideology may suggest probable objectives and tactics. It greatly influences the insurgent's perception of his environment. The combination of the insurgent's ideology and his perception of his environment shape the movement's organizational and operational methods.

Unfortunately for the analyst, insurgents are not likely to describe their ideology in specific detail. The counter insurgency planner must partly deduce it from other factors. Insurgents will project some ambiguity to accommodate differences in aims among the various groups within the movement. In addition, the analyst's own cultural bias may make it difficult for him to distinguish statements of ideology and strategic objectives from propaganda.

Objectives. Effective analysis of an insurgency requires counter insurgency planners to interpret its strategic, operational, and tactical objectives.

The strategic objective is the insurgent's desired end state; that is, how the insurgent will use power once he has it. The replacement of the government in



power is only one step along this path; however, it will likely be the initial focus of efforts. Typically, the strategic objective is critical to cohesion among insurgent groups. It may be the only clearly defined goal that the movement presents. In any case, the military planner should examine the internal structure of the insurgent group to fully understand the often-competing strategic objectives of its members. Ideology provides critical evidence in this examination.

Operational objectives are those that the insurgents pursue as part of the overall process of destroying government legitimacy and progressively establishing their desired end state. The following are examples of operational objectives:

- Isolation of the government from diplomatic and material support, and increased international support for the insurgency;
- Destruction of the self-confidence of the government's leaders, cadre, and armed forces, causing them to abdicate or withdraw;
- Establishment of civil services and administration in areas under insurgent control; and,
- Capture of the support (or neutrality) of critical segments of the population.

Tactical objectives are the immediate aims of insurgent acts, for example, the dissemination of a psychological operations (PSYOP) product or the attack and seizure of a key facility. These actions accomplish tactical objectives that lead to operational goals. Tactical objectives can be psychological as well as physical in nature. For example, legitimacy in the eyes of the population, and therefore the support of the population, is the center of gravity for both the insurgents and the counter insurgents. Legitimacy is largely a product of perception; consequently, it can be the principal consideration in the selection and attainment of tactical objectives.

Environment and Geography. Environment and geography include cultural and demographic attributes, as well as climate and terrain, and affect all participants in a conflict. The manner in which insurgents and counterinsurgents adapt to these realities creates advantages and disadvantages for each. The effects of environment and geography are most visible at the tactical level where they are perhaps the predominant influence on decisions regarding force structure, doctrine, and tactics, techniques, and procedures.

Other decisions which environment and geography influence include:

- Distribution of insurgent efforts between urban and rural areas;
- Adoption of appropriate organizational and operational patterns, for example, urban areas versus rural areas;
- Whether to advance to a new phase of operations, return to an earlier phase, or change patterns, programs, or strategies; and,



- Whether to open new operational areas.

External Support. Historically, some insurgencies have done well without external support. However, examples such as Vietnam and Nicaragua show that external support can accelerate events and influence the final outcome. External support can provide political, psychological, and material resources that might otherwise be limited or totally unavailable.

There are four types of external support:

- Moral - acknowledgment of the insurgent cause as just and admirable.
- Political - active promotion of the insurgents' strategic goals in international forums.
- Resources - money, weapons, food, advisors, and training.
- Sanctuary - secure training, operational, and logistical bases.

Accepting external support may affect the legitimacy of both insurgents and counter insurgents. It implies the inability to sustain oneself - a vulnerability the opponent will exploit. In addition, the country or group providing support attaches its legitimacy to the group being supported. It can, therefore, gain or lose legitimacy along with the insurgent or counter insurgent group it supports. The consequences can affect programs in the supporting nation wholly unrelated to the insurgent situation. The military planner must consider these important collateral effects as well.

The probability of a long-term, harmonious relationship between a nation and the insurgents or counter insurgents it supports increases if their objectives and ideologies are compatible. It decreases if they are incompatible.

Phasing and Timing. Successful insurgencies pass through common phases of development. Not all insurgencies experience every phase, and progression through all phases is certainly not a requirement for success. The same insurgent movement may be in another phase of development in other regions of a country or theater. Successful insurgencies can also revert to an earlier phase when under pressure, resuming development when favorable conditions return.

Some insurgencies depend on proper timing for their success. Because of their limited support, their success depends on weakening the government's legitimacy so that it becomes ineffective. Then, an opportunity to seize power exists. When these insurgencies move to seize power, they expose their organization and intentions. If they move too early or too late, the government may discover their organization, and destroy it. Timing is critical.



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The statement, "time is on the side of the insurgent" often appears in the literature on insurgency. This implies that an initially insignificant effort, maintained long enough, will succeed. Experiences in China and Vietnam support this assertion. These experiences, however, are not automatically transferable to other situations. Gaining time, or surviving, is a more effective measure of success for the insurgent than counting battles won or lost. It is an equally effective measure of success for the counter insurgent. However, gaining time, by itself will not produce victory, although it is a necessary condition for it. In general, victory in an insurgency belongs to the side that has the stronger psychological commitment, possesses the greater political and military skills, and makes the least mistakes.

Organizational and Operational Patterns. Insurgencies develop organizational and operational patterns from the interaction of all the factors discussed above. The four general patterns are:

- Subversive
- Mass-oriented
- Critical-cell
- Traditional

The analyst should understand that each insurgency is unique. No insurgent movement follows one model exclusively.

Subversive insurgents penetrate the political structure to control it and use it for their own purposes. They seek elective and appointed offices. They employ violence selectively to coerce voters, intimidate officials, and disrupt and discredit the government. Violence shows the system to be incompetent. It may also provoke the government to an excessively violent response -- which further undermines its legitimacy. A highly compartmented armed element normally carries out insurgent violence. A political element guides the armed element and also maneuvers for control of the existing political structure.

A subversive insurgency most often appears in a permissive political environment in which insurgents can use both legal and illegal methods. The typical subversive organization consists of a legal party supported by a clandestine element operating outside the law. Subversive insurgencies can quickly shift to the "critical-cell" pattern when conditions dictate. The Nazi rise to power in the 1930s is an example of this model. Subversive insurgencies primarily present a problem for police and internal intelligence agencies. National defense forces normally act only in a reinforcement role.

In the critical-cell pattern, the insurgents also infiltrate government institutions. Their object is to destroy the system from within. The infiltrators operate both



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covertly and overtly. Normally, the insurgents do not reveal their affiliation or program. They seek to undermine institutional legitimacy and convince or coerce others to assist them. Their violence remains covert until the institutions are so weakened that the insurgency's superior organization seizes power, supported by armed force. The Russian revolution of October 1917, or Leninist model, followed this pattern.

Two variations of the critical-cell pattern deserve mention. The first is the co-opting of an essentially leaderless, mass popular revolution. The Sandinistas' takeover of the Nicaraguan revolution is a case in point. The insurgent leadership permits the popular revolution to destroy the existing government. The insurgent movement then emerges, activating its cells to guide reconstruction under its direction. It provides a disciplined structure to control the former bureaucracy. The mass popular revolution then coalesces around that structure.

A second variation of the critical cell pattern is the *foco* (or Cuban model) insurgency. A *foco* is a single, armed cell that emerges from hidden strongholds in an atmosphere of disintegrating legitimacy. In theory, this cell is the nucleus around which mass popular support rallies. The insurgents erect new institutions and establish control on the basis of that support. The Cuban revolution occurred in this manner. The Cuban experience spawned over 200 subsequent imitative revolutionary attempts patterned on it, principally in Latin America and Africa. They all failed. This does not discredit the *foco* theory; it does emphasize the importance of a particular set of circumstances to this model. Legitimacy must be near total collapse. Timing is critical. The *foco* must mature at the same time as the government loses legitimacy, and before any alternative appears. The Nicaraguan insurgency combined the *foco* with a broad-front political coalition, indicating a synthesis of methodologies typical of successful insurgencies.

In general, critical-cell insurgencies are police and internal intelligence problems. They normally involve the national defense forces only in a reinforcement role. However, *foco* insurgencies may require more direct action by regular armed forces. *Foco* insurgencies are often made up predominately of guerrilla fighters operating initially from remote enclaves. Civilian law enforcement agencies are generally too small and not configured to mount a direct attack against a heavily armed enclave. Security forces may need to employ military force directly to deal with this variation.

The mass-oriented insurgency aims to achieve the political and armed mobilization of a large popular movement. Unlike those in the two previous models, mass-oriented insurgents emphasize creating a political and armed legitimacy outside the existing system. They challenge that system and then destroy or supplant it.



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These insurgents patiently build a large armed force of regular and irregular guerrillas. They also construct a base of active and passive political supporters. They plan a protracted campaign of increasing violence to destroy the government and its institutions from the outside. They organize in detail. Their political leadership normally is distinct from their military leadership. Their movement establishes a rival government that openly proclaims its own legitimacy. They have a well-developed ideology and decide on their objectives only after careful analysis. Highly organized and using propaganda and guerrilla action, they mobilize forces for a direct military and political challenge to the government. Examples of this model include:

- The communist revolution in China.
- The Vietcong insurgency.
- The Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) insurgency in Peru.

Once established, mass-oriented insurgencies are extremely resilient because of their great depth of organization. To defeat them requires coordinated action by all branches of government, including the armed forces.

The traditional insurgency normally grows from very specific grievances. It initially has limited aims. It springs from tribal, racial, religious, linguistic, or other similarly identifiable groups. These insurgents perceive that the government has denied the rights and interests of their group and work to establish or restore them. They frequently seek withdrawal from government control through autonomy or semi autonomy. They seldom specifically seek to overthrow the government or to control the whole society. They generally respond in kind to government violence. Their use of violence can range from strikes and street demonstrations to terrorism or guerrilla warfare. These insurgencies may cease if the government accedes to the insurgents' demand. The concessions the insurgents demand, however, are usually so great that the government concedes its legitimacy along with them. Examples of this model include:

- The Mujahideen in Afghanistan prior to the Soviet withdrawal.
- The Ibo revolt in Nigeria (Biafra).
- The Tamil separatists in Sri Lanka.

Governments typically treat these insurgencies as military problems because they present a clear target for applying coercive force. However, a lasting settlement requires significant political action.

Different groups within the same overall movement may adopt different patterns. This indicates incompatibilities in leadership, ideology, or objectives. No insurgency follows one pattern exclusively, as a close study of the cited examples reveals. Each develops unique characteristics appropriate to its own



circumstances. Methods change as conditions change. Insurgents who cannot adjust their methods to suit local conditions rarely survive. These patterns are useful as a starting point for comparative analysis.

The Principles of Insurgent Warfare

In examining the elements of an insurgency, it seems that there are a number of key principles of insurgent warfare that have been known and applied for generations by weak forces fighting strong enemies throughout the world. These principles are, in summary form:

- **The insurgent must be able and, indeed, want to wage protracted warfare** as time is of the utmost importance to the insurgents for a number of key reasons. Insurgents use time to organize themselves in order to fight the enemy. In contrast with the local government or the foreign occupier who is already organized as a force and who may need to make organizational adjustments over the course of the insurgency; the insurgent must usually build up his military and political infrastructure from scratch. The insurgent also needs time in order to build up support among the populace. In addition, the insurgent needs time to conduct operations of a kind that avoid decisive tactical engagement but which act ultimately to weaken the government forces or the foreign occupier. Vietnamese leader Ho Chi Minh considered time to be the most important principle of insurgent warfare when he said:

Time is the condition to be won to defeat the enemy. In military affairs time is of prime importance. Time ranks first among the three factors, coming before terrain and the support of the people. Only with time can we defeat the enemy.²⁰

Another Vietnamese revolutionary theorist, Dang Xuan Khu (aka Truong Chinh) wrote quite extensively about the role of time and protractedness:

The guiding principle of the strategy of our whole resistance must be to prolong the war. To protract the war is the key to victory. Why must the war be protracted? Because if we compare our forces with those of the enemy, it is obvious that the enemy is still strong, and we are still weak...If we throw the whole of our forces into a few battles to try to decide the outcome, we shall certainly be defeated and the enemy will win. On the other hand, if while fighting we maintain our forces, expand them, train our army and people, learn military tactics...and at the same time wear down the enemy forces, we shall weary and discourage them in such a way that, strong as they are, they will become weak and will meet defeat instead of victory.²¹



- **The insurgents know that the population is the center of gravity** since, after all, they claim to be fighting for the people and their grievances. But while the insurgents do not need either the full or active support of the populace, they cannot succeed in their violent endeavor if the population is either actively or passively hostile to them.
- **An insurgency is characterized by blurred boundaries between the civilian and military spheres** and the insurgent seeks to blur them even further and to benefit strategically and operationally from this very characteristic. Unlike conventional war with its neat separation between the military and civilian worlds (of course, collateral damage to the civilians does occur) with recognizable military forces in uniform, and strict laws of war (often flouted), unconventional warfare blurs the boundaries between these two domains to the benefit of the insurgent, who functions within and camouflages himself among the populace.
- **The insurgent knows that the advantage goes to the side that recognizes the centrality of politics** in this kind of war. No war is mindless violence; rather, all wars have political goals as their end-result, as Clausewitz pointed out over two hundred years ago. In an insurgency, the victor is the side that manages to successfully “market” and “sell” its vision of the society or state to the population, and this cannot be done by military means alone.
- **The insurgent is the weaker side militarily and organizationally and, therefore, must use asymmetric tactics/measures** in which he pits his strengths against the weaknesses of the opposing side. An insurgent cannot and should not stand and fight in a conventional-style manner against organized and well-trained government forces as he is bound to lose.²² Instead, the insurgent engages in the time-honored tactics of the weak; these might include:
 - Raids;
 - “Hasty” ambushes;
 - Targeted assassinations of politicians, bureaucrats/administrators, security and military officials;
 - Kidnappings;
 - Sabotage of critical infrastructure and government institutions;
 - Urban terrorism: car bombings, suicide attacks, random massacre of civilians;
 - Urban warfare: small-unit tactics and sniper teams; and, if available,
 - Use of low-level weapons of mass destruction.



- **Finally, the insurgent wins if he is not defeated, while the government loses if it does not win.**

Insurgency in the Middle East

What role has insurgency played in the history of the Middle East? The first recorded incident of such an insurgent or a guerilla war, historians tell us, may have occurred in ancient China or Vietnam; but there is little historical data on these incidents. The historical evidence for unconventional warfare in the Middle East, however, exists in abundance. One of the first detailed analyses of such warfare in the region is by the Romanized Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus in his book *The Jewish War*. In this book, Josephus wrote with some hyperbole that the "war of the Jews against the Romans was the greatest of our time; greater too, perhaps, than any recorded struggle whether between cities or nations."²³ The Jewish insurgents clearly recognized from the outset that the conventional balance of power between them and the Roman Empire was heavily skewed against them; so they decided to pit their strengths against Roman weaknesses: They engaged in hit and run attacks and assassinations of soldiers, officials and administrators. In addition, insurgencies occurred in abundance in medieval and early modern Islamic civilization.²⁴

The 19th century also witnessed scores of insurgencies in the Middle East by native populations fighting off the penetration of the region by European colonial powers. Even after they were colonized, some of the indigenous populations continued to wage irregular war against their colonial masters. However, one of the most successful insurgency wars fought in the region in the early modern era was the Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Empire during World War I. The Englishman T.E. Lawrence directed this revolt and analyzed its lessons in his classic book "Seven Pillars of Wisdom".

The post World War II era has witnessed an even larger number of insurgencies in the Middle East. What follows is a chronological list of major unconventional conflicts (i.e. the insurgencies themselves and the counter insurgency (COIN) campaigns against them) that have occurred in the Middle East since 1945:

- Jewish insurgency against the British, 1945-1947;
- Yemeni insurgency against the Egyptians and the Yemeni Republican faction;²⁵
- Algerian insurgency against the French, 1954-1962;²⁶
- Kurdish insurgency in Iraq, 1962-1989;
- Dhofari insurgency against the Sultan of Oman, 1962-1975;²⁷



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- Southern Sudanese insurgency against Sudanese government, 1958-1974 and 1979-Present;
- Afghan *Mujahideen* insurgency against the Soviet occupation and its puppet government in Kabul, 1980-1988;²⁸
- Lebanese/*Hizballah* insurgency against the Israelis, 1983-2000;²⁹
- Algerian Islamist insurgency/terrorism against Algerian state, 1990-2000;³⁰
- Egyptian Islamist insurgency/terrorism against the Egyptian state, 1993-1999;³¹
- Palestinian insurgency or *Intifada II* against the Israelis, 2000-Present;³²
- Kurdish PKK insurgency in Turkey, 1985-2000;³³
- Afghan *Taliban* insurgency, 2002-Present;³⁴
- Iraqi insurgency against the US/coalition, 2003-Present;³⁵

There have also been a number of violent (and in some cases ongoing) insurgencies on the periphery of the Middle East, these include those in Central Asia by Islamist groups against the post-Soviet authoritarian governments, the Kashmir insurgency and the Chechen insurgency. These merit mention because some of the lessons of these insurgencies, particularly the Chechen insurgency of the 1990s against the Russian state, have been absorbed by both state and non-state actors in the Middle East.³⁶

Government Response: An Overview of Counter Insurgency

Less well studied, and with fewer famous practitioners than insurgency, counter insurgency is reactive in nature. This can be seen in the working definition provided by Ian Beckett:

In many respects, the development of counter-guerrilla warfare and counter-insurgency have mirrored the development of guerrilla warfare and insurgency. Thus, modern counter-insurgency encompasses those military, political, socio-economic and psychological activities employed by the authorities and their armed forces to defeat the threat in question.³⁷

Anthony James Joes contends that an approach to analyzing counter insurgency should center on the overwhelmingly political nature of both insurgency and counter insurgency. To support this argument, Joes quotes sociologist Charles Tilly:

Despite the many recent attempts to psychologize the study of revolution by introducing ideas of anxiety, alienation, rising expectations, and the like, and to sociologize it by employing



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notions of disequilibrium, role conflict, structural strain, and so on, the factors which hold up under close scrutiny are, on the whole, political ones. The structure of power, alternative conceptions of justice, the organization of coercion, the conduct of war, the formation of coalitions, the legitimacy of the state – these traditional concerns of political thought provide the main guides to the explanation of revolution.³⁸

Since counter insurgency is about politics, Joes argues that its aim must be conciliation between the parties leading to peace, defined as “a pattern of stability acceptable to those with the capacity to disturb it by violence.”³⁹ Joes argues that counter insurgent victory derives from justice supported by military power, and cites the US in the Philippines (1899-1902) and the British in Malaya (1946-1954) as principal models for this type of approach.⁴⁰ The standard of justice should be defined in terms of the society in question and seen by this society to be done. Although they were imperfect and marred by excesses like most counter insurgencies, the Malayan and Philippine experiences are relevant because they resulted in both insurgent defeat and conciliation between the counter insurgent power and most of the population.⁴¹

The Evolution of Counter Insurgency Strategy

Much of what is today considered to be the theory of modern counter insurgency was put into writing in the 1960s, during what one scholar calls “the counter insurgency era.”⁴² This era got its start during the administration of US President John F. Kennedy, whose 1962 National Security Action Memorandum No. 124 held that insurgency was a “major form of politico-military conflict equal in importance to conventional warfare.”⁴³ Much of the counter insurgency theory developed during the Kennedy years drew from US experiences in the Philippines, both the 1899-1902 insurrection and the 1950s Huk Rebellion; and the numerous interventions in Central America and the Caribbean. It was also grounded in the thinking at the time on issues of security and development.⁴⁴ Counter insurgency strategists of the 1960s were also able to draw lessons from recent French and British experiences in Indochina, Algeria, Kenya, and Malaya. Early in the Vietnam War, the US applied counter insurgency principles, only to transition to an ill-conceived conventional approach during the conflict.⁴⁵ After the war, the US military establishment sought to put its counter insurgency experience behind it, and refocused its attention towards conventional war on European battlefields. US institutional resistance meant that counter insurgency lessons were cyclically forgotten and relearned, with the 1980s assistance program to El Salvador marking a return to a counter insurgency approach.⁴⁶

Other Western countries embraced counter insurgency to a greater degree, structuring their military forces and aligning their government structures



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accordingly. The British, French, and Portuguese each developed national approaches to counter insurgency, drawing upon centuries of experience with irregular warfare. The French counter insurgency experience has its roots in the disastrous occupation of Spain and the brutal suppression of the late 18th century insurgency in the Vendee region. In these conflicts, as well as in Algeria in the mid-19th century and in Indochina, the French tended to underestimate their opponents and abuse the civilian population.⁴⁷ Joseph Gallieni (1849-1916), a highly successful figure in French counter insurgency, is the father of the “oil stain” strategy and applied this concept effectively in Senegal, Tonkin, and Madagascar.⁴⁸ While the French defeat in Vietnam was a debacle, the French applied a sophisticated counter insurgency strategy in Algeria in the 1950s and won a decisive military victory against the FLN, only to lose the political battle due to domestic and international pressures.⁴⁹

The British unsuccessfully faced insurgents in the Carolinas during the American War of Independence. Developed primarily during the 50 years before World War II, British counter insurgency strategy reflected Britain’s position as an imperial power presiding over far-flung territories of diverse peoples, some of whom were frequently in rebellion. At the same time, Britain was subject to the domestic pressures of a democracy, and consequently could call on limited troops and resources. As a result, British counter insurgency doctrine emphasized minimum levels of military force; the use of local troops; reliance on police measures and effective civil administration; close cooperation among the military, police, and civil government; the primacy of civilian security, often involving relocation; pursuit of insurgents with light, highly trained units; and addressing popular grievances.⁵⁰

Another European power struggling with resistance in its colonial realm, Portugal developed its own counter insurgency school of thought. Portugal faced greater resource constraints than Great Britain in confronting independence movements in its African colonies of Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau. Portuguese officers studied the US, British, and French experiences, identified cautionary lessons such as the American over reliance on weaponry in Vietnam and the consequences of the French use of torture in Algeria, and developed their own unique approach. The Portuguese army transformed itself almost entirely into a counter insurgency force: mobile, low-tech, and comprised at the end of more than 50% indigenous African troops.⁵¹ Through effective use of intelligence, sound military tactics, and socio-political reforms, the Portuguese defeated or contained the insurgencies, but lost their colonies due to their own domestic upheavals.⁵² Portugal’s counter insurgency success was achieved in spite of the unjust and exploitative colonial system the country was defending.⁵³

Representative of the “hearts and minds” counter insurgency strategy is a work still widely cited today. US Army LTC John J. McCuen attempted to set out the



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principles of counter insurgency strategy in his 1966 book *The Art of Counter-Revolutionary War*.⁵⁴ McCuen argues that the art of counter insurgency lies in how a government “adapts the revolutionary strategy and principles and applies them in reverse to defeat the revolutionaries with their own weapons on their own battlefield.”⁵⁵ Hence, McCuen’s five strategic principles are equally applicable to both sides. They are: 1) preserving oneself and annihilating the enemy, 2) establishing strategic bases, 3) mobilizing the masses, 4) seeking outside support, and 5) unifying the effort.⁵⁶ These are supported by the tactical principles of initiative, intelligence, mobility, and surprise. For McCuen, a counter-revolutionary strategy must have a firm political foundation in the form of a national program for the country’s future, effective administration with the welfare of the people at heart, empowered local governance, a psychological element, and a population mobilized to defend itself and support the government.⁵⁷ Following the oil spot strategy, the government is to first consolidate strategic bases holding secure civilians and then expand them to other population centers. Only when this has been done should any large-scale operations against the insurgents commence.

As McCuen writes, counter insurgency strategy is the inverse of revolutionary warfare strategy, which draws its principles from Mao, Marx, and other thinkers. Exploitation of ethnic divisions and grievances has played a central role in many insurgency movements, for example those of Guatemala, Peru, Colombia, Malaya, Yemen, and Algeria. Typically, the insurgent movement seizes on a minority group’s perception that in the eyes of the government it consists of only second-class citizens.⁵⁸ For a government to successfully counter the insurgents’ ethnic division strategies is especially challenging, as governments frequently respond with greater repression of the ethnic group, playing into insurgent hands by heightening divisions.

The Three Types of Counter Insurgency Strategies/Responses

How have local governments or foreign occupiers responded to insurgencies over the ages? For the sake of simplicity there are three basic counter insurgency strategies available to the counter insurgent:

- Strategic Annihilation
- Repression or Coercion and Enforcement
- Winning “Hearts and Minds”

Strategic Annihilation – In this strategy the focus is overwhelmingly on the use of the military instrument to defeat the insurgents, their infrastructure and the civilian population that supports them. Examples in history include the Roman response to most insurgencies including the Jewish revolt and the counter insurgency campaigns undertaken by the Germans against the Hottentots and



Herrerros in Southwest Africa in the early 20th century, by the Germans against the partisans in Soviet Russia, by Stalinist Russia against the Ukrainians, and by Saddam against the Kurds in the Anfal Campaign of 1989.⁵⁹

Repression or Coercion and Enforcement – In this strategy the focus is on the use of the military instrument to wipe out the insurgents, their leadership, and infrastructure, but there is no institutionalized deliberate targeting of the civilian population. Examples include the counter insurgency campaigns undertaken by the British in Kenya against the Mau-Mau rebels, by the Algerian and Egyptian governments against Islamic insurgents, and by the Israelis against the Palestinians at the present time. It has also been used extensively by Latin and Central American governments against insurgency groups within their own respective governments. The evidence for the success of such a strategy is mixed at best; it succeeds in “putting the lid” on insurgent movements and suppressing their aspirations for a particular period of time. However, it does not lead to a permanent solution, and often the insurgencies flair up again. Moreover, while it is easier for a native government to use repressive measures against insurgents from its own country; it is more morally and politically complicated for a foreign occupier of a country to justify repression of a people that is racially, ethnically, or religiously different.

Winning “Hearts and Minds” – In this strategy the focus is on the implementation of a set of integrated measures – political, socioeconomic, psychological, informational, diplomatic, legal, and of course, military, in order to defeat the insurgency. This approach recognizes that insurgency needs a political solution. A hearts and minds counter insurgency strategy has a definitive evolutionary cycle.

First, the government usually begins by misunderstanding and underestimating the insurgency. As a result, it refers to them as bandits, criminals and misguided individuals manipulated by foreign parties. In the past, during the colonial era, as we saw above, the counter insurgency campaign would most likely have been a brutal one of annihilation of the insurgents and those associated with them.

Second, intelligence, particularly human intelligence is usually poor or lacking in the initial stages. This is due to the dearth of competence and expertise on the part of the government or occupation forces. Later when information begins to pour in; there is often not enough expertise to handle it effectively and, more importantly, the intelligence effort is not coordinated since either too many groups are involved in gathering intelligence, or the final product does not get to the troops in the field in a timely manner. Consequently, the government may fail to build an accurate and effective nation-wide picture of the insurgency, its leaders, structure, and *modus operandi*.



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In response, some governments and their military and security establishments engage in wide-ranging institutional learning. They discard the previous methods and, in the midst of battling the insurgency, they formulate totally new counter insurgency campaigns. However, it is difficult to undergo such a transformation, particularly if bureaucratic and cultural biases militate against such changes.⁶⁰ Those governments that do change, however, immeasurably improve their chances of success against the insurgents.⁶¹ For example, during the darkest days of the Malayan Emergency, the British government conducted a thorough critical analysis of their approach to combating the communist insurgency and then, based on the lessons they derived, set upon a new course under Generals Harold Briggs and Gerald Templer. They were ultimately successful in defeating the insurgency.⁶² Similarly, the Philippine Defense Minister, Ramon Magsaysay, reversed the coercion and enforcement strategy of President Roxas and instituted a totally new approach that defeated the Huk rebellion.

Principles of “Hearts and Minds” Counter Insurgency Strategy

There are a few key principles of the “hearts and minds” counter insurgency campaign, but it is extraordinary how often governments have *failed* to implement them. The British counter insurgency expert, Sir Robert Thompson, expounded on them effectively in his book, *Defeating Communist Insurgency: The Lessons of Malaya and Vietnam*.⁶³ It should be noted that even if a government successfully implements such principles, they are not an ironclad guarantee of ultimate success against the insurgents. The following constitute the counter insurgency principles:

The Population is the Center of Gravity

Governments must realize that the center of gravity in this kind of war is the population and not primarily territory or the insurgents. Winning the population over to one’s side or, at least, ensuring their neutrality, is critical while the government wages both a military and political/socioeconomic campaign. The populace will mobilize on behalf of the government when the people feel that its policies meet their needs and they are reasonably free of the threat of insurgent violence. Unless the people feel safe, they are cautious about supporting government programs. Their reluctance to do so may give the appearance that they do not care which side wins. The government must protect the people; then it must engage in balanced development to redress their social, political, and economic grievances. A government under attack normally does not have the resources to respond to all the needs of all the people at once. If it did, it would probably not be faced with an insurgent threat in the first place. The government must analyze the situation and establish priorities for programs for which it does have resources and which will tip the balance of mobilization in its favor.



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Institutional development is a major way in which a government promotes social cohesion and popular mobilization. Institutional development is the process of creating mechanisms within a society that enable people to identify common goals and work together to achieve them. Institutional development involves people at the local level and links them to the national community. It promotes organizations and methods for the two-way communication essential to mobilizing popular support for national objectives. Institutional development integrates disparate groups around common social, political, and economic needs, establishing new structures where none existed. It strengthens existing institutions. It modifies or eliminates those that work against national unity.

The government, however, must be prepared for the adverse effects of institutional development. These will inevitably arise from changes in familiar ways of doing things. But these discontents, in the long run, are less dangerous than maintaining the status quo. Government provides encouragement, leadership, and material and financial support to constructive institutions. Institutions enable the government to ascertain the needs of the people, to formulate development programs, and to evaluate their effect. They permit the government to exert influence and to be influenced.

In order for the government to address the causes of insurgency through balanced development, it must also protect the people from insurgent violence and separate them from insurgent control. This requires rendering the insurgent leadership and organization ineffective by persuasion, prosecution, or destruction. Denied its infrastructure, the insurgent organization will lack direction and sources of personnel, materiel, and intelligence. The insurgent tactical forces will be cut off, forced to fight on the government's terms, and vulnerable to disintegration. Government police, paramilitary, and military forces provide security, eliminate the infrastructure, and destroy, disperse or capture insurgent combat and support units. Information programs support both development and combat operations. They explain and promote the government's programs and discredit the insurgents. They offer an inducement for individual insurgents to leave the movement.⁶⁴

Civilian security is the principal measure of effectiveness in counter insurgency, and the most important metric in evaluating counter insurgent success is the number of civilian casualties. In counter insurgency, Clausewitz's center of gravity is the civilian population.⁶⁵ Government and insurgent forces fight for the loyalty of and control over the population, and use this loyalty and control as leverage to defeat the other side. Civilians are forced to cast their loyalty with the side that can best provide security, and the costs of miscalculation are high. Establishing control of the civilian population is important because the aim of effective counter insurgency is not to kill insurgents but to marginalize them, while exacerbating their internal contradictions.⁶⁶



Examples

The struggle between the two sides over the civilian center of gravity in an insurgency can have devastating effects. In recent internal wars, civilians have accounted for the vast majority of total casualties. In contrast, well-managed counter insurgency campaigns, such as those in Oman and Thailand, have concluded with minimal civilian casualties. The primary approaches used by counter insurgent forces to effect civilian security are discipline and rectitude, a sustained force presence, resettlement, and standing up local self-defense organizations.

A sustained force presence is needed in any population center under government control. One of the most fundamental principles of effective counter insurgency is never to leave a village after letting the inhabitants rally to the government standard.⁶⁷ The French consistently made this mistake in the early part of their Algerian experience, but later successfully combined large and sustained troop presence with resettlement and measures to secure borders against external support, resulting in a shift of the balance against the FLN. Unfortunately, to accomplish this the French had to commit 600,000 soldiers to Algeria for eight years at a cost of over \$1.5 billion a year.⁶⁸ The US made the mistake of clearing then departing Vietnamese villages, or establishing a daytime presence but ceding authority to the Viet Cong at night.

Resettlement is problematic because success has much to do with the status of the population being resettled, and with government competence in executing the program. Resettlement has been successfully used in counter insurgency operations in Malaya, Algeria, Peru, the Philippines (1899-1902), and in Portuguese colonies in Africa.⁶⁹ Under the Briggs Plan in Malaya, in order to deprive the guerrillas of a base of support, the British relocated Chinese squatter populations and granted them land titles in new settlements. While the Malayan experiment improved the Chinese squatters' livelihoods, the attempt to apply this concept in South Vietnam collapsed after 1963.⁷⁰ Here, an incompetent administration created new settlements at an unsustainable rate, then failed to defend or support them. Farmers' resentment at being resettled despite owning and having ancestral ties to their land compounded the problem. In contemporary times, resettlement has questionable applicability to easily mobilized populations in the communications age.

Local defense organizations serve to separate the civilians from the insurgents, protect local leaders from assassination, bind the population to the government, and free up regular troops for mobile anti-insurgent operations.⁷¹ For example, the Malayan Home Guard mobilized 250,000 members, including many ethnic Chinese (the Malay insurgents came from the ethnic Chinese population), and



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experienced few defections or lost weapons. Oman's *firqat* militiamen, half of whom were rebel defectors, were allowed to choose what areas each unit would be responsible for defending, ensuring that they were posted in their home communities. Portugal fielded 30,000 local militiamen in Angola alone.⁷² Thailand, Peru, and El Salvador effectively used local defense forces, with Thailand fielding more than 200,000 against an insurgency a fraction of that size. One of the most successful models for securing village security and standing up local forces was the US Marine Corps Combined Action Platoons (CAPs) in Vietnam.⁷³ Initiated in 1965, the CAP program placed 14-man Marine squads as permanent residents in Vietnamese villages, where they were to work with and train 38-man local Popular Forces platoons.

Application to Iraq

Civilian security conditions in Iraq are so dire that writing about lessons and examples from other counter insurgencies risks conveying an air of unreality. Nonetheless, some observations and lessons can be applied to Iraq. First, local forces are preferable to those from other regions, and Coalition efforts should be directed towards standing up police and military units that are drawn from and accountable to the population, preferably at the neighborhood and town level. To be effective, local forces must be supported by immediately available quick reaction units, so that under strength village militias are not overwhelmed one after the other by concentrated insurgent forces. Local defense at the village level should be complemented by mobile strike forces actively pursuing the insurgents.

Second, security vacuums should be addressed at all costs by embedding Coalition and Iraqi forces with local populations in programs modeled after the Combined Action Platoons. As was the case in Vietnam, having Coalition forces living among villagers would have the added effect of protecting the civil population from excessive Coalition firepower. Assassination is a particularly grave threat. In South Vietnam, the Viet Cong assassinated more than 25,000 local officials and other civilians between 1954 and 1965.⁷⁴ Iraq has a history of political assassination, notably during the 1960s, and sectarian forces are precisely using the tactic today against the educated middle class. Current insurgent tactics aimed at Iraqi society's most productive members militates for an adaptation of the oil spot strategy.⁷⁵

Third, offering funds and assistance to sectarian support groups to fund voluntary relocations should be carefully considered. In Iraq, spontaneous resettlement is taking place on a large scale as Sunni and Shia families flee mixed neighborhoods. Officially directed relocation may play a role in Iraq's future if agreed to as part of a grand political settlement among the major parties, but



short of that would not be welcome as a counter insurgency policy of the current government.

The Need for an Integrated Strategy, Sufficient Resources, and Long-Term Commitment

The government must have a clear political goal, which it must articulate from the very outset of the counter insurgency campaign. In order to attain this political goal, the government must devise an integrated plan to deal with the insurgency. There must be recognition from the very beginning that a counter insurgency campaign is not only or even primarily about the use of military force to bring the insurgents to heel. The plan should be focused on finding ways to implement critical political and socioeconomic reform measures to alleviate the insurgency and promote the active use of intelligence, legal, diplomatic, police, information operations and of course *military* measures all working in tandem to defeat the insurgency. Furthermore, the government must ensure civil-military coordination and cooperation between the civilian and military arms of the government in the course of implementing the plan to fight the insurgency. If these two arms of the government fail to coordinate or cooperate the result is likely to be failure in the conduct of the counter insurgency campaign.

T. E. Lawrence observed, “To make war upon rebellion is messy and slow, like eating soup with a knife.”⁷⁶ Counter insurgency is complicated, nebulous, and protracted. Central to the counter insurgency model is the integration of political, economic, intelligence, information, and military components. A sound counter insurgency policy recognizes that a conflict is an ideological and political struggle for legitimacy, and stresses the need for military force calibrated to political ends. Looking at a conflict holistically, a sound counter insurgency strategy places appropriate emphasis on both “hard” and “soft” elements. Building government legitimacy in a counter insurgency campaign is especially important because most insurgencies are struggles over distribution of resources where the insurgent movement builds on the valid grievances of part of the population. These aspects present extreme challenges to the established cultures of government institutions, and contribute to ubiquitous opportunities for clashes between agencies.

Durations of insurgencies – until the point of insurgent victory or defeat, or a negotiated settlement – are typically in the range of a decade or more. Sufficient resources are needed for the long haul, and premature pullouts can have disastrous consequences. Committing sufficient resources and staying the course throughout a lengthy conflict is especially challenging for a Western democracy in the information age, and the US is no exception. Tribal and ethnic aspects of counter insurgency add to its complexity.



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Getting the military element of counter insurgency right is especially challenging for Western defense establishments. A paradox is that while most military professionals believe that they exist primarily to fight large-scale conventional wars, the vast majority of British, French, and US military expeditions have been unconventional in nature.⁷⁷ The institutional conservatism of Western militaries is at odds with their actual experience, causing lessons to be repeatedly forgotten and relearned. The military components of counter insurgency are best supported by what some call an “imperial army,” meaning a force with an expeditionary culture and a willingness to accept “ambiguous objectives, interminable commitments and chronic skirmishes as a fact of life,” as opposed to the definable missions and decisive battles sought by traditional militaries.⁷⁸ John Nagl contends that organizational culture is a key variable in determining how militaries adapt to conflicts for which they are unprepared.⁷⁹

Examples

Nagl argues that the British army’s adaptability as a learning institution and its flexible organizational culture enabled it to develop and execute an effective counter insurgency strategy in Malaya. In contrast, Nagl finds that the US Army’s comparatively rigid organizational culture impeded the development of sound strategies in Vietnam. Applying Nagl’s framework to other military institutions, Portugal is a prominent example of a military that transformed itself into a counter insurgency force, emphasizing low technology, mobility, intelligence exploitation, cultural knowledge, and integration and management of indigenous forces.⁸⁰ While France in Algeria made political mistakes that cost it the war, France approached the conflict with a sense of national purpose and commitment worthy of emulation. Oman’s counter insurgency campaign was a stellar example of an integrated, intelligently conceived, well-executed effort.

Application to Iraq

Because of counter insurgency’s protracted nature, and the complex tribal and ethnic factors particular to Iraq, the US government and its partners should adopt a long-term approach to supporting Iraq, and commit sufficient resources for its reconstruction.

Tribal strategies should be part of an integrated and unified counter insurgency effort. The government and its advisors should remain aware of and work to mitigate the inherent tradeoffs between empowering tribes and building institutions of civil governance. Governments should attempt to build tribal capacity and envision sustainable roles for the tribes. Simultaneous and complementary government initiatives should be used to engage tribal leaders as part of an integrated strategy.



The Centrality of Intelligence

A good intelligence organization is the most effective weapon against an armed insurgency.⁸¹ If government/Coalition forces know who the insurgents are and where they are, their ability to bring military power to bear against them — especially in the early phases of an insurgency — is overwhelming. Intelligence can also be used to exploit divisions between leaders, between leaders and followers, and between different groupings of the rank and file. The key to gaining good intelligence is to win the support of the population. The population is often the best source of information. The key to getting access to this information is to provide the people with a sense of enduring security and a political, economic and social stake in the new regime.⁸²

Examples

One of the most valuable sources of intelligence is a defected insurgent, as demonstrated in the case of Oman. The Vietnamese Chiu Hoi program achieved similar results. Good intelligence collection and exploitation was integral to counter insurgency successes in the Philippines (both the 1899-1902 insurrection and the Huk campaign), Malaya, Peru, and military successes in Portuguese colonies in Africa.⁸³

Application to Iraq

Intelligence is presently a weak point in the Iraqi government/Coalition counter insurgency program. Rectifying this will require considerable effort, and will not be possible until the Iraqi government addresses sectarian tensions in such a way that amnesty programs can be contemplated. Successfully engaging the Sunni Arabs of Iraq, possibly through their tribal structures, is key to gaining critical intelligence for successful counter insurgency operations.

The Utility of Amnesty

Amnesty programs have played a major role in successful counter insurgency campaigns. A well-conceived amnesty program can both hasten a conflict's end and help lay the groundwork for an enduring post-conflict settlement. First, amnesty can hasten a conflict's end by providing an alternate path to all but the most committed insurgents. Many young men join insurgencies out of boredom, the desire for adventure, the need for money, or the perceived lack of alternatives.⁸⁴ Amnesty arrangements that encompass laying down arms with honor, prospects for new economic livelihood, and protection from reprisals can quickly deprive an insurgent movement of its "low hanging fruit," or least committed members. Over time, good treatment by government forces can erode



insurgent morale by highlighting the contrast with how insurgents treat their own disloyal members.

Honor for the defeated is an important component of amnesty, not only to encourage insurgents to lay down arms, but also to promote a lasting peace by setting the stage for the guerrillas' reintegration into society. By providing the means for a livelihood, the economic and reintegration aspects of amnesty programs address the question of "what to do with them," and can prevent former insurgents from drifting into criminality, or back to the insurgency.

Examples

Philippine amnesty programs during the Huk rebellion of the 1950s carefully avoided the term "surrender,"⁸⁵ as did similar programs directed at the communist New Peoples Army in the 1980s and 1990s. In the 1950s, Philippine defense secretary Magsaysay crafted an amnesty program that included twenty acres of land, assistance with building a house, and a cash loan.⁸⁶ The South Vietnamese Chieu Hoi ("Open Arms") program, which offered participants economic incentives and full citizenship privileges, attracted nearly 200,000 Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army defectors.⁸⁷ During the 1899-1902 US counter insurgency effort in the Philippines, surrendered Filipino insurgent commanders would be honored with ceremonies and often appointed as local government chiefs.⁸⁸ Thailand used similar ceremonies to welcome surrendered communist insurgents back into society, and many former insurgents can be found today in the ranks of corporate middle management. Oman conducted what may have been the most effective amnesty program, in which defectors were pardoned by the sultan, provided with security and material benefits, and given the opportunity to join the *firqat* militias, which were instrumental in defeating the insurgency.

Application to Iraq

In Iraq, tribal leaders can be effective intermediaries between government forces and insurgents, such as former regime elements, on the issue of amnesty. By negotiating and helping draft government amnesty programs, tribal leaders have the power to legitimize the laying down of arms. Tribal leaders can use their offices to assist the government with the reintegration of amnestied former insurgents. In other counter insurgencies, amnesty programs have usually excluded senior insurgents accused of serious criminal acts. Instead, cash rewards were offered for their capture. The combination of attractive amnesty provisions for insurgents and prices on the heads of their worst leaders can build increasing dissension and intrigue within insurgent ranks.⁸⁹ However, in the case of Iraq, since the insurgency has many components with differing objectives and leaders, each case must be examined on an individual basis. Clearly, most leaders of al-Qaida in Iraq (AQIZ) who are Islamist zealot terrorists and not even



Iraqi citizens are unlikely candidates for amnesty programs. However, influential tribal shaikhs and former Iraqi military and political leaders may be good candidates for amnesty programs if their participation can truly help undermine the insurgency and bring the Sunni Arab Iraqis into the political process.

The Requirement of Rectitude

Decent conduct by government forces towards civilians and prisoners is a central principle of successful counter insurgency. Rectitude on the part of government forces attacks insurgent recruiting efforts and encourages surrender, makes civilians and prisoners more likely to offer intelligence, promotes counter insurgent forces' morale and discipline, helps prepare the ground for post-conflict reconciliation, and undercuts insurgent efforts to manipulate the media.⁹⁰

The government must function according to legal standards in a counter insurgency campaign. Fighting an insurgency is extremely messy and the lack of clear-cut lines between the civilian and military spheres can, and often does, lead to legal and ethical conundrums. If the government mistreats the captured insurgents or members of the civilian population, it will likely lose. The insurgents want it to cross the line, as this would surely alienate the population. The fact that the government should not cross the line between the legal and the illegal does not mean that it cannot enact very tough anti-terrorist or counter insurgency measures which should be implemented in accordance with legal norms.

Examples

Joes surveys counter insurgency campaigns and finds that the general presence of rectitude in counter insurgent conduct is highly correlated with success. He concludes that, "The long road of warfare is strewn with the wreckage of those who forgot about or sneered at the necessity for right conduct. Rectitude is worth many battalions."⁹¹ Examples include Malaya, the post-1898 Philippine conflicts against both Aguinaldo's forces and the Moros, the post-1951 Huk War in the Philippines, Greece, Peru (Sendero Luminoso), the Dhofar conflict in Oman, and the post-1984 conflict in El Salvador. Conversely, the absence of rectitude is correlated with counter insurgent defeat, as in the cases of the Soviets in Afghanistan, the Japanese in China, the Germans in Yugoslavia, Napoleonic Spain, and Cuba under Batista.⁹²

Application to Iraq

Good conduct by government forces is especially important as it affects the tribes. The traditional right to avenge the death of a tribesman passes to members of his *fakhd*, or unit of several generations of families, and can be satisfied by killing either the transgressor or some other member of his *fakhd*.⁹³



As interpreted in today's Iraq, avenging a death by targeting someone not connected to it can be a matter of tribal honor. To date, humiliation and revenge have been overwhelming motivations behind tribal involvement in anti-Coalition attacks.

While tribal structures can magnify the impact of counter insurgent human rights violations, tribes can also play a positive role. If relations with tribal leaders are good, the intelligence these leaders provide can make human rights abuses less likely. Tribal leaders may speak with an authority and credibility that a fledgling government will take years to develop. As such, they can maximize the impact of good government conduct by making the counter insurgent case to their constituents. Tribal leaders can act as intermediaries between their constituents and the government in addressing damages claims and other issues of government conduct.

From both a human rights and an effectiveness perspective, indigenous forces are often preferable to foreign troops, owing to their cultural attributes, links to the population, and intelligence gathering abilities. Whenever possible, troops should be deployed to their home areas. This results in better morale and discipline, lower rates of desertion, and a link of accountability between the troops and the population they are to protect.

Cautionary Lessons for US Counter Insurgency Policy

Counter insurgency theory is not without its detractors. Highlighting what he sees as unexamined assumptions underlying US counter insurgency doctrine, D. Michael Shafer argues that, "American policymakers misunderstood past insurgency situations, prescribed inappropriate solutions to them, and overestimated the United States' role in the process. They did so because of the distorting impact of widely shared and unquestioned assumptions concerning the sources, nature, direction, and potential consequences of political change in the Third World."⁹⁴

While primarily concerned with United States foreign policy, Shafer's critique highlights key pitfalls that can befall any government's counter insurgency approach. Using the cases of Greece, the 1950s Philippines, and South Vietnam, Shafer argues that US policymakers ignored local realities and diagnosed the same (inaccurate) condition of a beleaguered but reformist government struggling with subversion. The ignored local realities were, for example, intragovernmental constraints caused by elite interests over land issues in the Philippines.

Despite contrary local realities, US policymakers uniformly prescribe what Shafer calls the three great oughts: security, good government, and progress. These



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prescriptions are logical, but may not work because of three consistently unexamined critical assumptions: the possibility of leverage, the prospects for governmental reform, and the nature of government–population relations.⁹⁵ Shafer argues that “[t]he issue is not whether reform is necessary...Instead, the issue is whether the interests of key elites and necessary reforms are reconcilable.”⁹⁶ Shafer contends that vested interests and risk-averse politicians cause governments to place short-term interests (their own) above long-term goals, particularly in the area of military and police reform. This is an especially valid line of enquiry with regards to the Iraqi government.

The Need for Operational Tools in Counter Insurgency

Considerable research, analysis and writing have been expended in developing a wide range of “frameworks” for analyzing insurgencies and counter insurgencies. While these “analytical frameworks” are useful in efforts to understand and describe insurgencies and counter insurgencies, they seldom offer anything in the way of actual successful implementation of such operations. On the other hand, there is a considerable body of knowledge on conducting insurgency and counter insurgency operations at the tactical level – primarily focused on military tasks such as patrolling, raids, ambushes, etc. However, this body of knowledge is not linked to any coherent conceptual operational framework that links military tactical operations either to non-military tactical operations, or an overall concept of how the operations impact the key focus of insurgencies and counter insurgencies – the local population.

In order to successfully conduct counter insurgency operations, the counter insurgents – military and civilian – need a coherent conceptual framework and specific operational tools for conducting counter insurgency operations.

The “Object Beyond War”: Counter Insurgency and the Four Tools of Political Competition*

“The state is a relation of men dominating men, a relation supported by means of legitimate (i.e. considered to be legitimate) violence. If a state is to exist, the dominated must obey the authority claimed by the powers that be. When and why do men obey?”⁹⁷ Max Weber, the father of modern sociology, asked this

* This section on operational tools in counter insurgency was written by Dr. Montgomery McFate and Andrea V. Jackson and has been incorporated in this study with their consent. Dr. McFate and Ms. Jackson developed this ground-breaking framework for conducting counter insurgency warfare in the course of work on a number of programs in direct support of deployed forces in Iraq and Afghanistan. This work is the basis of an article on this subject subsequently published by the authors in the January – February 2006 issue of *Military Review*.



question in 1918 and the answer reveals a key to conducting effective counter insurgency operations.

In the most basic sense, an insurgency is a competition for power. According to British Brigadier General Frank Kitson, "there can be no such thing as purely military solution because insurgency is not primarily a military activity."⁹⁸ Insurgency, as defined in U.S. Field Manual (interim) 3-07.22, "is organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through use of subversion and armed conflict. It is a protracted politico-military struggle designed to weaken government control and legitimacy while increasing insurgent control. *Political power is the central issue in an insurgency.*"⁹⁹

In any struggle for political power, there are a limited number of tools that can be used to induce men to obey. These tools are: coercive force, economic incentive and disincentive, legitimating ideology, and traditional authority.¹⁰⁰ These tools are equally available to both insurgents and counter insurgency forces in their effort to control the civilian population. From the perspective of the population, neither side has an explicit or immediate advantage in the battle for hearts and minds. The civilian population will support the side that makes it *in their interest* to obey. The regard for one's own benefit or advantage is the basis for behavior in all societies, regardless of religion, class, or culture. Iraqis, for example, will decide to support the insurgency or the government forces based on a calculation of which side on balance best meets their needs for physical security, economic well-being, and social identity.

The central goal in counter insurgency operations then is to surpass the adversary in the effective use of the four tools. According to British Brigadier General Richard Simpkin, "established armed forces need to do more than just master high-intensity maneuver warfare between large forces with baroque equipment. They have to go one step further and structure, equip and train themselves to employ the techniques of revolutionary warfare — to beat the opposition at their own game on their own ground."¹⁰¹ Beating the opposition requires that counter insurgency forces make it in the interest of the civilian population to support the government. How? To win support, counter insurgents must be able to selectively provide security, or take it away. Counter insurgency forces must become the arbiter of economic well being by providing goods, services and income, or by taking them away. Counter insurgency forces must develop and disseminate narratives, symbols, and messages that resonate with the population's pre-existing cultural system, or counter those of the opposition. And finally, counterinsurgents must co-opt existing traditional leaders whose authority can augment the legitimacy of the government, or prevent the opposition from co-opting them.



In order to use the tools of political competition effectively, the culture and society of the insurgent group must be fully understood. Julian Paget, one of Britain's foremost experts on the subject, wrote in 1967 that "every effort must be made to know the Enemy before the insurgency begins."¹⁰² For each key group in society, counter insurgency forces must be able to identify: the amount of security the group has and where it gets that security; the level of income and services that group has and where it gets that income; ideologies and narratives that resonate with the group and the means by which they communicate; and the legitimate traditional leaders and their interests.

In the vast majority of counter insurgency operations since 1945, the insurgents have held a distinct advantage in their level of local knowledge. They speak the language, move easily within the society in question, and are more likely to understand the interests of the population. Thus, effective counter insurgency requires a leap of imagination and a peculiar skill set not encountered in conventional warfare. Jean Larteguy, writing about French operations in Indochina and Algeria noted, "To make war, you always must put yourself in the other man's place ... eat what they eat, sleep with their women and read their books."¹⁰³ Essentially, effective counter insurgency requires that state forces mirror their adversary.¹⁰⁴

Prior counter insurgency campaigns offer a number of lessons about how to conduct (and how not to conduct) counter insurgency using the four tools of political competition, and these lessons have potential relevance for current operations in Iraq.

Coercive Force

Max Weber, in his 1918 speech *Politik als Beruf* (Politics as a Vocation) argued that the state must be characterized by the means which it, and only it, has at its disposal: "a state is a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory."¹⁰⁵ While the most direct source of any state's political power is coercion, or the right to use or threaten the use of physical force, it is not necessarily the most effective mode of governing. Governments (such as totalitarian regimes) that base their power purely on coercion play a dangerous game, since citizens who are the object of this unmediated power often view it as illegitimate and are frequently willing to engage in acts of resistance against the state.

Legitimate governance, on the other hand, implies a reciprocal relationship between central authority and citizenry. In order to be considered legitimate by the populace, the government must monopolize coercive force within its territorial boundaries in order to provide its citizens with the most basic human need –



security.¹⁰⁶ Where the state fails to provide security to its citizens or becomes a threat to them, it fails to fulfill the implicit contract of governance. In certain circumstances, citizens may then seek alternative security guarantees in the form of an ethnic or political allegiance with a group engaged in an armed struggle against central authority.¹⁰⁷ In some cases, this struggle may develop into an outright insurgency.

During an insurgency, the government's legitimacy becomes a center of gravity target, meaning that insurgents will attempt to demonstrate the state cannot guarantee security within its territory. The "central goal of an insurgency is not to defeat the armed forces, but to subvert or destroy the government's legitimacy, its ability and moral right to govern."¹⁰⁸ Insurgents have a natural advantage in this game because their actions are not constrained by codified law. States, on the other hand, must not only avoid wrongdoing but also the appearance of wrongdoing because it undermines their legitimacy in the community. As Thomas Mockaitis points out, "In counter insurgency an atrocity is not necessarily what one actually does but what one is successfully blamed for."¹⁰⁹

During an insurgency, there are three ways to conserve state legitimacy: the use of proportionate force, the use of precisely applied force, and the provision of security for the civilian population.

Proportionate Force

In responding to an insurgency, states naturally tend to reach for the most convenient weapon at their disposal: coercive force. The military doctrine, training and strategic culture of most states is focused squarely on major combat operations as a core competency, often leaving them unprepared for counter insurgency operations. Since 1923, for example, the core tenet of US warfighting strategy has been that overwhelming force deployed against an equally powerful state will result in military victory.¹¹⁰ Yet in a counter insurgency, 'winning' through overwhelming force is often inapplicable as a concept, if not problematic as a goal. Often, the application of overwhelming force has a negative, unintended effect of strengthening the insurgency by creating martyrs, increasing recruiting, and demonstrating the brutality of state forces. For example in May 1945, the Muslim population of Sétif, Algeria, rioted and killed 103 Europeans. General Duval, at the behest of the French *colon* government of Algeria, indiscriminately killed thousands of innocent Algerians in and around Sétif in reprisal. The nascent Algerian liberation movement seized upon the barbarity of the French response and awakened a largely politically dormant population. "Sétif!" became a rallying cry of the Algerian insurgency, which resulted in 83,441 French casualties and the eventual French withdrawal from independent Algeria.¹¹¹ As this example indicates, military action must be circumscribed by political considerations as a fundamental matter of strategy.¹¹²



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Because state military institutions are trained, organized, and equipped to fight wars against other states, they have a natural tendency to misread the nature of the adversary in counterinsurgencies. As Charles Townsend noted, “if the nature of the challenging ‘force’ is misunderstood, then the counter-application of force is likely to be wrong,”¹¹³ potentially resulting in the use of force appropriate against another state army, but which is counterproductive when used against an insurgent group. For example, the Irish Republican Army historically viewed itself as an ‘army,’ and construed its activities as a ‘war’ against British occupation. Thus, any British actions that implied that the conflict was a war provided very effective propaganda for the IRA. According to the *Record of the Rebellion in Ireland in 1920-21*, “recognition [by the military authorities] of the IRA as belligerents might *ipso facto* be said to involve the Imperial Government in the recognition of an Irish Republic.”¹¹⁴ Identifying the conflict a war would have legitimized Sinn Fein and threatened the political legitimacy of the British government and of the Union, itself. As Lloyd George said in April of 1920, “you do not declare war against rebels.”¹¹⁵

The use of excessive force may not only legitimate the insurgent group, but also cause the state to lose legitimacy in the eyes of the civilian population. For example, in Londonderry, Northern Ireland on January 30, 1972 the British Army Parachute Regiment was ordered to arrest demonstrators in an illegal anti-internment march. Believing that they were being attacked, soldiers opened fire on a crowd of civil rights demonstrators. According to a sergeant who witnessed the debacle, “acid bottle bombs were being thrown from the top of the flats, and two of our blokes were badly burnt... It was very busy, very chaotic... People were running in all directions, and screaming everywhere.”¹¹⁶ The soldiers responded to the rioters as if they were an opposing army. According to one British Army observer, “The Paras are trained to react fast and go in hard. That day they were expecting to have to fight their way in...In those street conditions it is very difficult to tell where a round has come from...that section, quite frankly lost control. For goodness’ sake, you could hear their CO bellowing at them to cease firing, and only to fire aimed shots at actual target.”¹¹⁷ As a result of the over-kill in Londonderry on what is now known as Bloody Sunday, the IRA came to be seen as the legitimate protectors of their own communities. The British Army, on the other hand, became a target of the people it had intended to protect. For the government to retain legitimacy, the population must believe that state forces are improving rather than undermining their security.

Precise Application of Force

There is a direct relationship between the appropriate use of force and successful counter insurgency. A corollary of this rule is that force must be applied precisely. According to British Army Colonel Michael Dewar, “COIN



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operates by precise tactics. Two weeks waiting in ambush and one kill to show for it is far better than to bomb a village flat."¹¹⁸ Force must be applied precisely so that it functions as a disincentive to insurgent activity. If the state threatens individuals through the imprecise application of force, the insurgency may begin to look more appealing as a security provider.

Although never implemented, certain senior military commanders in Vietnam understood the need for precise application of firepower. When General Harold K. Johnson became US Army Chief of Staff in 1964, he proposed an approach to the war in Vietnam that was radically at variance with Westmoreland's attrition-based "body count" approach. During his early trips to Vietnam, Johnson was disturbed by the enormous amount of firepower being "splashed around," of which only six percent was actually observed.¹¹⁹ In 1965, Johnson commissioned a study entitled *A Program for the Pacification and Long-Term Development of Vietnam* (PROVN).¹²⁰ The PROVN Study was drafted by ten officers from diverse backgrounds, including Col. Don Marshall, a cultural anthropologist by training who later directed Gen. Creighton Abrams' Long Range Planning Project.¹²¹ The PROVN study carefully examined the unintended consequences of indiscriminate firepower concluding that, "aerial attacks and artillery fire, applied indiscriminately, also have exacted a toll on village allegiance." Operations intended to protect villagers were having the opposite effect of harming and alienating them. Johnson noted a new rule that should be applied in this type of warfare: "Destruction is applied only to the extent necessary to achieve control and, thus, by its nature, must be discriminating."¹²²

The PROVN study has implications for operations in Iraq. The main focus of Multinational Forces Iraq (MNFI) has been the destruction of insurgent and terrorist networks. Lacking quality information on the identity of insurgents, MNFI has engaged in raids on neighborhoods containing suspected weapons caches. These untargeted raids by US soldiers tend to have a negative unintended effect on the civilian population. As one young Iraqi *imam* said, "There are too many raids. There are too many low flying helicopters at night. Before, people wanted to go to America. Now they do not want to see Americans anymore. They do not want to see any more soldiers. They hate all of the militaries in their area."¹²³ In order to avoid causing resentment that can drive insurgency, coercive force must be applied accurately and precisely. Each use of force should be preceded by these questions: Is the action creating more insurgents than it is eliminating? Does the benefit of this action outweigh the potential cost to security if it creates more insurgents?

Provision of Security

One of the core functions of a state is the provision of security to citizens within its territory. Security is the most basic pre-condition for civilian support of the



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government. As Charles Simpson pointed out in regard to Vietnam: “the motivation that produces the only real long-lasting effect is . . . the elemental consideration of survival. Peasants will support [the guerrillas] . . . if they are convinced that failure to do so will result in death or brutal punishment. They will support the government if and when they are convinced that it *offers them a better life*, and it can and will protect them against the [guerrillas] . . . forever.”¹²⁴ Thus, to counter an insurgency the government must establish (or reestablish) physical security for the citizens. In a recent *Foreign Affairs* article, Andrew Krepinevich reaches the same conclusion: “Rather than focusing on killing insurgents, [Coalition Forces] should concentrate on providing security” to the civilian population.¹²⁵

There are three operational models for the provision of civilian security in a counter insurgency: local, indigenous forces working in conjunction with regular military forces; community policing; and direct support. In Vietnam, the US Marine Corps’ Combined Action Program (CAP) was highly effective at providing security to the local civilian population by using local, indigenous forces in conjunction with regular military forces. In every CAP unit, a Marine rifle squad was paired with a platoon of local Vietnamese forces. Using a local village as a base, CAP units trained, patrolled, defended, and lived with indigenous forces, preventing the guerrillas from extracting rice, intelligence, and sanctuary from local towns and villages. In addition to providing valuable intelligence about enemy activity, CAP units accounted for 7.6 percent of the enemy killed while representing only 1.5 percent of the Marines killed in Vietnam.¹²⁶ In Malaya, the British administration replaced soldiers with civilian police, who were able to gain the trust of the community by building long-term relationships, and developed an information campaign to portray the police as civil servants, whose job it was to protect the civilians. By 1953, these efforts reduced the level of violence and increased trust in the government.¹²⁷ In Mosul during 2003, the 101st Airborne Division engaged in direct provision of security to the civilian population. With over 20,000 soldiers, the US force in Nineveh province had excellent civil affairs, patrolling, and rapid reaction coverage. As the largest single employer in northern Iraq, the 101st Airborne was a powerful force for social order in the community.¹²⁸

The Iraqi Police are the main force designated by the Coalition to provide security to Iraqi citizens. Despite vigorous recruiting and training efforts, they have been less than effective providing security for the population. The town of Hit, with a population of over 130,000, entirely lacked a police force as of August 2005.¹²⁹ Iraqis interviewed between November 2003 and August 2005 consistently indicated that security and crime, specifically kidnapping and assault, remain their greatest concern.¹³⁰ In many Iraqi towns, women and children cannot walk in the street for fear of abduction or attack. The most insignificant conflict, such as a minor traffic accident, may escalate into deadly



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violence. In many towns, police only patrol during the daytime with support from the Iraqi Army or Coalition Forces, leaving the militias and insurgents in control at night. Residents view the police as a means of legitimizing illegal activities rather than as a source of security: police commonly accept bribes to ignore smuggling (from Iran and Turkey), black market activities, kidnappings, and murders. For a price, most police officers will arrest an innocent man, and for a greater price they will turn the suspect over to the Coalition as a potential insurgent. In Mosul, a US officer reported in August 2005 that for \$5,000 - \$10,000 a detainee could bribe his way out of Iraqi Police custody.¹³¹

In most areas of the country, local pre-existing militias and *ad hoc* units form the core of local police forces. These units tend to be overwhelmingly dominated by a single ethno-religious or tribal group, which frequently arouses the animosity of local populations from different groups. Many of these forces freely use official state structures to serve their own interests. One American military officer, when discussing the Sunni Arab police from East Mosul (90% of whom are from the al-Juburi tribe) said, "I don't know if the police are about peace and security, or about their own survival and power."¹³² In some areas of the country, self-interested militias previously engaged in insurgent activities against the Hussein regime now provide questionable security services to the population. Some of them, like the Badr Brigade¹³³ or the *peshmerga*,¹³⁴ have been integrated into the new Iraqi Security Forces. In other areas, the Interior Ministry has deployed Public Order Battalions to maintain government control. Intended to augment civilian police during large scale civil disobedience, these units are not trained to provide police services and have been heavy handed in their application of coercive force. In Falluja, the Battalion currently functions as a *de facto* Shiite militia, extorting business owners, dishonoring women, and raiding homes indiscriminately.¹³⁵ According to a Marine Corps Officer, using Shiite police in a predominately Sunni area leads to resentment among the population: "We've had problems. There are inevitable cultural clashes."¹³⁶

State failure to provide security may cause citizens to accept alternative security guarantees from non-state actors, which can be a major driver of insurgency. According to an Iraqi insurgent, for example, the failure of US forces to provide security motivated him to take up arms: "my colleagues and I waited to make our decision on whether to fight until we saw how they would act. They should have come and just given us food and some security . . . It was then that I realized that they had come as occupiers and not as liberators and my colleagues and I then voted to fight."¹³⁷ In some areas of Iraq, insurgent groups and militias have established themselves as extra-governmental arbiters of the physical security of the population and now represent a challenge to the state's monopoly on coercive force. For example, Muqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army¹³⁸ is the sole security provider for the population of Sadr City, a district of Baghdad with an estimated population of two million. In Haditha, the Mujahideen composed of



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Ansar al-Sunna and *Tawhid al-Jihad*, effectively govern the town. They enforce a strict interpretation of Islamic law in their court system and use militias to provide order. If Haditha residents follow the rules, they receive 24-hour access to electricity and can walk down the street without fear of random crime. If they disobey, the punishments are extremely harsh.¹³⁹ In the border town of al-Qaim, followers of Abu Musab Zarqawi took control on September 5, 2005, and began patrolling the streets, killing US collaborators, and enforcing strict Islamic law. Sheik Nawaf Mahallawi, a leader of the Albu Mahal tribe noted that because Coalition forces cannot provide security to local people, "it would be insane [for local tribal members] to attack Zarqawi's people, even to shoot one bullet at them..."¹⁴⁰

Until the Coalition is able to provide security to the civilian population, Iraqis will maintain affiliations with other groups in order to protect themselves and their families. If they fear reprisal and violence, few Iraqis will be willing to work with MNFI as translators, to join the Iraqi Security Forces, participate in local government, initiate reconstruction projects, or to provide information on insurgent and terrorist operations. According to an Iraqi police officer, "The people are scared to give us information about the terrorists because there are many terrorists here. And when we leave, the terrorists will come back and kill them."¹⁴¹ Currently, cooperation with the Coalition does not enhance individual and family security, and can even undermine it. For Iraqi civilians, informing on other Iraqis can eliminate enemies and economic competitors, but informing on actual insurgents is likely to result in the murder of the informant and his family.¹⁴² Throughout Iraq, translators working with Americans regularly turn up dead. City council members and senior police officials are assassinated. These strong security disincentives for cooperation with the Coalition and Iraqi government have a negative combined effect. Iraqis have little incentive to provide information to the Coalition, and the lack of intelligence makes accurate targeting of insurgents difficult. To develop intelligence, Coalition forces conduct sweeps and raids in suspect neighborhoods. Sweeps greatly undermine public support for the Coalition and its Iraqi partners, creating further disincentive for cooperation.

Ideology

In *Low Intensity Operations*, British Brigadier General Frank Kitson noted that ideas are a motivating factor in insurgent violence: "the main characteristic which distinguishes campaigns of insurgency from other forms of war is that they are primarily concerned with the struggle for men's minds."¹⁴³ Insurgencies fight for an idea, whether it is Islam, Marxism, or nationalism. To fight back, "you need a better idea," according to US Marine Corps General Gen. Charles C. Krulak. "Bullets help sanitize an operational area... They don't win a war."¹⁴⁴



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While compelling ideas are no guarantee of victory, the ability to leverage ideology is an important tool in a counter insurgency. Mass movements of all types, including insurgencies, gather recruits and amass popular support through ideological appeal. Individuals subscribe to ideologies that articulate and render comprehensible the underlying reasons why practical, material interests remain unfulfilled. Recruits are often young men whose ambitions have been frustrated and are unable to improve their lot (or their communities' lot) in life.¹⁴⁵ A mass movement offers a refuge, "from the anxieties, bareness and meaninglessness of ... individual existence...freeing them from their ineffectual selves – and it does this by enfolding them into a closely knit and exultant corporate whole."¹⁴⁶ The insurgent group provides them with identity, purpose, and community in addition to physical, economic, and psychological security. The movement's ideology not only clarifies their tribulations, but also provides a course of action to remedy those ills.

The central mechanism through which ideologies are expressed and absorbed is the narrative. A cultural narrative is an, "organizational scheme expressed in story form."¹⁴⁷ Narratives are central to the representation of identity, particularly the collective identity of groups such as religions, nations, and cultures. Stories about a community's history provide models of how actions and consequences are linked, and are often the basis for strategies, actions, and interpretation of the intentions of other actors. "Narrative is the discourse structure in which human action receives its form and through which it is meaningful."¹⁴⁸

Insurgent organizations have used narratives very efficiently in the development of a legitimating ideology. In "Terror's Mask: Insurgency Within Islam," for example, Michael Vlahos identifies the structure and function of the jihadist narrative.¹⁴⁹ According to Vlahos, Bin Laden's depiction of himself as a man purified in the mountains of Afghanistan, who begins converting followers and punishing the infidels, resonates powerfully with the historic figure of Muhammad. In the collective imagination of Bin Laden and his followers, Islamic history is a story about the decline of the *umma* and the inevitable triumph against Western imperialism. Only through *jihad* can Islam be renewed both politically and theologically. The jihadist narrative is expressed and appropriated through the sacred language of mystical heroic poetry (*hikayat*) and revelations provided through dreams. Because the "act of struggle itself is a triumph, joining them to God and to the River of Islam ... there can be no defeat as we know it for them." Narratives thus have the power to transform reality: the logic of the narrative insulates those who have absorbed it from temporal failure, promising followers monumental, inevitable victory.¹⁵⁰

In order to employ (or counter) ideology effectively, the cultural narratives of the insurgent group and society must be understood. As William Casebeer points



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out, “understanding the narratives which influence the genesis, growth, maturation and transformation of terrorist organizations will enable us to better fashion a strategy for undermining the efficacy of those narratives so as to deter, disrupt and defeat terrorist groups.”¹⁵¹ Misunderstanding the cultural narrative of an adversary, on the other hand, may result in egregious policy decisions. For example, the Vietnamese view their history as continued armed opposition to invasions in the interest of national sovereignty, beginning with the Song Chinese in the 11th century, the Mongols in the 13th century, the Ming Chinese in the 15th century, the Japanese during World War II, and the French who were eventually defeated at Dien Bien Phu on May 7, 1954. After establishing the League for Vietnamese Independence, better known as the *Viet Minh*, Ho Chi Minh wrote, “national liberation is the most important problem... We shall overthrow the Japanese and French and their jackals in order to save people from the situation between boiling water and boiling heat.”¹⁵² The Vietnamese believed that their “weak and small” (*nhuoc tieu*) nation would be annihilated by colonialism, a cannibalistic “people-eating system” (*che do thuc dan*),¹⁵³ and that their only chance for survival was to fight back against a more powerful adversary.¹⁵⁴ When the Viet Minh began an insurrection against the French, however, US policy makers saw this not as a quest for national liberation, but as evidence of communist expansion.¹⁵⁵ Lyndon Johnson frequently told visitors to the White House that if we did not take our stand in Vietnam, one day we would have to make our stand in Hawaii.¹⁵⁶ US failure to understand the Vietnamese cultural narrative transformed a potential ally into a motivated adversary. As Ho Chi Minh said, “You can kill ten of my men for every one I kill of yours. But even at those odds, you will lose and I will win.”¹⁵⁷

Insurgent organizations in Iraq have been very effective in leveraging pre-existing cultural narratives to generate anti-imperialist sentiment. Current events resonate powerfully with the history of successive invasions of Iraqi territory, including the 13th century sacking of Baghdad by Genghis Khan’s grandson Hulegu, the invasion of Tamerlane of Samarkand in 1401, and more recently the British Mandate. For example, Egyptian cleric Abu Hamza described George Bush as “the Ghengis Khan of this century” and Tony Blair as “his chambermaid,” concluding that, “we are just wondering when our blood is going to be shed.”¹⁵⁸ Capitalizing on this narrative of foreign invasion and domination, insurgent groups have generated pervasive beliefs that undermine the Coalition, such as the notion that the Coalition is intending to appropriate Iraq’s natural resources and that America wants to destroy Islam. Unfortunately, some of our actions tend to confirm their narratives, such as protecting oil refiners rather than the Baghdad museum after major combat operations ended in 2003.¹⁵⁹

Despite the general appeal of the anti-imperialist narrative to the general Iraqi population, the insurgency in Iraq currently lacks an ideological center. Due to the ethno-religious divisions in the society, the resurgence of tribalism following



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the occupation, and the subsequent erosion of national identity, insurgent organizations are currently deploying ideologies that appeal only to their own ethno-religious group. Various Sunni Arab insurgent groups, for example, feel vulnerable within the new Shia dominated regime and would prefer an authoritarian, secular, Sunni government. Other Sunni Arab insurgents are using extremist Islam to recruit and motivate followers,¹⁶⁰ claiming that the secular nature of the Baath regime was the root cause of its brutality and corruption. Among the Shia, the Sadr Movement employs the narrative of Imam Hussein's martyrdom at Karbala in 681 AD¹⁶¹ as a means to generate resistance against the Baath Party, against secular, democratic forms of government, and against other Shia Arab leaders (like al-Hakim and al-Jaafari) who are viewed as proxies of Iran. Like Hussein who suffered for making the 'just' choice, the Shia construe their persecution for opposing outside influences (including modernization, capitalism, communism, socialism, secular government, and democracy) as martyrdom akin to Hussein's.

To defeat the insurgent narratives, the Coalition must generate a strong counter-narrative. Unfortunately, the main themes of the Coalition's message -- freedom and democracy -- do not resonate well with the population. In Iraq, freedom is associated with chaos, and chaos has a particularly negative valence that is expressed in the proverb "better a thousand years of oppression than a single day of anarchy." The aversion to political chaos has a strong basis in historical reality: Iraq's only period of semi-democratic governance from 1921 until 1958 was characterized by social, political, and economic instability. Current Iraqi skepticism regarding the desirability of democratic governance is accentuated by the continued declarations that the current system, which is very chaotic, is a democracy. After witnessing unlawful, disorderly behavior, Iraqis will occasionally joke, "Ah, so this is democracy."¹⁶² Democracy is also problematic as an effective ideology because Islam forms the basis for conceptions of government and authority (despite the secular views of many Iraqis). The Islamic concept of sovereignty is grounded in the notion that human beings are mere executors of God's will. According to the Islamic political philosopher Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi, "Islam, speaking from the view-point of political philosophy, is the very antithesis of secular Western democracy . . . [Islam] altogether repudiates the philosophy of popular sovereignty and rears its polity on the foundations of the sovereignty of God and the vice regency (*khilafah*) of man."¹⁶³

Economic Incentive And Disincentive

In order to win the support of the population, counter insurgency forces must create incentives for cooperation with the government and disincentives for opposition to it. The US Marine Corps *Small Wars Manual* advocates this approach, stressing the importance of focusing on the social, economic, and



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political development of the people more than on simple material destruction.¹⁶⁴ Although counter insurgency forces typically have greater financial capacity to utilize economic incentive and disincentive than do insurgent organizations, this tool of political competition is not used as frequently as it could be.

The 'land to the tiller program' in South Vietnam offers an example of effective use of economic incentive in a counter insurgency. The program was intended to undercut the Viet Cong land program and gain the farmers' political support.¹⁶⁵ Unlike the concurrent communist land reform program that offered only provisional ownership rights, this program transferred actual ownership of the land to peasants. Between 1970 and 1975, titles had been distributed for 1,136,705 hectares, an estimated 46% of the national rice crop hectareage.¹⁶⁶ The old landlord-tenant system, which motivated many of the agrarian political movements in South Vietnam, was eliminated. The land to the tiller program effectively undercut the support for the VC by attacking one of the communists' main ideological tenets – that the capitalist system harmed the peasantry – and dramatically reduced support for the insurgency in South Vietnam by 1975.¹⁶⁷

The provision of broad economic benefits was also a component of Portuguese counterinsurgency efforts in Angola. After the onset of the conflict, the Portuguese government began investing in industrial development, boosting Angola's iron ore production from its 1957 rate of 100,000 tons year to 15 million tons by 1971.¹⁶⁸ The Portuguese also expanded social services: within eight years, the number of primary school students increased from 100,000 to 400,000. The Portuguese Army built schools, and soldiers functioned as teachers in remote locations where there were no qualified civilians.¹⁶⁹ By establishing mobile clinics staffed by army doctors, the Portuguese were able to meet the World Health Organization standards for proper health care by 1970.¹⁷⁰ Compulsory labor was abolished in 1961 along with the requirement that farmers plant cash crops, such as cotton, to be sold at state-controlled prices. Programs such as these negated the guerilla's claims that Portugal was only concerned for the welfare of white settlers, and by 1972, lacking any factual basis for their claims, the guerrillas could no longer operate inside Angola.

Direct financial rewards for surrender can also be used as an incentive. During the Malayan Emergency (1948-1960), the British began bribing insurgents to surrender or to provide information leading to the capture, elimination or surrender of other insurgents. Incentives for surrender ranged from US \$28,000 for the Chairman of the Central Committee, down to \$2,300 for a platoon leader, and \$875 for a soldier. Statements by insurgents who had accepted amnesty urging their former comrades to surrender were broadcast from airplanes over the jungle; these "voice flights" were so effective that 70 percent of those who surrendered said that these recordings contributed to their decision to surrender. During the twelve years of the Emergency, a total of 2,702 insurgents



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surrendered, 6,710 were killed and 1,287 were captured using information gained from the 'rewards for surrender' program. One observer called the program "the most potent propaganda weapon in the Emergency."¹⁷¹

To date, economic incentive and disincentive has not been used effectively in Iraq. Although the Coalition and its Iraqi partners have pledged \$60 billion toward reconstruction, the average Iraqi has seen little economic benefit. The US government appropriated \$24 billion (for 2003-2005 fiscal years) for improving the security and justice systems, as well as the oil, electricity and water infrastructures. As of May 2003, only \$9.6 billion had been disbursed to projects.¹⁷² The American funds for infrastructure repair were channeled mainly through six American engineering companies, but the cost of providing security to employees resulted in unexpected cost inflation, undermined transport capacity, and made it difficult to ensure the completion of projects by Iraqi subcontractors. Of the \$10 billion pledged in international community loans and \$3.6 million pledged in grants, the Iraq government has only accessed \$436 million for debt relief and \$167 million in grants.¹⁷³

In Iraq, high unemployment, lack of basic services, and widespread poverty are driving the insurgency. Unemployment in Iraq is currently estimated at 28-40%.¹⁷⁴ In Sunni Arab areas, however, unemployment figures are probably much higher, given that Sunnis were typically employed in the now disbanded Baath state apparatus. As a result of the collapse of the Iraqi educational system over twenty years of war and sanctions, a large group of angry, semiliterate young men remain unemployed. For these young men, working with insurgent organizations is an effective mechanism of making a living. According to General John Abizaid, "In most of the cases of direct-fire engagements that our troops have, they find very young men who have been paid to attack our forces." Indeed, the Baath loyalists running the insurgency pay young male Iraqis from \$150 to \$1000 per attack -- a considerable amount of money in a country where the average monthly household income is less than \$80.¹⁷⁵ In Iraq, where a man's ability to support his family is directly tied to his honor, failure by operating forces to disperse money on payday often results in armed attacks. As one Marine noted, "If we say we will pay and we don't, he will go get that AK."¹⁷⁶

Economic incentive could be used to reduce support for the insurgency in Iraq either by employing young men in large-scale infrastructure rebuilding projects or through small-scale local sustainable development programs. Small-scale sustainable development could be kick-started by distributing \$1.4 billion worth of Iraqi seized assets and appropriated funds through the Commanders Emergency Response Program (CERP).¹⁷⁷ Typically, local military commanders award CERP as small grants to serve immediate needs of the community. Military units, however, often lack the economic background necessary to select projects most likely to encourage sustainable local economic growth. Because Iraq is an oil



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economy, it is susceptible to what is commonly known as the ‘Dutch Disease,’¹⁷⁸ an economic condition that limits the ability of oil economies to produce low cost products and that results typically in a service-driven economy. Thus, CERP funds should not be expended to reconstruct factories (which were an element of Saddam Hussein's state-controlled command economy and did not produce goods for export), but in developing small-scale local services such as tea shops, hair salons, and auto repair services.

Traditional Authority

The fourth tool available to both insurgents and counter insurgents is the ability to leverage traditional authority within a given society. Rather than being codified in impersonal rules, traditional authority is usually invested in a hereditary line or invested in a particular office by a higher power.¹⁷⁹ “Traditional authority is based on a claim by the leaders, and a belief on the part of the followers, that there is virtue in the sanctity of age-old rules and powers.”¹⁸⁰ Status and honor are accorded to those with traditional authority and this status in turn helps maintain dominance. Tribal and religious forms of organization rely in particular on traditional authority.

Traditional authority figures often wield enough power, especially in rural areas, to single-handedly drive an insurgency. During the 1948 and 1961 Dar ul Islam rebellions against the Indonesian government, several Islamic leaders were kidnapped or executed without trial by the Indonesian military. A village leader described how, “the anger of the Umma Islam in the region of Limbangan, because of the loss of their *bapak* (literally father or leader) who was very much loved by them, was at that time a flood which could not be held back.”¹⁸¹ After a series of initial missteps, the Indonesian military recognized the importance of these local traditional authority figures and began to use coercion in conjunction with amnesty programs to remove support for the Dar ul Islam village by village in West Java, eventually defeating the insurgency.¹⁸²

Throughout the Vietnam War, insurgent groups leveraged traditional authority very effectively. After Viet Minh forces overthrew the Japanese in a bloodless coup in 1945,¹⁸³ official representatives traveled to the Imperial Capital at Hué to demand Emperor Bao Dai's abdication. Facing the prospects of losing his throne or his life, the Emperor resigned and presented Ho Chi Minh with the imperial sword and sacred seal, thereby investing him with the ‘mandate of heaven’ (*thien minh*)¹⁸⁴ – the ultimate form of traditional authority. Subsequently, Ho ruled Vietnam as if he were an emperor possessed of a heavenly mandate, replicating many of the signs and signals of Vietnamese traditional authority.¹⁸⁵ Like many political systems that operate the principle of traditional authority, the character of the leader was of paramount concern.¹⁸⁶ Thus, Ho cultivated and projected the



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virtuous conduct of a *quan tu* (superior man)¹⁸⁷ and the traditional requisites of "talent and virtue" (*tai duc*) necessary for leadership.¹⁸⁸ Widely seen as possessing the mandate of heaven and having single-handedly liberated Vietnam from the French, there was little opposition to Ho inside Vietnam. Although some senior US military officers recognized that many Vietnamese considered Ngo Dinh Diem's government to be illegitimate,¹⁸⁹ the dictates of policy trumped an honest assessment of the power of traditional authority in Vietnam, which would have made the futility of establishing a puppet government in South Vietnam immediately apparent.

In Iraq, the US failure to leverage the traditional authority of the tribal sheiks hindered the establishment of a legitimate government and became a driver of the insurgency. The overthrow of Saddam Hussein in April 2003 created a power vacuum that was quickly filled by resurgent tribes, accustomed to political and legal autonomy. As a young tribal leader observed "We follow the central government... But of course if communications are cut between us and the center, all authority will revert to our sheik."¹⁹⁰ Tribes became the source of physical security, economic well-being, and social identity. Shortly after the fall of Hussein's regime, for example, religious and tribal leaders in Falluja appointed their own civil management council, prevented looting, and protected government buildings. Because Coalition forces have been unable to reestablish a legal system throughout the country, tribal law has become the default mode of settling disputes. "If you have a car accident, you don't sort it out in the courts anymore," according to Wamidh Nadmih, a professor of political science at Baghdad University. "Even if you live in the city, you sort it out in the tribe."¹⁹¹

Instead of leveraging the traditional authority of the tribes, Coalition forces virtually ignored it. According to a senior US official, the tribes were not a significant issue for Washington. The implicit policy of Bremer's administration in Iraq appears to have been detribalization: "If it is a question of harnessing the power of the tribes, then it's a question of finding tribal leaders who can operate in a post-tribal environment. We'll have to rely on these people to carry the message of what the new democracy is about."¹⁹² The anxiety motivating the anti-tribal policy was, in the words of one US official, the "ability of people like the Iranians and others to go in with money and create warlords" sympathetic to their own interests.¹⁹³ As a result, an opportunity to leverage traditional authority was wasted in Iraq. According to the Center for Army Lessons Learned, "A failure to understand the role of tribalism, for instance, has led to some American units disproportionately empowering tribal structures, while others have virtually ignored them... A failure to recognize the different sources of authority can disrupt existing governance and resolution structures."¹⁹⁴



Conclusion

In the Clausewitzian tradition, “war is merely the continuation of policy by other means,”¹⁹⁵ in which limited means are used for political ends. The US War Department’s General Order 100 of 1863 reflects this rule: “The destruction of the enemy in modern war, and, indeed modern war itself, are means to obtain that object of the belligerent which lies beyond the war.”¹⁹⁶ The object that “lies beyond the war” is the restoration of civil order, and this is particularly essential in counter insurgency where the government’s legitimacy has been weakened or possibly destroyed. As General Harold Johnson noted, “military force . . . should be committed with the object beyond war in mind... broadly speaking, the object beyond war should be the restoration of stability with the minimum of destruction, so that society and lawful government may proceed in an atmosphere of justice and order.”¹⁹⁷

The restoration of civil order in Iraq would require: a guarantee of political and economic participation; a guarantee of security; the reconstruction of civil institutions destroyed by decades of repression and dehumanization; and the generation of a national ideology and set of symbols around which people feel proud to organize. The four tools of political competition – coercive force, economic incentive and disincentive, ideology, and traditional authority – can be employed in concert at the strategic, operational and tactical levels to attain the object beyond war. But like every counter insurgency, the conflict in Iraq requires a leap of imagination from soldiers and statesmen alike. Success depends on the ability to put oneself in the shoes of the civilian population and ask: how would I get physical and economic security if I had to live in this situation? Why would I obey the authority claimed by the powers that be? In the words of Max Weber, when and why would I obey?



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- ¹ Quoted from Andrew Krepinevich, *The War in Iraq: The Nature of Insurgency Warfare*, Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, June 2, 2004, 1.
- ² Ian F. W. Beckett, *Modern Insurgencies and Counter-Insurgencies: Guerrillas and their Opponents since 1750*, Reprinted 2003 (London: Routledge, 2001), 1.
- ³ Beckett, *Modern Insurgencies and Counter-Insurgencies*, 1. See Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, trans. S.B. Griffith (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981).
- ⁴ Beckett, *Modern Insurgencies and Counter-Insurgencies*, vii.
- ⁵ Central Intelligence Agency, *Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency*, 2.
- ⁶ Bard E. O'Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism: From Revolution to Apocalypse*, 2nd ed., Revised (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2005), 1.
- ⁷ Ibid., 15. (Emphasis in original)
- ⁸ Ibid., 19-29.
- ⁹ Ibid., 21-22.
- ¹⁰ Ibid., 29-31.
- ¹¹ O'Neill offers Japan's Aum Shinrikyo as an example of an apocalyptic-utopian insurgent group. Ibid., 23-24.
- ¹² Ibid., 33.
- ¹³ Richard H. Shultz, Douglas Farah, and Itamara V. Lochard, "Armed Groups: A Tier One Security Priority," (accessed May 5, 2006); available from <http://www.usafa.af.mil/df/inss/OCP/ocp57.pdf>. 21.
- ¹⁴ Ibid., 21.
- ¹⁵ Ibid., 21-22.
- ¹⁶ Ibid., 21.
- ¹⁷ See *FM 100-20: Military Operations in Low Intensity Conflict*, Chapter Two, U.S. Department of the Army, Washington, DC, 1990.
- ¹⁸ This section summarizes the findings presented in Anthony James Joes, *Resisting Rebellion: The History and Politics of Counterinsurgency*, (Lexington, KY: The University press of Kentucky, 2004), Ch. 2.
- ¹⁹ Ibid., Ch. 3-4.
- ²⁰ Ho Chi Minh, "Revising Working Methods," quoted in Douglas Pike, *PAVN: People's Army of Vietnam*, (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1986), 219.
- ²¹ Truong Chinh, *Primer For Revolt*, (New York: Frederick Praeger, 1963), 111-112.
- ²² Some insurgent forces are successfully transformed into conventional forces in line with Maoist guerilla warfare theory, but that does not always occur, nor should it be a yardstick by which to measure the success of an insurgency.
- ²³ Josephus, *The Jewish War*, (London: Penguin, 1981), 27.
- ²⁴ See Hugh Kennedy, *The Armies of the Caliphs: Military and Society in the Early Islamic State*, (London: Routledge, 2001).
- ²⁵ For studies of the Egyptian COIN campaign in Yemen see, *inter alia*, David Witty, "A Regular Army in counterinsurgency operations: Egypt in North Yemen, 1962-1967," *Journal of Military History*, Vol.65, No.2, (2001), 401-439.
- ²⁶ The literature on the Algerian insurgency against or war of independence from the French is enormous and rich, particularly in French. Among the most readable studies are Alistair Horne, *The Savage War of Peace*
- ²⁷ There is actually an extensive literature on this little-known insurgency, see Stephen Cheney, "The Insurgency in Oman, 1962-1976," Research Paper, U.S. Marine Corps Command and Staff College, April 1984; John Akehurst, *We Won a War: The Campaign in Oman 1965-1975*, Guilford: Biddles Ltd., 1982;



Robert Sarnoski, "The Fight for Oman 1963-1975: Analysis of Civil-Military Operations in Low-Intensity Conflict and its Relevance to Current World Conflict," Research Report, Air University, Maxwell Air Force Base, April 1995.

²⁸ The literature on the Afghan insurgency is enormous; see Lester Grau and Michael Gress (eds.) *The Soviet-Afghan War: How a Superpower fought and lost*, (translation of the Russian General Staff lessons of the war), Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2002; General Mohammad Yahya Nwaroz and Lieutenant-Colonel Lester Grau, "The Soviet War in Afghanistan: History and Harbinger of Future War?" Foreign Military Studies Office, Fort Leavenworth at <http://www.bdg.minsk.by/cegi/N2/Afg/Waraf.htm>; C.J. Dick, "Mujahideen Tactics in the Soviet-Afghan War," Conflict Studies Research Center, January 2002.

²⁹ Unfortunately there is very little open literature on this important conflict. Both the Israelis and Hizballah have a vast collection of lessons learned and after action reports that are not available for research. The few open source studies include: Al Venter, "Hezbollah Defies Onslaught," *Jane's International Defense Review*, No.6, 1996, pp.81-86; David Eshel, "Counterguerilla Warfare in South Lebanon," *Marine Corps Gazette*, Vol.81, No.7, July 1997, pp.40-43; Shmuel Gordon, "The Vulture and the Snake: Counter-Guerilla Air Warfare and the War in Lebanon," Mideast Security and Policy Studies, No.39, Begin-Sadat Center For Strategic Studies, Bar-Ilan University, July 1998; Nicholas Blandford, "Hizbullah prepares to open up front along the Israeli border," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, April 2002, pp.26-29. Hizballah has emerged as one of the most successful insurgent organizations in the world. On Hizballah itself see Adam Shatz, "In Search of Hezbollah," *New York Review of Books*, Vol.51, No.7, April 29, 2004 (accessed on-line).

³⁰ The literature in English on this savage internal war is limited; among the best are two full length studies: Luis Martinez, *The Algerian Civil War, 1990-1998*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2000; see also Colonel Rachid Zouine (Algerian Army) "Islamism and Terrorism in Algeria," USAWC Strategy Research Project, U.S. Army College, Carlisle Barracks, April 2002.

³¹ There is not much literature on the Islamist insurgency in Upper Egypt; of course, one could argue whether it was an insurgency at all and more like acts of terrorism by extremist groups. Neither the extent of it nor the casualty levels were anything like the Algerian Islamist insurgency that took place in the same time period. However, we do not yet know of the extent of the firefights between the Egyptian security forces and the insurgents in urban and rural areas of Upper Egypt. For a brief comparative analysis of the Islamist onslaught on the Egyptian state see, Lawrence Cline, "Egyptian and Algerian Insurgencies: A Comparison," *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol.9, No.2, Autumn 1998, pp.114-133; for a longer study whose methodology is questionable though, see Ruth Beitler and Cindy Jebb, "Egypt as a Failing State: Implications for U.S. National Security," paper in my possession.

³² I am distinguishing this episode from the acts of terror undertaken by Palestinian groups, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, since the early 1960s. Of course, the Palestinian insurgency of 2000-Present has been characterized by horrific incidents of terrorism.

³³ Few full-length studies are available in English on this bloody insurgency and Turkish COIN campaign; see Tammy Arbuckle, "Stalemate in the mountains," *Jane's International Defense Review*, No.1, 1997, pp.48-50. In it the author notes that the Turkish Armed Forces shifted from a policy of repression to one of trying to win the hearts and minds of the disgruntled Kurdish population by, among other things, issuing a strict code of conduct for the personnel of the armed forces in their day-to-day dealings with the Kurdish inhabitants of eastern Anatolia.

³⁴ Most of the literature on the ongoing insurgency in Afghanistan is overwhelmingly journalistic in nature.

³⁵ There are few studies of the Iraqi insurgency. I have done a great deal of work on it but most is not available for public readership. The following studies of mine are available, "The Sunni Insurgency," Middle East Brief No. at; "The Iraqi Insurgency," *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Autumn 2003, pp.; see also the following valuable additions, Michael Knights and Jeffrey White, "Iraqi resistance proves resilient," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, November 2003, pp.20-24; Steven Metz, "Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq," *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol.27, No.1, Winter 2003-04, pp.25-36.



³⁶ The Chechen insurgency, particularly the urban-based insurgency in the Chechen capital of Grozny, has generated a vast literature; the following are noteworthy and were examined in the course of research on this paper, see

³⁷ Beckett, *Modern Insurgencies and Counter-Insurgencies*, viii.

³⁸ Charles Tilly, “Does Modernization Breed Revolution?” *Comparative Politics*, vol. 5 (April 1973), 447. Quoted in Joes, 7.

³⁹ Anthony James Joes, *Resisting Rebellion: The History and Politics of Counterinsurgency*, (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2004), 8.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 9.

⁴¹ Ibid., 9.

⁴² See Douglas Blaufarb, *The Counterinsurgency Era: U.S. Doctrine and Performance*, (New York: Free Press, 1977).

⁴³ Beckett, *Modern Insurgencies and Counter-Insurgencies*, 24.

⁴⁴ D. Michael Shafer, *Deadly Paradigms: The Failure of U.S. Counterinsurgency Policy*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 132.

⁴⁵ See, for example, Andrew F. Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).

⁴⁶ See, for example, A.J. Bacevich, et. al., *American Military Policy in Small Wars: the Case of El Salvador*, (Washington, DC: Pergamon-Brassey’s, 1988).

⁴⁷ Joes, 219-221.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 219.

⁴⁹ For an example of French writing on counterinsurgency, see Roger Trinquier, *Modern Warfare: A French View of Counterinsurgency*, Daniel Lee, trans. (New York: Praeger, 1964).

⁵⁰ Joes, 221-222. See also Sir Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*,

⁵¹ Joes, 227-229. See also John P. Cann, *Counterinsurgency in Africa: The Portuguese Way of War, 1961-1973*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1997).

⁵² Joes, 227-229.

⁵³ For a description of Portuguese injustices in the African colonies, see Beckett, *Modern Insurgencies and Counter-Insurgencies*, 130-131.

⁵⁴ See John J. McCuen, *The Art of Revolutionary War*, (St. Petersburg, FL: Hailer Publishing, 2005) First published 1966.

⁵⁵ McCuen, 28-29.

⁵⁶ Ibid., Ch. 3.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 324-330.

⁵⁸ Scholars use the term “minority group” to refer not to the group’s population percentage, but rather its status vis-à-vis the power structure.

⁵⁹ It should be recognized that this strategy does not mean annihilation of the entire population from which the insurgents stem, but total eradication of the insurgents and their infrastructure and all those who support them or are suspected of supporting them. In essence this means that the civilian population will pay a heavy price, particularly if the eradicators are a foreign power that racially denigrates the entire ethnicity or racial group that gave rise to the insurgents.

⁶⁰ One of the best recent analysis of government and military institutional learning concerning the waging of COIN campaigns is John Nagl, *Counterinsurgency Lessons From Malaya and Vietnam: Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*, Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2002, pp.3-14.

⁶¹ However, note the following caveat: as previously mentioned, no foreign occupier has won against a war of national liberation that mobilizes the entire population and retains its support. So, even if the U.S. government and military had not been institutionally resistant to new approaches and changed their entire



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approach to the Vietnam War, the chances of victory would have still been slim. But history has shown that both local governments and foreign occupiers have won against localized insurgencies, terrorist groups and partisan groups that have not succeeded in mobilizing the entire population.

⁶² For more details, see Richard Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds in Guerilla Warfare*; Julian Paget, *Counter-Insurgency Operations: Techniques of Guerilla Warfare*, New York: Walker and Company, 1967, pp.43-75; Kumar Ramakrishna, *Emergency Propaganda: The Winning of Malayan Hearts and Minds 1948-1958*, Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2002;

⁶³ What follows is largely based – with some modifications -- on Thompson, Robert, *Defeating Communist Insurgency: The Lessons of Malaya and Vietnam*; and Anthony James Joes, *Resisting Rebellion*.

⁶⁴ See FM 100-20: *Military Operations in Low Intensity Conflict*, Appendix E, U.S. Department of the Army, Washington, DC, 1990.

⁶⁵ Joes, 105.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 105.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 110.

⁶⁸ Bernard B. Fall, *Counterinsurgency: The French Experience*, A Speech Delivered to the Resident Students of the US Industrial College of the Armed Forces, Washington, DC, January 18, 1963, p. 16.

⁶⁹ Ibid., Ch. 3.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 112.

⁷¹ Ibid., 113.

⁷² Ibid., 114.

⁷³ Ibid, 115. See also, F.J. West, *The Village*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1972).

⁷⁴ Joes, 105.

⁷⁵ See Andrew F. Krepinevich, “How to Win in Iraq,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 84, Number 5 (September-October, 2005).

⁷⁶ Quoted in John A. Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam*, Paperback ed. 2005 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002).

⁷⁷ Beckett, *Modern Insurgencies and Counter-Insurgencies*, ch. 2.

⁷⁸ Thomas Donnelly and Vance Serchuk, “Fighting a Global Counterinsurgency,” *National Security Outlook*, American Enterprise Institute Online (Washington), December 1, 2003. (accessed April 7, 2006) ; available from http://www.aei.org/publications/pubID.19546/pub_detail.asp.

⁷⁹ Nagl, ch. 9.

⁸⁰ Joes, 227-229.

⁸¹ Ibid., 145.

⁸² See Andrew Krepinevich, *The War in Iraq: The Nature of Insurgency Warfare*, Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, June 2, 2004, pp. 1-2.

⁸³ Joes, ch. 8.

⁸⁴ This point is discussed in Ibid., 166.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 167.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 166.

⁸⁷ Ibid, 167-169.

⁸⁸ Brian McAlister Linn, *The Philippine War, 1899-1902* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2000), 285, 297. Cited in Joes, 167.

⁸⁹ This point is made in Joes, 167.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 164.



⁹¹ Ibid., 165.

⁹² Ibid., 164.

⁹³ Jwaideh, 161.

⁹⁴ Shafer, 276.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 105.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 121.

⁹⁷ Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 1946. pp. 78

⁹⁸ Frank Kitson, *Low Intensity Operations: Subversion, Insurgency, and Peacekeeping*, (New York: Stackpole Books, 1971), p. [need page number]

⁹⁹ Headquarters, Department of the Army, Field Manual (Interim) 3-07.22, *Counterinsurgency Operations*, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1 October 2004, section 1-1. Italics added

¹⁰⁰ This framework is derived from Max Weber, "The Types of Authority and Imperative Coordination," from *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, (New York: The Free Press, 1947) 324-369 and "Politics as a Vocation," *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 1946, 77-80.

¹⁰¹ Richard Simpkin, *Race to the Swift: Thoughts on Twenty-First Century Warfare*, (London: Brassey's Defence Publishers, 1985) 320.

¹⁰² Julian Paget, *Counter-Insurgency Campaigning*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1967), 163-164.

¹⁰³ Jean Larteguy, *The Centurions*, (New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, 1961), 280.

¹⁰⁴ This idea has a long history. At the beginning of World War II, Great Britain established the Special Operations Executive (SOE) to arm and train the French resistance. Colonel Colin Gubbins, who had served in Ireland in 1921-22, and on the North-West Frontier in the 1930's, was the first Director of Operations and Training at SOE. According to M.R.D Foot, Gubbins "saw the advantages, in the economy of life and effectiveness of effort, of the Irish guerrilla... [and] both determined that next time, guerrilla [tactics] should be used by the British instead of against them." SOE training and operations, which were directly based on studies of the IRA, became the basis of counterinsurgency doctrine in the post-1945 period and laid the foundation of British Special Forces. Ian F.W. Beckett and John Pimlott, eds., *Armed Forces and Modern Counter-Insurgency*, (London and Sydney: Croom Helm, 1985), 17; Timothy Llewellyn Jones, *The Development of British Counter-insurgency Policies and Doctrine, 1945-52*, (King's College, University of London, Ph.D. Dissertation, 1991), 47; E.H. Cookridge, *Inside SOE: The Story of Special Operations in Western Europe, 1940-45*, (London: Arthur Baker, Ltd., 1966); M.R.D Foot, "The IRA and the Origins of SOE," in M.R.D. Foot, ed., *War and Society: Historical Essays in Honour and Memory of J.R. Western, 1928-71*, (London: Pal Ellele, 1973), p 68.

¹⁰⁵ Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946), pp. 77-78.

¹⁰⁶ John W. Burton, "The History of International Conflict Resolution," in Edward Azar and John W. Burton, eds., *International Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice*, (Boulder: Wheatsheaf Books, 1986), 51.

¹⁰⁷ Christopher Louise, "The Social Impacts of Light Weapons Availability and Proliferation," *The Journal of Humanitarian Assistance*, September 1995. Available on-line at: <http://www.jha.ac/articles/a004.htm>. For a full discussion of the concept of human security see United Nations Development Programme, "New Dimensions of Human Security," *Human Development Report 1994*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 22-46.

¹⁰⁸ Courtney E. Prisk, "The Umbrella of Legitimacy," in Max G. Manwaring, ed., *Uncomfortable Wars: Toward a New Paradigm of Low Intensity Conflict*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), 69.

¹⁰⁹ Thomas R. Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency, 1919-1960*, (London: MacMillan, 1990), 37.



¹¹⁰ The 1923 Field Service Regulations postulate that the ultimate objective of all military operations is the destruction of the enemy's armed forces and that decisive results are obtained only by the offensive. The preference for use of offensive force is found continuously in U.S. military thought, most recently in 2001 Field Manual 3-0, *Operations*: "The doctrine holds warfighting as the Army's primary focus and recognizes that the ability of Army forces to dominate land warfare also provides the ability to dominate any situation in military operations other than war." Richard Darilek and David Johnson, "Occupation of Hostile Territory: History, Theory, Doctrine; Past and Future Practice," conference presentation at Future Warfare Seminar V, Carlisle PA, January 18, 2005.

¹¹¹ Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954-1962*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), 28.

¹¹² Loren B. Thompson, "Low-Intensity Conflict: An Overview," in L. B. Thompson, ed., *Low-Intensity Conflict: The Pattern of Warfare in the Modern World*, (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1989), 4.

¹¹³ Charles Townshend, *Britain's Civil Wars: Counterinsurgency in the Twentieth Century*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1986), 59.

¹¹⁴ Jeudwine Papers 72/82/2, correspondence from H.Q. November, 23, 1920. Held at the Imperial War Museum. London, England.

¹¹⁵ Keith Jeffery, *The British Army and the Crisis of Empire, 1918-1922*, (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1984), 86.

¹¹⁶ Max Arthur, *Northern Ireland: Soldiers Talking*, (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1987), 73.

¹¹⁷ Desmond Hamill, *Pig in the Middle: The Army in Northern Ireland, 1969-1984*, (London: Methuen, 1985), 93.

¹¹⁸ Col. Michael Dewar, Montgomery McFate interview, London, November 1994.

¹¹⁹ Lewis Sorley, "To Change a War: General Harold K. Johnson and the PROVN Study," *Parameters*, Spring 1998, pp. 93-109.

¹²⁰ Department of the Army, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Military Operations, *A Program for the Pacification and Long-Term Development of Vietnam*, Washington: Department of the Army, 1966, p. G-8.

¹²¹ Gerald C. Hickey, *Window on a War: An Anthropologist in the Vietnam Conflict*, (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2002), 260. The LRPP was tasked with an appraisal of American strategy in Vietnam and projected future strategies based on historical, economic and socio-psychological perspectives.

¹²² Sorley, "To Change a War," 93-109.

¹²³ Andrea Jackson, interviews, Fallujah, Iraq, July 2005

¹²⁴ Charles Simpson, *Inside the Green Berets: The First Thirty Years*, (Novato, Calif.: Presidio Press, 1982), 62.

¹²⁵ Andrew Krepinevich, "How to Win in Iraq," *Foreign Affairs*, volume 84, no. 5. Available at: www.foreignaffairs.org/20050901faessay84508/andrew-f-krepinevich-jr/how-to-win-in-iraq.html. Krepinevich argues that U.S. and Iraqi forces should focus on key areas and gradually broaden the effort, in what he refers to as an "oil-spot strategy."

¹²⁶ Robert M. Cassidy, "Back to the Street without Joy: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Vietnam and Other Small Wars," *Parameters*, Vol. 36, no. 2, Summer 2004. Available at: <http://carlisle-www.army.mil/usawc/Parameters/04summer/cassidy.htm>

¹²⁷ Richard Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds in Guerrilla Warfare: The Malayan Emergency, 1948-1960*, (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1989), 155-164.

¹²⁸ Michael Knights, "Lessons from Mosul," *PolicyWatch* #950, January 27, 2005. Available at: <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=2245>. Beginning in January 2004, however, the force was drawn down to the 8,700-strong Task Force Olympia (built around a Stryker Brigade Combat Team), with a commensurate loss of security, mentoring, and CERP capacity.

¹²⁹ Tom Lasseter, "Iraqi Forces May Need Years of Preparation," *Mercury News*, Aug. 26, 2005.



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¹³⁰ Andrea Jackson, interviews Baghdad, Baquba, Fallujah, Ramadi, Sarmara, Basra and Hilla, November 2003 – August 2005.

¹³¹ Richard A. Oppel, Jr., “A New Police Force Emerges From Mosul’s Chaos,” *The New York Times*, August 17, 2005.

¹³² Andrea Jackson, interviews, Diyala Province, Iraq, November 2003 through April 2005.

¹³³ The Badr Brigade is the militia of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI). SCIRI is one of the most powerful organizations inside the governing United Iraqi Alliance. SCIRI was founded by the Iranian government in 1980 as an umbrella organization for Shia Arab organizations aiming to overthrow the Baath regime. The Badr Brigade was trained by the Iranian military and fought on the side of Iran during the Iran-Iraq war. Many Iraqis, including many Shia Arabs, view SCIRI’s ties to the Iranian government with suspicion.

¹³⁴ Peshmerga are paramilitary forces associated with the two large, tribally based political parties in the Kurdish territories, the Kurdish Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan.

¹³⁵ Andrea Jackson, interviews, Fallujah, Iraq, July 2005.

¹³⁶ Tom Lasseter, “Iraqi Forces May Need Years of Preparation,” *Mercury News*, Aug. 26, 2005.

¹³⁷ P. Mitchell Prothero, “Iraqi Guerillas: ‘Why We Fight’,” *United Press International*, December 4, 2003.

¹³⁸ The Mehdi Army is a paramilitary organization comprised largely of poor, uneducated urban Shia who are followers of Muqtada al Sadr. Sadr is an Iraqi nationalist who feels that Iraq’s Shia Arabs should rule Iraq and Iraq’s Shia Arabs should dominate the relationship with Iran. During the Hussein regime, the Sadr family led an insurgency inside Iraq with the goal of replacing it with rule by Shia clerics. After OIF, Sadr was not included in the interim governments, has continually fought Coalition Forces, and is not participating in the new government. He is engaged in a major conflict with the members of the United Iraqi Alliance for leadership of Iraq’s Shia population.

¹³⁹ Omer Mahdi, “Under US Noses, Brutal Insurgents Rule Sunni Citadel,” *The Guardian* (London), August 22, 2005.

¹⁴⁰ Ellen Knickmeyer and Jonathan Finer, “Insurgents Assert Control Over Town Near Syrian Border,” *Washington Post*, September 6, 2005, p. A20.

¹⁴¹ Tom Lasseter, “Iraqi Forces May Need Years of Preparation,” *Mercury News*, Aug. 26, 2005.

¹⁴² Andrea Jackson, interviews, Diyala Province, Iraq, November 2003 through April 2005.

¹⁴³ Frank Kitson, *Low Intensity Operations: Subversion, Insurgency, and Peacekeeping*, (New York: Stackpole Books, 1971), 290.

¹⁴⁴ Evan Thomas, Rod Nordland and Christian Caryl, “Operation Hearts and Minds” *Newsweek* Dec. 29/Jan. 5, 2003. Available at: <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/3771204/>.

¹⁴⁵ Eric Hoffer, *The True Believer: Thoughts on the Nature of Mass Movements*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1951).

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹⁴⁷ D. E. Polkinghorne, *Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 1988), 13. Narrative theory (“narratology”) is often used to understand the construction of ethnohistory. See W. Labov, “Some Further Steps in Narrative Analysis,” *Journal of Narrative and Life History*, No. 7, 1997; Hayden V. White, *Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987).

¹⁴⁸ Polkinghorne, 135.

¹⁴⁹ Michael Vlahos, *Terror’s Mask: Insurgency Within Islam*, Occasional Paper, Joint Warfare Analysis Department, Applied Physics Laboratory, Johns Hopkins University, May 2002.

¹⁵⁰ See also Mark Juergensmeyer’s theory of “cosmic war,” *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, 3rd Edition (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003).



- ¹⁵¹ William D. Casebeer and James A. Russell, "Storytelling and Terrorism: Towards a Comprehensive Counter-Narrative Strategy," *Strategic Insights*, Volume IV, Issue 3 (March 2005).
- ¹⁵² Ho Chi Minh, "Letter from Abroad," in Bernard Fall, ed., *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution: Selected Writings, 1920-1966*, (New York, 1967), 132-4.
- ¹⁵³ Ho Tai Hue-tam, *Radicalism and the Origins of the Vietnamese Revolution*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 4-5.
- ¹⁵⁴ Ironically, the Vietnamese based their struggle on the American Revolution. On 2 September 1945, Ho proclaimed independence with the words: "All men are created equal...they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness." "Declaration of Independence of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam," in Bernard Fall, ed., *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution: Selected Writings, 1920-1966*, (New York, 1967), 141-3. Available at: <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietdec.htm>. Ho genuinely believed that the U.S. would support Vietnamese liberation, and approached Woodrow Wilson at Versailles, wrote letters to President Harry S. Truman seeking assistance, accepted military assistance from the Office of Strategic Services to fight the Japanese, ordered the Viet Minh to help rescue American pilots downed behind Japanese lines, and offered naval bases in Vietnam to the U.S.
- ¹⁵⁵ The basis for the strategy of communist containment was George F. Kennan [writing as X], "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," *Foreign Affairs*, July 1947. Available at <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/19470701faessay25403/x/the-sources-of-soviet-conduct.html>
- ¹⁵⁶ David Fromkin and James Chace, "Vietnam: The Retrospect: What Are the Lessons of Vietnam?" *Foreign Affairs*, Spring 1985. Available at: <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/19850301faessay8426-p20/david-fromkin-james-chace/vietnam-the-retrospect-what-are-the-lessons-of-vietnam.html>
- ¹⁵⁷ Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, (New York: Viking Press, 1983), 169.
- ¹⁵⁸ Editors, "Britain Revokes Citizenship of Cleric," *Associated Press*, April 5, 2003. Available at: <http://www.jsonline.com/news/intl/ap/apr03/ap-britain-radical040503.asp>
- ¹⁵⁹ Afnan Hussein Fatani, "The Money or Your Lives: Wild West in Iraq," Arab View. Available at: <http://www.arabview.com/articles.asp?article=244>; Alexander Chancellor, "Barbarians at the gates," *The Guardian* (UK), April 26, 2003.
- ¹⁶⁰ Amatzia Baram, *Who are the Iraqi Insurgents?*, Washington: United States Institute of Peace, Report 134, April 2005.
- ¹⁶¹ Following Muhammed's death in 632 A.D, a split emerged in the Muslim community between the Sunni who followed Ali (Muhammed's cousin and son-in-law) and the Shia who followed Hussein (his grandson). Hussein and 71 other companions and relatives were denied drinking water for 3 days before they were killed in Karbala.
- ¹⁶² Andrea Jackson, interviews Baghdad, Baquba, Fallujah, Ramadi, Sarmara, Basra and Hilla, November 2003 – August 2005.
- ¹⁶³ Abu'l A'la Mawdudi, "Political Theory of Islam," in Khurshid Ahmad, ed. *Islam: Its Meaning and Message*, (London: Islamic Council of Europe, 1976), 159-161. On the other hand, many attempts have been made to make the Islamic heritage and democracy compatible. A number of Islamic guidelines for social and political behavior, such as the concept of consultation (*shurah*) and consensus (*ijma*), could be used as a foundation for Islamic democracy. John L. Esposito and John O. Voll, *Islam and Democracy*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 23-28.
- ¹⁶⁴ US Marine Corps, *Small Wars Manual*, (Washington: General Printing Office, 1940), 1-1 to 1-31; Max Boot, "A Century of Small Wars Shows They Can be Won," *New York Times Week in Review*, 6 July 2003.
- ¹⁶⁵ Charles Stewart Callison, *Land-to-the-Tiller in the Mekong Delta: Economic, Social and Political Effects of Land Reform in Four Villages of South Vietnam*, Lanham, (Maryland: University Press of America and the Regents of the University of California, 1983), 86.
- ¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 327.



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- ¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 366.
- ¹⁶⁸ Malyn Newitt, *Portugal in Africa: The Last Hundred Years*, (London: C. Hurst & Co., 1981), 237-238.
- ¹⁶⁹ John P. Cann, *Counterinsurgency in Africa: The Portuguese Way of War, 1961-1974*, (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1997), 145-148.
- ¹⁷⁰ Newitt, 238-239.
- ¹⁷¹ R.W. Komer, *The Malayan Emergency in Retrospect*, RAND, 1972, 72-75.
- ¹⁷² United States Government Accountability Office (USGAO), *Rebuilding Iraq: Status of Funding and Reconstruction Efforts*, (Washington, D.C.: US Government, July 2005), 6-16
- ¹⁷³ Ibid., 14.
- ¹⁷⁴ Brookings Institution, *The Iraq Index: Tracking Variables of Reconstruction and Security in Post-Saddam Iraq*, Washington, DC, May 2005, p. 26. The wide range in this March 2005 estimate results the presence of a very large grey and black market, a large number of house wives, payment of salaries to employees of state owned enterprises which no longer function, and the number of people with multiple jobs.
- ¹⁷⁵ Dana Dillon and Melissa Parham, "The Iraqi Mafia: An evolving Insurgency," *National Review Online*, January 15, 2004.
- ¹⁷⁶ Montgomery McFate and Andrea Jackson, USMC Focus Groups, Camp Pendleton, CA, 2004.
- ¹⁷⁷ United States Government Accountability Office (USGAO), *Rebuilding Iraq: Status of Funding and Reconstruction Efforts*, 14.
- ¹⁷⁸ As oil exports increase, the currency of the oil exporting country inflates. As the cost of the country's currency becomes higher, so do wages in the country relative to the rest of the world. The relative cost of goods produced in an oil economy exceeds those produced in non-oil producing states. Oil economies therefore tend to export only oil and import consumer goods. The bulk of their economic activities outside of the oil sector are focused on services (which can only be produced locally).
- ¹⁷⁹ Lewis A. Coser, *Masters of Sociological Thought: Ideas in Historical and Social Context*, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977).
- ¹⁸⁰ George Ritzer, *Sociological Theory*, (New York: McGraw-Hill), 132.
- ¹⁸¹ Karl D. Jackson, "Post-Colonial Rebellion and Counter-Insurgency in Southeast Asia" in *Governments and Rebellions in Southeast Asia*, Chandran Jesrun, ed., (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985), 25
- ¹⁸² Ibid, 27-28
- ¹⁸³ Douglas Pike, *History of Vietnamese Communism*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1966), 52.
- ¹⁸⁴ John T. McAlister and Paul Mus, *The Vietnamese and Their Revolution*, (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1970), 67.
- ¹⁸⁵ Peter A. DeCaro, "Ho Chi Minh's Rhetoric for Revolution," *American Communication Journal*, vol. 3, no. 3, June 2000. Available at: <http://acjournal.org/holdings/vol3/Iss3/spec1/decaro.html>
- ¹⁸⁶ Jacques Dalloz, *The War In Indo-China 1945-54*, (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1987)?, 50; Hoang Van Chi, *From Colonialism to Communism: A Case History of North Vietnam*, (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964), 33.
- ¹⁸⁷ Alexander B. Woodside, *Community and Revolution in Modern Vietnam*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976), 97.
- ¹⁸⁸ Editors, *Vietnam: A Country Study*, (Washington, DC: Library of Congress). Available at: <http://countrystudies.us/vietnam/55.htm>
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Iraq Tribal Study

*Analytic & Operational Tools to
Influence Tribal Behavior*

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CHAPTER SEVEN-A: EMERGING INSIGHTS ON INFLUENCING THE TRIBES OF AL-ANBAR

Introduction

Iraq's tribes and their tribal shaikhs provide a major resource through which the Coalition can influence portions of Iraq's population. They have been used successfully by Coalition forces as channels of influence, particularly in rural areas. The limits of their power must, however, also be understood if the Coalition is to make best use of limited resources.

Tribes are perhaps the oldest, most enduring and controversial social entity in the Middle East. From centralizing polities in the agrarian age, down to the era of industrialism and nation-states, tribes have sustained never-ending change, acting in and reacting to changing political, military, economic, and at times even topographical environments.

Over the centuries, the Persians, Greeks, Arabs, Mongols, the Ottomans, the British, and now the United States and Coalition forces have occupied Iraq. The tribes and family clans have had to depend on their families for survival for hundreds of years of previous occupations. The people of the country have survived past occupations by applying tribal laws that date back millennia. Tribal laws ensure that criminals are punished and that victims receive satisfaction or recompense without the need for intervention by central government. These laws allow tribes to live in relative peace amongst one another without fearing the application of an occupier's law against every infraction. While tribal law is not as evident in today's metropolitan Baghdad, it is still depended upon in rural areas throughout the country.

There are hundreds of tribes spread across the country; most can trace their lineage to three primary tribes, the Zubayd, Tayy, and Rubia. For example, the Janabis, Juburis, Dulaymis, Ubaydis and Azza all belong to the Zubayd tribe, but tribal loyalty is to the sub-tribal shaikhs, not the tribe's shaikh general.

Most of the people of Iraq belong to a tribe. While some Iraqis, particularly the urban educated, may not directly affiliate with their tribe, their name identifies their family and more than likely their loyalty. The former regime identified over 7,380 Arab shaikhs; many were "fake" shaikhs given their title by Saddam Hussein. The real shaikhs, however, are deeply honored and are proud of a rich history of authority and tradition.

The overthrow of Saddam Hussein in April 2003 created a power vacuum that was quickly filled by resurgent tribes, accustomed to political and legal autonomy.



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As a result, in many areas of Iraq, and certainly in al-Anbar Governorate, tribes have become the source of physical security, economic well being, and social identity for the Iraqi people. Because Coalition forces have been unable to reestablish a legal system throughout the country, tribal law has become the default mode of settling disputes. In addition, many Sunni Arab tribes actively support the insurgency, though the specific type of support varies greatly according to each tribe's interests – real or perceived.

Successful Coalition efforts to engage and influence the Sunni Arab tribes of al-Anbar Governorate could result in significant support for Coalition operations in Iraq. However, failure to properly engage the tribes may not only fail to gain support for the Coalition, but also may very well cause additional animosity towards the Iraqi Government.

Emerging Insights on Influencing Tribes in Iraq

The examination and analysis of a wide range of case studies concerning controlling and influencing the tribes of Iraq and the tribes of other Middle East countries, as well as counter insurgencies in general, reveal a number of insights on influencing Iraq's tribes today.

First and foremost, the insurgency in Iraq's al-Anbar Governorate, like insurgencies anywhere, is a human endeavor undertaken to attain political power, and is focused on gaining the active or passive support of the local population, willing or coerced. Likewise, counter insurgency operations must be focused on the human dimension of the conflict with the same goal of gaining the support of the population or, at the very least, denying it to the insurgents. Therefore, winning the population over to one's side or, at least, ensuring their neutrality is critical while the Coalition and Iraqi government wages both a military and political/socio-economic campaign to undermine the insurgency and bolster its control of the people. The populace will mobilize on behalf of the government when the people feel that its policies meet their needs, and that they are reasonably free of the threat of insurgent violence. Unless the people feel safe, they will be cautious about supporting government programs. Their reluctance to do so may give the appearance that they do not care which side wins; however, many do care, but their first duty is to survive, and if they demonstrate support for the government too soon, they may be killed by the insurgents.

In Iraq's security vacuum, all communities, including tribes, need to be engaged to improve conditions. Tribes are among the most potentially effective organizations in the country's shattered social landscape. Assertions of tribal authority are not necessarily permanent. In Iraq's history, balances of power between tribes and governments have ebbed and flowed, with strengthened



government institutions corresponding to both declines in tribal influence and more harmonious relations between government and tribe.¹ Nonetheless, care should be taken to selectively encourage some types of tribal authority and not others.

Tribal engagement and influence operations are primarily efforts to gain the support of a part of the population. However, rather than gaining the support of each tribal member individually, the influence of tribal leaders is used as leverage to garner the support of large segments of the population in a relatively short period of time.

Based on an examination of the identity and history of Iraq's tribes and attempts to influence them; case studies of influence of other Middle East tribes; and an analysis of a wide range of counter insurgencies, a number of insights on influencing Iraq's tribes have emerged. These insights are key to successful tribal engagement and influence operations aimed at the Sunni Arab tribes of al-Anbar Governorate:

- Implement as Part of an Integrated Strategy;
- Ensure an In-Depth Understanding of Iraqi and Tribal Culture;
- Identify Tribes and Tribal Interests;
- Leverage Traditional Authority;
- Use a Compelling Ideology;
- Use Appropriate Coercive Force: Proportionate/Precise/Provision of Security;
- Use Economic Incentives and Disincentives;
- Explore the Use of Non-Iraqi Tribal Intermediaries; and,
- Understand Insurgent Use of Tribes.

It is also imperative to avoid key pitfalls in dealing with tribes and to learn from previous coalition efforts to influence Iraqi tribes.

Implement as Part of an Integrated Strategy

Tribal engagement in Iraq is critical because tribes wield considerable political, economic, cultural, and military/coercive power in many areas of the country, particularly in predominately rural areas distant from central governmental control such as al-Anbar Governorate. As a result, a comprehensive strategy for tribal engagement and influence, tailored for the specific tribal areas, should be a key component of the Coalition's counter insurgency plan in Iraq. In addition, tribal engagement and influence operations in Iraq must be integrated with a realistic and effective counter insurgency strategy for the country that combines political, economic, social-cultural, and military components. Furthermore, tribal engagement in al-Anbar Governorate must be integrated, synchronized, and coordinated with tribal engagement policies and operations in other



governorates, because tribal boundaries, alliances, and conflicts are not bound by the political subdivisions of Iraq.

A failure to integrate tribal engagement and influence operations with other counter insurgency efforts, particularly military operations, will result in conflicting and contradictory policies and operations affecting the tribes, and will undermine or nullify efforts to gain their support.

Ensure an In-Depth Understanding of Iraqi and Tribal Culture

In order to be successful, those conducting counter insurgency operations must know the population they are trying to influence. Therefore, any successful effort in working with the Sunni Arab tribes of Iraq's al-Anbar Governorate must begin with an in-depth understanding of Iraqi culture and the Arabic language, the interaction of the various components of Sunni Arab Iraqi identity, the nature and influence of tribal society, and the interests and motivations of the target population. The degree of in-depth understanding necessary to successfully engage Iraq's Sunni Arab tribes requires considerable experience, education, and training. Therefore, a cadre of specialists may be required to provide this expertise either as an adjunct to, or in place of conventional military forces.

Even with the support of such specialists, all personnel involved in counter insurgency operations must have a minimal level of cultural awareness in order to operate within the accepted culture and traditions. This is because what may seem to be small, insignificant infractions against tribal norms by any Coalition member can have significant negative impacts on Coalition - tribal relations and cooperation. Insult or disrespect towards shaikhs, especially in rural areas, can lead to tribal reprisals against Coalition forces. To the members of the tribe, the honor of the shaikh and the tribe is more valuable than life.

The Mamluks, late Ottomans, and British each had unique insights on and ways of studying tribal culture, even if there were disconnects between sound understanding at the ground level and policy decisions. The British were especially effective in Oman, where they fielded large numbers of Arabic speaking, culturally savvy current and former soldiers as military trainers and civilian government advisors. In Yemen, the British lost touch with developments in tribal communities, notably failing to understand the impact of Arab nationalism.

The Coalition needs to adopt a body of knowledge on the Iraqi tribes and, more importantly, the skill sets to make cultural observations and adaptations in the field. This training should be pushed out to the individual warfighter level, where it is most needed. Unintentionally, Coalition forces have alienated vast segments of



the Iraqi population through cultural insensitivity, and similarly have failed to capitalize on intelligence opportunities.

Tribal Culture. The fundamental aspect of tribal society is extended kinship and collectivism, but tribes are actually more than just kin-based groupings. This is because sometimes an individual's, family's, clan's or subtribe's stated attachment to a particular genealogical heritage is partly a political act, since tribal genealogies can be based on fictive kinship ties, rather than actual ones. However, these relationships become solidified over the course of time and are treated as real. Within the tribe, family ties and a strict honor code bind its members, often more than ethnic background, religion, or professional association.

Iraqi history has shown that its tribes are extremely adaptive, and that the power of the tribes is normally inversely proportional to the power of the central government or authority. That is, when governments or central authority were strong and wielded extensive power and control over tribal lands, the tribes tended to be weak and subservient to the state. However, when governmental authority was weak, the tribes had significantly more power and influence, often to include effective or real autonomy from the state.

Throughout Iraqi history, tribal chiefs have been given weapons, lands, money, and great authority over their tribes. Tribal autonomy meant that tribal law and practices (*urf*, *adah*) prevailed in the tribal countryside, even over the law of the land. For instance, tribal rules governed practices such as blood feud and peacemaking (*sulha*), including blood money (*diyyeh*), official government prohibitions against murder notwithstanding. Beginning in the 1990s, the Hussein regime also accepted tribal practices when it came to "honor" crimes, including the murder of women to protect family honor (*ird*). Indeed, men murdering their female relatives for reasons of "protecting the family honor" were routinely acquitted in the state courts, and sometimes were not even brought to justice.²

As a result, the tribes are accustomed to acting in semi-independence, have followed a different rule of law than the rest of the country, and have precedent and tradition on their side. Any attempt to influence the tribes will require a combination of benefits, diplomacy, and force, just as Saddam, the British, the Ottomans, and other authorities used to influence them in the past.

Tribal Ritual and Conflict Resolution. A critical aspect of dealing with tribes is the fact that ritual in negotiations and conflict resolution in tribal culture often comes before what is considered substance in the West. As a result, Western-based conflict resolution models will seldom succeed in addressing tribal matters because such models seldom recognize the importance of indigenous ways of



thinking and feeling, nor do they take into account local rituals for managing, reducing, and resolving conflicts.

In tribal and village society, the role of the mediator (*wasit*) or mediators in resolving conflict has been, and remains, a crucial one. In every conflict, those involved tend to feel their honor is at stake and that to compromise in any way would reduce their self-respect and dignity. This feeling is so strong that even to take the first step toward ending a conflict would be viewed as a sign of weakness, and would greatly damage one's honor. As a result, it is almost impossible for an Arab to come to agreement in direct confrontation with an opponent. Given the Arab tradition of invective and proclivity to boasting and verbal exaggeration, any face-to-face encounter between the adversaries would likely exacerbate the dispute rather than help in its resolution.

Therefore, the function of the mediator is, first, to separate the adversaries to make it physically impossible for them to continue the conflict. This forces the adversaries to stop fighting and enables them to do so without incurring the shame associated with weakness or admitting defeat. The restraint results from the respect both sides hold for the mediator(s). Therefore, the greater the prestige of the mediator(s), the better the chance for a successful resolution to the conflict. Thus, mediator(s) of high status from noble tribes or with direct lines of descent to the Prophet Muhammad or one of his companions are often sought for large disputes. The mediator(s), of course, must also be completely neutral to both sides of the dispute and preferably be wealthy, to preclude to any suspicion of bribery from either side.³

Rituals play an important role in tribal conflict resolution. The *sulh* (settlement) ritual recognizes that injuries between individuals and groups will fester and grow if not acknowledged and repaired. Given the severity of life in the desert, competing tribes realized that *sulh* is a better alternative to endless cycles of vengeance. Following a conflict, tribes take stock of losses in human and material terms. The tribe with the fewest losses compensates the tribe that suffered most. Stringent conditions are set to settle the conflict definitively. The most important of these conditions is that the parties pledge to forget everything that happened and initiate new and friendly relations.

In addition, the Western view of all conflict as solvable must be discarded to effectively influence Iraqi tribes. Tribal culture takes a more pragmatic approach – it accepts that conflict, regardless of its nature, may well be intractable. Conflict can evolve through phases of escalation and confrontation as well as phases of calm and return to a status quo. As a result, tribal rituals of conflict resolution often involve extended periods of conflict “management” between the disputing parties, resulting in a conflict “resolution” process that allows each side to keep their all-important honor intact.⁴ Therefore, knowledge of tribal rituals in dealing



with conflict resolution is key to effectively influencing the tribes of Iraq. (See pp. 2-48 – 2-51.)

Identify Key Tribes and Tribal Interests

Based on an extensive and detailed assessment of the target area of operations, key tribes must be identified for the tribal engagement and influence efforts. The targeted tribes must be associated with the target area and must be large and influential enough to be worth approaching. Tribes that are not in the appropriate geographic area or are too small or weak are probably not worth approaching initially. Instead, a larger more influential tribe should be targeted. The smaller tribe may be worth approaching at a later time, perhaps utilizing the influence of a larger tribe.

Analysis and selection of the targeted tribes should include a complete analysis of their genealogy, history, leadership, linkages, supporters, alliances, enemies, territory, and recent activities, in order to determine the best approach to engage the tribe. Often the best approach is through the tribal confederation to which the targeted tribe belongs because, even though tribal confederations rarely have control over their subordinate tribes, they can have a degree of influence. Another method of initially identifying and engaging a targeted tribe is through allied or related tribes.

Part of the process of identifying key tribes for engagement and influence, is to identify their key interests. This is done in order to determine if the tribe will be open or susceptible to engagement and influence, as well as to determine the right mix of incentives and disincentive to use when dealing with the tribe.

Every tribe has its own specific circumstances and, therefore, has its own specific interests. However, many general interests can usually be identified for a particular geographic area for tribes of similar background. A summary of the general interests of most of the Sunni Arab tribes in the al-Anbar Governorate are:

- The very basic interests of the tribes are to be able to provide security, basic services, jobs, and education for their members, and to protect and keep their lands. In short, they want a return to a “normal” life.
- Throughout the modern history of Iraq, the Sunni tribes have occupied a privileged position in Iraqi society and enjoyed wealth, autonomy, and political clout. To lose those advantages in a system of proportional representation that empowered the Shia, or in a truncated Iraq with a Kurdish autonomous province, would bring shame to a long and



prosperous Sunni history.⁵ The Sunni Arabs seek to maintain as many of the benefits they enjoyed under Hussein as possible.

- Political representation is the most important issue to Sunnis in the post-Hussein environment. Sunnis understand that they will lose some of the benefits that they enjoyed under the Baath regime, and will maneuver to the best of their political abilities to prevent what they view as “oppression” by the majority Shia in the South. They see Iraq as an Arab state, and themselves as an essential component of it. They are deathly afraid of being ruled by a Shia government, which they believe will be little more than a puppet of the Shia religious extremists in Iran.
- The Sunnis do not favor a system of direct elections with a strong central government in Baghdad. Under that system, they will be out voted on a number of key issues by the Shia, to the detriment of their political and economic security. The Sunnis prefer a federal system with extensive powers delegated to the provinces.⁶ They also want a fair share of the key governmental positions in Baghdad, in the Governorates, and in the local municipal councils.
- Iraqi Sunni tribesmen are well-practiced in cost-benefit analyses from years of competition between tribes and between tribes and the Baathist government. Sunni tribes will make the same calculations when they decide whether to engage in violent resistance against Coalition forces or to participate in the formal political process. If the Sunni populace sees that in a new state of Iraq, they have lost too many of the benefits that they have historically enjoyed, they will continue to engage in *muqaawama*, resistance against what the tribes view as a foreign-backed, illegitimate government. The Sunnis must be convinced that the benefits of constructive participation with the new Iraqi government outweigh the benefits of violent resistance.
- The Sunni tribesmen want to have their own people placed in the Iraqi Police, National Guard, Army, and other security forces that are stationed in their geographic areas.
- The Sunni Tribes, in general, oppose the occupation and desire a complete withdrawal of the Coalition as soon as possible.

Leverage Traditional Authority

Traditional authority in a particular culture or society is usually invested in a hereditary line or invested in a particular office by a higher power. Status and honor are accorded to those with traditional authority, and this status in turn



helps maintain dominance. Leaders with traditional authority can use their authority to influence large segments of a population, greatly reducing the efforts that would otherwise have to be expended to influence each member of the population individually. Tribal and religious forms of organization rely in particular on traditional authority. Traditional authority figures often wield enough power, especially in rural areas, to single-handedly drive an insurgency. The process of engaging and influencing tribal leaders in Iraq is a classic example of leveraging traditional authority.

Identify the Key Shaikhs. It is crucial to properly identify the legitimate key shaikhs at the national, provincial, and local levels who can assist in Coalition objectives. There are many people posing as key shaikhs in Iraq. Some of these are only minor shaikhs, others are some of the “new shaikhs” created by Saddam during the 1990s who have no influence, and still others are not shaikhs at all, but they know that most members of the Coalition are completely ignorant of the tribal landscape in Iraq and, therefore, they are able to pass themselves off as key shaikhs. The first step in identifying the key shaikhs is to first identify the Shaikh Generals of large tribes and tribal confederations. These shaikhs are normally the easiest to identify, though care must be taken to ensure that they have real power and are not just figureheads. The Shaikh Generals can identify the influential and authentic shaikhs in the provinces and assist in engagement with these shaikhs.

Develop Personal Relationships. The central concepts of extended family, kinship and honor in tribal organizations highlight the importance of personal relationships in interacting with Iraq’s tribal society. As a result, any effort to successfully influence Iraq’s tribes to reduce support for the insurgency and/or increase support for the Coalition must start with developing meaningful, long-term personal relationships, as opposed to casual, short-term relationships, with key tribal leaders. Such relationships are essential to winning and keeping tribal allies in achieving Coalition objectives. Developing personal relationships with key shaikhs can lead to cooperation with an extended network of tribal entities throughout al-Anbar Governorate, as well as assistance in vetting Coalition policies, or proposed policies.

To be effective, engaging a tribe and its leaders cannot be an impersonal arrangement; it must be a mutually beneficial relationship with corresponding obligations, and this requires nurturing. Developing an appropriate relationship requires patience and commitment. In addition, patronage is an important part of any tribal relationship and obligations entered into must be honored. Therefore, Coalition personnel involved in relations with the tribes must be knowledgeable of all things pertaining to the tribe and must be able to work effectively with the tribal leaders. In addition, they must have the requisite power, resources, and status to interact at an equal level with the shaikhs of the tribes in question.



Shaikhs are leaders of their people, therefore Coalition leaders at the appropriate level must interact with the shaikhs. It may be permissible for a trusted representative of leaders to perform tribal engagement functions, but they must be able to speak for the key leaders they represent and they must be able to deliver on promises and obligations. However, if current organizational structures and command relationships inhibit tribal engagement, alternative structures should be explored in the interest of mission accomplishment. Because developing personal relationships with and in-depth understanding of specific tribes takes a long time, personnel involved in such operations should, ideally, remain in those positions for as long as possible. Coalition personnel and unit rotations of one year and less are significant obstacles to the development of such relationships and understanding.

For example, the British established separate Political Officer positions in Iraq, filled by expert Arabists, to develop and maintain relations with tribes; these positions were not part of the military command structure. Likewise, the French established a completely separate command structure and organization throughout Algeria called the Section Administrative Speciale (SAS) to perform civil operations among the Algerian population.⁷ This organization maintained a continuous presence in each region, with French personnel living among the people and developing long-term relationships and in-depth knowledge of each area. Conventional military forces were commanded under a separate chain-of-command and were moved around the country to perform military missions as required, with the expert guidance of the regional officers. This system reduced friction between combat forces and the population, and allowed combat forces to focus on combat roles, while civil operations officers focused on the political, economic, and social aspects of the counter insurgency.

Understand the Influence of Shaikhs. In attempting an outreach to the tribes, it must be understood that the influence of today's tribal shaikhs span the spectrum from complete control to pleasant conversation with advice. As influential and respected members of the society, shaikhs can be a bridge between western and eastern understandings of action. Shaikhs discuss ideas and initiatives with their fellow shaikhs, tribal councils, tribal members, family and friends, and attempt to build consensus for a decision. The challenge for the Coalition is to know who can do what and who cannot. In the rural areas, shaikhs usually have more control than the shaikhs living in urban areas. Control cannot be arbitrarily demanded from the shaikhs without the Coalition providing support. Support and authority cannot be given and then taken away within days, because the involved shaikhs cannot provide immediate results. Nonetheless, even when they cannot directly control members of their tribe, shaikhs are key communicators and have an ability to shape opinions. In any case, if the shaikhs' opinions are not utilized, an explanation should be provided in order for them to fully understand the



reason and in order to maintain the relationship. Earning their trust is a fundamental requirement, and supporting them is absolutely essential for our success in Iraq.

Coalition and Iraqi government authorities should understand the nature of traditional relationships between shaikhs and their constituencies in the past, for example during early Ottoman times. Sending civil officials to rural areas for extended periods of time would be necessary to develop these understandings. Authorities should then encourage tribal leaders to reassert some of their traditional tribal leadership roles and functions, while gradually handing off other responsibilities to emerging government bodies.

Government authorities in the late Ottoman and British Mandate periods imposed oppressive roles on shaikhs, making them more like landlords and tax collectors than they had ever been before. The shaikh's traditional role is that of tribal champion, responsible for the welfare of his tribe and leading it in time of war, with his sons and relatives as lieutenants.⁸ Shaikhly responsibilities include maintaining a guesthouse for tribesmen, advancing money to those in need, providing meals for the indigent, and determining individual landholdings.

Historically, shaikhs have been responsible for overseeing agriculture, including distribution of water resources, organization of labor for digging canals, and the transport and sale of produce. Shaikhs delegate some of these duties to *sarkals*, or foremen. Shaikhs are responsible for dispute resolution within the tribe, in accordance with unwritten tribal customary law. The shaikh presents matters for decision to a tribal council of elders, with the involvement of arbitrators or tribal law specialists if necessary.⁹

Additional areas where shaikhs exert what Max Weber called “traditional authority”¹⁰ include maintaining cultural traditions through storytelling and legends, and the socialization and mentoring of young males. In short, shaikhs should be encouraged to develop authority and legitimacy from within, by enhancing the lives of their tribe members. One way to do this would be to work with shaikhs to revive and advance elements of traditional regional Iraqi culture – for example music, crafts, food, and literature – thereby enhancing shaikhs’ roles as rural benefactors and cultural patrons. To accomplish this, it would be necessary to grant the shaikhs funds to distribute for these purposes and help them develop ways to identify repositories of cultural knowledge in their areas.

While trying to leverage traditional authority, caution must be taken to enhance the status and influence of tribal leaders without unduly weakening government and civil society actors. The key is to identify appropriate roles for shaikhs and tribes, roles that most likely center on wielding traditional authority consistent with Ottoman times. Engaging tribal leaders must take place in the context of building



a liberal state. Where possible, the tribes' traditional authority should complement without excessively undermining the state's rational-legal authority.

Adopt an Interest-Based Approach. Writing in late 2003, scholar Amatzia Baram argues that Iraq's tribal values are ripe for exploitation. According to an old Iraqi saying, "you cannot buy a tribe, but you can certainly rent one."¹¹ Those dealing with the tribes should have a comprehensive picture of what the shaikhs' interests are, as well as the interests of their tribesmen. Three levers of influence on shaikhs that this study identifies are personal interests, the ability to extend patronage, and the ability to wield traditional authority for the benefit of the tribe. All three are intertwined. The history of the Ottoman and British periods suggests that shaikhs are acutely attuned to opportunities to further their self-interest, and that their positions rest on their ability to meet the needs of their constituencies.

Shaikhs have responded well to financial incentives, particularly when they are given the means to extend financial patronage, as well as enhance their personal well-being. The prospect of allocating provincial reconstruction funds partially along tribal patronage networks is a powerful inducement for cooperation. In today's Iraq, shaikhs' success especially depends on how well they can manage the idle young men in their communities.

In Ottoman times, mutual interests were powerful counterbalances against state-tribal conflict. Efforts should be made to identify areas of mutual interest between and among tribes, sectarian groups, and the Iraqi government. One example would be village-level security.

Not all interests are tangible. The British found that status and prestige were valuable points of psychological leverage when tribal shaikhs reacted positively to measures that enhanced or codified their status. A worthwhile area of study would be ways that recognition and status can be conferred without corresponding authority and its potential complications.

Use a Compelling Ideology

The ability to leverage a compelling ideology is an important tool in a counterinsurgency. Mass movements of all types, including insurgencies, gather recruits and amass popular support through ideological appeal. Individuals subscribe to ideologies that articulate and render comprehensible the underlying reasons why practical, material interests remain unfulfilled.

In order to employ (or counter) ideology effectively, the cultural narratives of the insurgent group and society must be understood. To effectively counter the insurgents' message, utilizing Arabists with a comprehensive knowledge of not only the Middle East, but also Iraq specifically, and more importantly Islam, is a



prerequisite for an effective Information Operation Campaign. The current narratives are tied to the group's identity, which is defined by the key factors that have shaped the unique ideological characteristics, combined with other factors from the group's history.

Leveraging a compelling ideology requires an accepted authority to deliver the message – tribal shaikhs are an ideal messenger for the tribal audience. In building up shaikhs' traditional authority, Coalition interlocutors should help shaikhs speak with an authoritative and valued voice on the future of their communities and Iraq. To this end, interlocutors should help shaikhs develop and disseminate narratives, symbols, and messages that resonate with their constituencies.¹² To combat insurgent and sectarian messages, shaikhs should be encouraged to put forth a counter-narrative that emphasizes the defense of traditional rural Iraqi culture. For example, Wahhabi tribesmen raided Iraqi territory from the southwest from the late 1700s to the late 1800s, as did the *Ikhwan* thereafter. Taking advantage of Iraqis' immediate sense of history, it may be possible to use historical perceptions of the Wahhabis and *Ikhwan* in a current narrative to counter foreign jihadists.

Narratives, themes, and messages are of critical importance in any counterinsurgency, and the shaikhs are voices of authority within their communities. David Kilcullen argues that the influence of opinion makers in societies

...often takes the form of a single narrative: a simple, unifying, easily-expressed story or explanation that organizes people's experience and provides a framework for understanding events. Nationalist and ethnic historical myths, or sectarian creeds, provide such a narrative. The Iraqi insurgents have one, as do al-Qaida and the Taliban. To undercut their influence you must exploit an alternative narrative: or better yet, tap into an existing narrative that excludes the insurgents.¹³

Due to literacy and educational factors, and overall civil society degradation during the Saddam Hussein years, shaikhs are probably not as effective as they could be in generating and communicating powerful messages. To fill this gap, Coalition authorities should facilitate discreet discussions between shaikhs and "wise men" who are not the negotiating partners shaikhs are accustomed to dealing with, but instead are sources of advice and knowledge that shaikhs can draw upon. The goal is to find a way to quietly help shaikhs reconstitute their cultural heritage and traditional authority, and develop and tailor messages that can unite their communities.



Various groups of insurgents in Iraq have used, with varying degrees of success, key narratives that resonate with many Sunni Arab tribes in al-Anbar Governorate, to include:

- The Coalition are occupiers who just want to steal Iraq's resources, like occupiers from the past;
- The Coalition (and the Shia) are infidels and non-believers (of Islam) and should be forced from Islamic lands or destroyed;
- The Coalition is acting on behalf of the Jews of Israel and want to subjugate Iraq to Israel; and,
- The Shia Arabs and the Kurds want revenge for wrongs of the past and intend to kill or harm all Sunni Arabs when they have the chance.

To defeat such insurgent narratives, the Coalition must generate strong counter-narratives that also resonate with the target audience. Unfortunately, the main themes of the Coalition's message -- freedom and democracy -- do not resonate well with the population because freedom is associated with chaos in Iraq. The aversion to political chaos has a strong basis in historical reality: Iraq's only period of semi-democratic governance from 1921 until 1958 was characterized by social, political, and economic instability.

One theme to partner with shaikhs to develop is that of Iraqi nationalism, potentially a powerful psychological leverage point. Iraqi nationalism is a powerful force, but one that is still nebulous and open to influence. Rather than discounting nationalism as a motivator of political behavior, as the British did in the 1920 Revolt, Coalition and Iraqi authorities should try to shape the emergence of Iraqi nationalism as a positive and inclusive force. An example from the case studies would be the Omani sultan's development of a narrative stressing the Dhofaris' Islamic heritage and its incompatibility with the insurgents' Marxist ideology. Ibn Saud developed a narrative that resonated strongly with the tribal chiefs who became the *Ikhwan*. He made tribal values and mores integral to the Saudi identity, and empowered the chiefs as the embodiment of the state and the guardians of its religion. In doing so, ibn Saud created an extraordinary degree of tribal unity of purpose and loyalty.

A close examination of Iraq's Sunni Arab tribal identity and the history of Iraq reveal some other potential successful and compelling ideological themes (which, of course, must be backed up by supporting action), such as:

- The Coalition is in Iraq merely to help establish a fair and sustainable government that represents all Iraqis, and will be equitable and fair to Sunni Arabs;



- The history and heritage of Iraq, which go back thousands of years, should form the foundation of an Iraqi nationalist identity, undivided by ethnicity or religion;
- The Sunni Arab tribes have an important and honorable place in Iraq's history and should have one in Iraq's future;
- For the past few hundred years, Iraqis have been repeatedly attacked by extremist Wahhabis, who have come to Iraq to steal, murder, and impose an aberrant form of Islam on Iraqis – these are the real enemies of Iraq;
- The foreign terrorists affiliated with AQIZ are not Salafis as they claim, they are Wahhabis and, even worse, Takfiris -- and they want to spread their distorted religious beliefs in Iraq in order to establish their own rule over Iraqis (being called a Salafi is not necessarily a derogatory term in al-Anbar, but being called a Wahhabi or a Takfiri is derogatory); and,
- Iraq was a great center of Islamic culture and jurisprudence under the Abbasid Empire – the “Golden Age of Islam.” The Wahhabis and Takfiris reject the accomplishments of that golden age and want to take Muslims and Iraq back to the “Age of Ignorance (*Jahiliyya*)” – the era on the Arabian Peninsula before the advent of Islam.

Leverage the Influence of Religious Leaders. Religious leaders can be extremely useful in communicating compelling ideologies to the tribes of al-Anbar. Since the fall of the Hussein regime, Sunni mosques, organizations, and Islamic trusts (*awqaf*) have sought to reclaim the right of religious expression they were denied for so long. Books on Islamic politics and economics that had been banned for thirty years returned overnight to the shelves of religious lending libraries. Independent publications calling for a reinterpretation of the dictates of the state *mufti* were distributed. Imams in mosques throughout the Sunni Triangle spoke freely in their sermons of political matters, free from state interference. Some criticized the former regime for its intense secularism and the immoral lifestyles of its leaders.¹⁴

The most common sign of Iraq's new religious freedom has been fiery sermons aimed at the American occupiers and the Iraqi collaborators working for them. In December 2003, Shaikh Ahmad Hassan Al-Samaraai at al-Imam al-Aazam Mosque in Baghdad warned against cooperating with the occupation and praised Iraqis who chose to remain unemployed rather than work for the Americans. “Anyone who cooperates with American intelligence agencies is serving America, and America serves only the interests of Israel,” said al-Samaraai, “Iraqis should not be spies and sell themselves to the occupier.”¹⁵

While religious networks, weakened by years of regime propaganda and a surge in secular tribal power, remain less effective than family and tribal networks, anti-American rhetoric from clerics has a tangible impact.



Religious leaders can and do inspire their followers to join the armed resistance. They can also endorse the secular, tribal insurgent movement, giving it a measure of legitimacy that helps recruitment and assures insurgent leaders that their cause is just.

Use Appropriate Coercive Force: Proportionate / Precise / Provision of Security

The use of force is always required in counter insurgency operations. However, due to the constant proximity of the local population when engaging insurgents, care must be taken in the application of force to avoid unnecessary damage and accidental death. There is a direct relationship between the appropriate use of force and successful counter insurgency. History shows that the use of excessive force by the Coalition and Iraqi government may not only enhance the legitimacy of insurgent groups, but also cause the Coalition to lose legitimacy in the eyes of the civilian population.

Unfortunately, there have been many instances where Coalition military operations have resulted in death or injury to a large number of Iraqi civilians, resulting in Coalition personnel becoming targets of the people they had intended to protect. The tribes of al-Anbar Governorate have suffered many such attacks due to the significant insurgent activity in their areas. For the Coalition and government to retain legitimacy, the population must believe that “state” forces are improving rather than undermining their security.

There is a direct relationship between the appropriate use of force and successful counter insurgency. A corollary of the rule of the appropriate use of forces is rule is that force must be applied precisely. Force must be applied precisely so that it functions as a disincentive to insurgent activity. If the state threatens individuals through the imprecise application of force, the insurgency may begin to look more appealing as a security provider. In order to avoid causing resentment that can drive insurgency, coercive force must be applied accurately and precisely.

Provision of Security. One of the core functions of a state is the provision of security to citizens within its territory. Security is the most basic pre-condition for civilian support of the government. State failure to provide security may cause citizens to accept alternative security guarantees from non-state actors, and this can be a major driver of insurgency.

In some areas of Iraq, the failure of Coalition forces to provide security has motivated insurgent groups and militias to establish themselves as extra-governmental arbiters of the physical security of the population, and now represent a challenge to the state’s monopoly on coercive force. Many tribes in



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al-Anbar Governorate, in the absence of functioning Iraqi police and security forces, have done the same to protect their tribal members and their property.

Security is the most important issue for tribal constituencies, and criminal organizations are second only to the insurgents as threats to the civilians' well-being. Coalition and Iraqi authorities should endeavor to partner with shaikhs on security initiatives. Doing so would be an important step in acting on the principle, repeatedly demonstrated in past counter insurgencies, that civilian security can bring popular support, which is the center of gravity in the conflict.

Effective tribal engagement and influence by the Coalition can enlist the support of tribes in al-Anbar Governorate to improve security in the area by:

- Having the tribes provide intelligence on insurgent groups and activities;
- Forming community police forces with recruits from the local tribes;
- Providing combat support to tribal forces at war with insurgent groups and their allies;
- Forming local security/military units to work with Coalition forces to defeat insurgent groups;
- Establishing liaison and/or joint operations centers to coordinate tribal and Coalition military/security operations;
- Providing weapons, training and equipment to tribal forces for use in policing in tribal urban and rural areas, securing Iraq's borders, and conducting counter insurgency operations; and,
- Embedding Coalition units in tribal areas to enhance tribal capabilities and closely coordinate (and, if possible, control) tribal military operations.

The tribes knowledge of the culture, actors, language and local area – currently significant weaknesses of the Coalition – can provide the Coalition with the critical support it needs to deal effectively with the insurgency.

Project Strength and Resolve. Applying coercive force proportionately and precisely does not mean that military forces should project an image of weakness. On the contrary, the Mamluk and British experiences teach us that tribal Iraqis are quick to act on perceptions of both strength and indecision. Tribal assertiveness rose and fell according to perceptions of the relative power levels of Mamluk pashas. During the Mesopotamian Campaign and the 1920 Revolt, the British found that tribes would rise up in revolt or preemptively surrender, based on whether the British were winning or losing some distance away. Likewise, under Saddam, the tribes were also closely attuned to the power of the central government – when the government was weak, the tribes expanded their power and autonomy, and when the government was strong, the tribes gave up power and autonomy.



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These lessons were underscored in the Yemen, Oman, and Saudi Arabia case studies. In Yemen, tribal perceptions of British equivocation regarding their commitment to defending Aden fueled nationalist opposition and hastened the British withdrawal. In Oman, the British and Omani victory in the defense of a small outpost at Mirbat proved to be the turning point in a ten-year conflict. In Saudi Arabia, ibn Saud's blow against the Rashidi tribe when he captured Riyadh in 1902 created a momentum culminating in the conquest of much of the Arabian Peninsula.

In the information age, the nuances of debates in Washington and London are transmitted to Iraqi audiences at the speed of light. At the strategic level, the Coalition should be conscious of the messages it sends regarding its long term commitment to Iraq, and should take every opportunity to demonstrate resolve. At the tactical level, decisive victories, however small, can have effects on perception far in excess of their military significance.

Use Economic Incentives and Disincentives

In order to win the support of the population, counter insurgency forces must create incentives for cooperation with the government and disincentives for opposition to it. In Iraq, high unemployment, lack of basic services, and widespread poverty are driving the insurgency. Economic incentives could be used to reduce support for the insurgency in Iraq by both employing young men in large-scale infrastructure rebuilding projects and through small-scale local sustainable development programs.

Economic and other types of infrastructure improvement and support could be used to great effect in influencing Iraqi tribes. In order to reward tribal shaikhs for the support of their tribes, the shaikhs could be used as conduits for such resources from the Coalition and Iraqi government. By allowing the shaikhs to advise on and be involved in the distribution of resources, shaikhs, with the oversight of the Coalition and Iraqi Government, would make sure that their followers receive equitable (if not quite equal) shares of the resources. In return, the shaikh would receive the credit from his tribal members for obtaining the resources, reinforcing his influence and power over them. (Shaikhs should not be allowed to directly distribute resources. There have been many documented cases where the tribal elements believed the shaikhs were "holding back" and hoarding resources for themselves. Additionally, competing tribes have viewed similar actions as unequal support and have attacked the tribe receiving the resources.)

With oversight, tribes can also be utilized to facilitate and support the distribution of government services and other benefits such as health services, nutritional supplements, treated water, sewage treatment, electricity, agricultural machinery,



fertilizers, irrigation systems, high-quality seeds, and roads where they have eroded, as well as telephone services and education. In addition, amnesty programs and financial rewards for the surrender of insurgents could also be used as incentives through tribal leaders to undermine and infiltrate insurgent groups. (Note: Direct and visible monetary disbursement has created rivalries and assassinations in the past.)

Explore the Use of Non-Iraqi Tribal Intermediaries

Unfortunately, relations between Iraqi tribal leaders in al-Anbar and Coalition and Iraqi government officials are at a low point, impeding the Coalition's ability to reach agreements with the tribes. It may be useful to use non-Iraqis with ethnic links to the tribes as intermediaries for negotiation and as sources of human intelligence.¹⁶ There are several populations from which potential intermediaries could be drawn. Many people with ties to the tribes of al-Anbar live in border communities in Syria and Jordan, but their sympathies may not be with the new Iraqi government. Another source could be among the communities of Arabic speakers living near the Syrian border in Turkey's Hatay Province. This population includes those who are alienated from Turkey's government and who do business in Syria and Iraq.

A more likely prospect may be to use prestigious members of extended tribal confederations to use their influence with their tribal 'brothers' in Iraq. There are strong ethnic and tribal links between Yemen and Saudi Arabia with the people of al-Anbar Governorate, owing to a history of back and forth migrations between the Arabian Peninsula and the Mesopotamian river valley. There are likely many Sunni Arab extended family members of Iraqi tribes who would like to assist in influencing the Iraqi tribes, if it leads to a peaceful, stable Iraq with Sunni Arab Iraqi interests respected.

Understand Insurgent Use of Tribes

Former regime elements provide management skills, as well as plan, fund, and coordinate many insurgent military operations. They exploit their implicit understanding of tribal culture and are currently reaching out to segments of former tribal clienteles. Payment for military attacks against Coalition targets is increasingly seen as the only means to provide for the family, and is often used as a recruitment tool, due to high unemployment. The insurgents understand tribal customs, social activities, and relationships, and need only ask if the ruling authorities respect tribal honor to provide an argument for resistance. Promises of special status for all tribes may give hope to the disenfranchised tribal members for a better future.



The insurgent movement attempts to influence the tribes using psychological and political techniques. The tribal center of gravity that may be exploited is shame and honor. Honor is regarded in the Arab culture above life itself, and without honor a man would be considered dead. A man's place in the tribe, as well as the tribe's place among other tribes, is measured in terms of honor. Hence the Arab saying, "It is better to die with honor than live with humiliation."

Insurgent control of the tribes is established through a network of loyal tribal leaders. Attempts are made to make every member of the tribe feel that the Coalition has shamed them and to regain their honor by becoming part of the struggle. The greatest danger to the insurgency movement is if its popular base of loyal tribes can be won away and realigned with the Coalition.

Avoid Key Pitfalls in Dealing with Tribes

Beware of the Limits of Tribal Authority

Past experiences in Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen have demonstrated that engaging tribal leaders is a delicate balancing act, and that it is easy to produce unintended consequences. Coalition and Iraqi authorities should be wary of placing the shaikhs and other tribal figures in unsustainable roles, imposing and enforcing non-existing relationships between shaikhs and their constituencies, and expecting too much as a result. It will be necessary to selectively promote some types of tribal authority and discourage others. One concern should be avoiding encroachment on institutions of civil law, a mistake made by the British when they transferred unprecedented powers to the shaikhs during the Mandate period.

In Yemen, the British found that intervening in tribal conflicts on behalf of allied shaikhs tainted these shaikhs and fueled nationalist opposition to them. Many shaikhs who had supported the British were either defeated or forced to cast their lot with the opposing side. On the contrary, in Oman, the sultan and the British were able to work with Dhofari leaders within the scope of their traditional authority, while newly introduced institutions were clearly under government control. In western Iraq, forging alliances with the tribes must take place in concert with strengthening government presence and services.

Distribution of Incentives Should be Equitable – or, More Importantly, Perceived as Equitable

The population of al-Anbar Governorate, rather than a cohesive assembly of citizens bound together by an agreed-upon set of rights and obligations, instead consists of competing communities requiring absolute allegiance and obedience



from their members. Each one of these communities feels that the other tribes have victimized it in one way or another. Coalition military activities, as well as civilian programs, perceived to favor one community over the other have added another ingredient into this volatile mix. Coalition US and British forces tried to use economic incentives and government services selectively to reward and punish tribal behavior in Falluja and Basra, respectively, and caused alienation and rivalries among the competing tribes. Since clans and tribes are not equal in terms of status, power, size, patronage, and wealth, competition may be expressed in vendettas and tribal banditry (as evident among select tribes of the Dulaym Confederation in the vicinity of al-Qaim and along the Baghdad – Al-Ruthbah – Amman route).

Too Much Tribal Power

The Iraqi government, with requested assistance from the Coalition, must ensure that tribal allegiances do not become a new source of oppression. Traditional tribal systems were reasonably equitable, and tribal shaikhs were reasonably democratic because they did not have the power to impose their will on a reluctant tribe. Under the British Mandate and then the monarchy, however, the central government often rewarded shaikhs for their obedience by giving them total power over their tribesmen — a practice that bred alienation, resentment, and revolt. This mistake must be avoided at all costs. Shaikhs who are unpopular with their tribesmen should immediately be removed, and the tribes should be allowed to replace them with more acceptable figures. (Any attempt by the Iraqi government or the Coalition to install a “suitable” shaikh will be viewed with the same contempt that they had for the former regime’s involvement in the same practices. The central government must also keep itself well informed about tribal politics (local governors, for instance, should be versed in tribal affairs), and it must take immediate action if it learns of any abuses of authority.

Avoid the “Tribal Trap”

The Coalition will be challenged in collecting tribal intelligence without the cooperation of at least some key leaders who hold a form of traditional authority. Coalition attempts to by-pass traditional authorities and deal with the local population directly will often fail. A “reliable” shaikh may assist in arresting looters, smugglers, terrorists, and former regime loyalists, who in many cases also happen to be tribal rivals. By assisting the Coalition, the “friendly” shaikh will advance his tribe’s interests while harming those of his rivals. Many of the tribes will have shaikhs that are willing to cooperate with the Coalition and the Iraqi government, but there will always be one or more rivals, usually close relatives that are “rebellious”.



This “tribal rebellion” will more often than not be provoked by disagreement within a leading family of the tribe, or a conflict with a neighboring tribe rather than by disaffection with the Coalition or the Iraqi government. This apparent split between tribes and/or their leading families into pro-and anti-government factions, as witnessed during World War I, may not always reflect a serious conflict dividing the family, however. In some cases it will be the consequence of a deliberate decision not to put all of one’s “eggs into one basket” – a time honored strategy of elite families everywhere. Loyalties will follow prevailing winds of power and interest. Without careful planning and consideration, the Coalition will be drawn into the power politics of tribal society – with its perpetual conflicts and rivalries – without a clear appreciation of the rules and rituals. In order to avoid the tribal trap, an intimate understanding of the indigenous population within an operational area is essential. Successfully incorporating tribal groupings into a comprehensive security system depends on understanding beforehand the intricacies of tribal politics.¹⁷

Learn from Previous Coalition Efforts to Influence Iraqi Tribes

Coalition Mistakes Inflaming the Tribes

The greatest wild card that the insurgents can exploit is the Coalition’s lack of cultural understanding and ability to communicate with the rural population, and the insurgents continue to reinforce the message that the Iraqi government and the Coalition attack the cultural norms, honor, and way of life. One example is the rough handling of patriarchal family heads in front of their families during cordon and sweep/knock operations. This shames family honor and requires revenge in the form of resistance. Furthermore, the Coalition’s lack of inclusion of tribal leaders in policymaking and implementation shames tribal leaders and ignores thousands of years of Arab socio-political culture. The impression created is that of a “well-armed adolescent” – the Coalition – imposing idealistic but culturally insensitive policy through superior firepower.¹⁸

What Not to Do: Tribal Anecdotes of Coalition Interaction

There are numerous examples of incidents that have occurred due to the misunderstandings between Coalition Forces and the local customs and norms of Iraq. The following are only a few examples of the animosity that has been created by the Coalition’s lack of understanding of Iraqi cultural differences.

Shaikh Miteb Anaiza. The first example took place in August 2003, when the Coalition arrested Miteb Anaiza, the most revered shaikh in Iraq. Miteb is the Shaikh General for the tribe that includes the House of Saud, the royal family in Saudi Arabia, and members in Kuwait. When word of his detention was received



by the two countries, it caused an international incident and left the US looking for a way out.

The shaikh lives in al-Anbar, approximately 30 km from the Saudi border, and reportedly receives a monthly allowance from the Saudi royal family. There are no banks in the area and no national electricity that runs to the village. The shaikh was believed to have been involved in the insurgency, but after his detention, it was determined that it was, in fact, the shaikh's brother and cousin who were suspected..

During the arrest, Coalition forces confiscated over \$30k and a kilo of gold that was the shaikh's wife's jewelry. After Miteb's release, he requested that his money and wife's jewelry be returned, to no avail. This request was elevated to the Coalition Provisional Authority's Deputy Country Administrator, but as of June 2004, the shaikh had not had his personal possessions returned.¹⁹

Incidents such as this, particularly to such a prominent member of Iraqi society, did nothing but create animosity among the Anaiza Tribe toward the Coalition.

Al-Anbar Shaikh. The second incident began in June 2003. An al-Anbar shaikh, who had been a former senior Baathist in 1994, surrendered to Coalition forces because he was concerned that he would be targeted for attack, and did not want his family dishonored. A strategic analysis of his credentials determined that he was not wanted, and he was released. The shaikh was grateful for the treatment and offered his assistance to the Coalition. Due to his close proximity to sensitive operations being conducted, he was asked to assist, and he agreed. The shaikh was provided a letter of safe passage on official letterhead and a point of contact. The memorandum requested that any Coalition unit detaining the shaikh to please contact the point of contact.

Five days later, members from the local Coalition unit detained the shaikh and when they were presented with the memorandum, the officer in charge balled it up and stated, "This is no good here." The Sunni shaikh was transferred to a prison to Umm Qasr in Southern Iraq, and it took 46 days to obtain his release. The unfortunate part was that the shaikh was released in the Shia area with no phone, no car, and no money. He was left to his own devices to attempt to make his way back to al-Anbar.

The shaikh hid for 30 days and then returned to the Coalition official that provided the letter of safe passage. The shaikh stated that it was an unfortunate mistake and that he would continue to assist in the sensitive operation, but he feared returning to his home. Assured by the Coalition official there was no longer a concern, the shaikh returned to his home. At 0500 hours the next



morning, the shaikh's home was raided by members of a US Army unit and he was detained again. The shaikh's son-in-law promptly contacted the Coalition point of contact and informed them of the raid. The CJTF-7 C2 was immediately notified of the incident and began to conduct an inquiry. It was determined that a single source had reported the shaikh was caching weapons, but the raid only turned up a photo of the shaikh with Saddam Hussein and that was the purpose of the detention.

The shaikh was released within 12 hours and continued to assist Coalition forces in one of the most sensitive operations. Yet, in June 2004, the shaikh's home was raided by the new Coalition unit in the area. This time, the shaikh was not at home, but in Syria. He sent a message to the Coalition forces that he would like to continue to assist them, but feared for his life and the lives of his family, and he did not intend to return to Iraq.²⁰

The Elderly Shaikh. The third and last example occurred in October 2003. British forces raided a local shaikh's home the day after he met with the Coalition representative in Basra. The shaikh was not at home, so instead, the British forces detained the shaikh's 80-year-old father, who was suffering from Alzheimer's disease. The next morning, the elderly man was released from the detention facility and left on his own to find his way home, not knowing who he was or where he lived.

A member of the elderly man's tribe recognized him wondering around, picked him up, and transported him home. During a subsequent discussion with the younger shaikh, the shaikh was asked if he would assist the Coalition forces in reducing attacks and preventing incidents such as the one with his father. The shaikh stated, "If you are willing to do this to an old man, what will you do with me? I was working with you before and then you did this. There is nothing I can do or say to convince my tribe that you are here to give us freedom."²¹

While these are only three examples, there are countless examples available where influential members of Iraqi society were mistreated by the Coalition according to their standard of conduct. If this behavior does not change, the Coalition will completely undermine its efforts to influence the tribes in al-Anbar.

In fact, significant problems remain. For example, during a Falluja Security Council meeting in early 2006, when asked by Coalition representatives why violence was lower during the elections than it was in 2006, a leading Iraqi council member replied:

"Let me tell you why there was calm in the city. For the Referendum and the Elections, there was involvement of the shaikhs and the imams...why? Because the people were filled with hope for the



outcome; they figured it would bear fruit. After the election they were filled with despair. The violence has six root causes:

- (1) **The first is the reaction to the Marines' actions that we talked about at the beginning [of the meeting]; i.e., raids;**
- (2) The second is that the political process is not being pursued correctly;
- (3) There is still *idjtihad* (persecution) [of Sunnis] in parts of the country;
- (4) Unemployment;
- (5) *Irhab* (terrorism) that has come from outside the country; and,
- (6) Common criminals and thugs.

"You don't have to fight them all at once, but if you reduce a bit here and there, then you will reduce the violence."²²

Previous Tribal Engagement Efforts

In the three years since the invasion of Iraq, there have been many opportunities to engage the Sunni tribes with the aim of turning them into allies, or at least into neutrals in the struggle for Iraq. There is a considerable amount of evidence available with regard to the willingness of segments of the Dulaym, in particular, to cooperate with the US. The interaction between the US and the tribes has occurred in fits and starts, has been inconsistent, and has sometimes been reversed or denied by Baghdad or other higher authorities. Any abandonment of obligations undertaken, or promises made to the tribesmen, is extremely damaging to those who are perceived to have broken their word. Culturally, any breaking of promises or agreements and perceived insincerity is considered an affront to honor, and will almost certainly lead to further hostility.

On the other hand, a resolute and persistent effort to cultivate the tribes and their leaders can lead to alliances so strong that they become effective instruments of policy and useful in combat operations. The previous experience of US Army Special Forces all over the world, in Vietnam and more recently in Afghanistan, points clearly to the great benefits that can be gained by sincere and consistent approaches to tribal peoples.

In the open source literature about US relations to tribes in Iraq, there are virtually no examples of a well thought out approach to the question of relations with the western al-Anbar tribes. However, one good example is that of the initiative of LTC Alan King, a veteran of Special Forces and Psychological Operations, who deployed to Iraq in 2003 as Commander of the 422nd Civil Affairs Battalion, and who worked as a Coalition Provisional Authority outreach officer, to the tribes before returning to the US in July, 2004.



The Christian Science Monitor reported that "scholar-soldier" LTC King had "two secret weapons" in Iraq -- "his Palm Pilot and his Koran." He memorized sections of the Quran and used them in his dealings with tribal chieftains, elders, and wise men. "I realized early on that the shaikhs have a place," King told the Christian Science Monitor. "The idea should not be to build controlling little warlords, but to use the information that the shaikhs have to benefit the country."

King's patience, knowledge of Islam, and knowledge of history, drew praise from a number of tribal leaders. King also obtained a copy of the British Arab Bureau's "Arab Tribes of the Baghdad Wilayat," which he used as a guidebook to seek out, and personally speak to approximately 3,000 tribal leaders, whom he indexed in his Palm Pilot, "neatly subdivided into tribe, subtribe, clan, sub-clan, branch, and family." He made it a point to find and have a discussion with one tribal scholar every week. This is something that was widely respected among Arab tribesmen, who revere their elders and expect others to do so as well.

Eventually, LTC King received the Coalition approval for a project that could have provided a center for ongoing contact with tribal leaders. On January 7, 2004, the Coalition Provisional Authority announced that it awarded \$916,700.00 in contracts for four "Tribal Democracy Centers" to provide a place for shaikhs and tribal leaders "to discuss relevant issues and to learn about democracy." The project received little publicity after its inauguration on March 8, 2004 at a ceremony attended by 3,000 at the Coalition press office in Baghdad. A democracy course was subsequently taught by USAID-RTI in its centers. Topics included freedom of the press, freedom to gather, respect for minority beliefs, freedom of religion, voting systems, courts, and democratic models of government. The current status of the project is not known, but it appears to have fallen far short of its early promise, and to have largely ignored recognition of the value and vitality of the cultural and historical customs of the tribal organizations, and how to use them to bring stability to Iraq.

It is clear from the available evidence that there is great potential for cooperation with the Dulaym confederation in the area of western al-Anbar Governorate, and that this potential has not been seriously addressed. Tribal elders are in nearly all cases the key "entrée" into tribal society, and a sincere attempt to cultivate them as friends and allies is likely to be beneficial.²³



CHAPTER SEVEN-B: EXAMPLE APPLICATION TO THE THREE TARGET TRIBES

Introduction

An example scenario for implementing the emerging insights for influencing Iraqi tribes is to examine their potential application to the three target tribes in al-Anbar Governorate – the Albu Fahd, the Albu Mahal, and the Albu Issa tribes. The emerging insights identified in the previous section provide a framework that can be used to plan and implement tribal engagement and influence operations. This example will use the framework to address the various facets of working with the three target tribes and will attempt to implement the emerging insights as fully as possible, in combination with the detailed substantive information on Iraq's tribes contained in the preceding chapters of this study:

- Implement as Part of an Integrated Strategy;
- Ensure an In-Depth Understanding of Iraqi and Tribal Culture;
- Identify Tribes and Tribal Interests;
- Leverage Traditional Authority;
- Use a Compelling Ideology;
- Use Appropriate Coercive Force: Proportionate/Precise/Provision of Security;
- Use Economic Incentives and Disincentives;
- Explore the Use of Non-Iraqi Tribal Intermediaries; and,
- Understand Insurgent Use of Tribes.

How to Persuade the Tribes to Stop Supporting Insurgency

Most experts disagree in the short-term about securing cooperation from the Iraqi tribes in the Sunni Triangle. Some feel that it could help stem the growing resistance to US forces and bring more areas under control. On the other hand, engaging select tribal shaikhs across Iraq shores up their power, and this could hurt a longer-term effort to create a unified national identity and a political party system in which Iraqis do not vote along strictly sectarian lines.

To effectively marginalize the insurgency in Iraq, it is necessary to separate the actors into respective factions, and then to develop a specific tribal engagement and influence plan and information campaign plan for each. Generally, each of the three target tribes are involved in the insurgency for similar motives. Each of the three tribes is primarily nationalistic in its ideology and feel betrayed by the Coalition after the fall of the former regime. In addition, the three tribes, or significant parts of them, are part of the growing movement in al-Anbar against AQIZ and its associated foreign insurgents. This presents a window of opportunity for engagement and influence of the tribes by the Coalition. However,



due to the volatile situation in al-Anbar, this window of opportunity may not be open for long.

How to Persuade the Tribes to Support the Coalition

Members and selected leadership from all three tribes have worked with the Coalition at various times over the past three years. The future challenge is not necessarily how to get these tribes to support the Coalition, but how to marginalize the tribes' support for the insurgency.

In the case of the Albu Fahd and Albu Mahal, the focus should be on creating a relationship to drive the foreign insurgents from their areas (al-Ramadi and al-Qaim, respectively) – with specific intentions to eliminate the AQIZ network in al-Anbar Governorate – while creating long-term relations with the tribes. This is an achievable objective with the proper team of Middle East/Iraq experts who can create the necessary sustained relationships with the tribal leaders.

As with most begrudging business associations in Iraq, the alliances formed between the Coalition and the Albu Fahd and Albu Mahal tribes will unquestionably exist for no other purpose but to rid the area of a common enemy – AQIZ and its allies. Cooperation on the part of the tribes should not be considered as support for, or even acceptance of, Coalition activities. Nevertheless, this partnership, if properly managed, can establish a bond of trust that can transcend the immediate mutual interests. In fact, if done well, it could possibly lead to a longer - term relationship – as long as the relationship remains in the interests of both parties.

As for the Albu Issas, there is a Middle Eastern proverb that says, “Put a black turban on a scorpion and you still have a scorpion.” This proverb applies to the Albu Issa tribe. While it would be inappropriate to stereotype the entire tribe, as a course of action, the recognized leadership plays both ends of the insurgency – Coalition versus the insurgents – against the middle while maintaining a single motive, to force the Coalition to leave Iraq.

Albu Fahd Tribe

Members of the Albu Fahd tribe have participated with various insurgent groups within al-Anbar Governorate. Support from the tribal leadership appears to be indirect and specifically in the interest of self-preservation. It is not uncommon for the tribal leadership to “walk in the middle of the road” to position themselves as mediators among their members, the Coalition, and the insurgency when it is necessary.



Tribal cooperation in the insurgency with AQIZ continued through mid- to late 2005, but differences began to emerge as AQIZ focused its attacks on local Iraqis in addition to Coalition forces and the Shia. As a result, local tribes, including the Albu Fahd, began to openly oppose AQIZ's assertion that it was justified in killing Iraqis linked to the Government, including local Sunni policemen. This ideology was increasingly rejected by local residents, and caused a divide between the two groups. (Note: For an detailed assessment of the Albu Fahd Tribe, see pp. 4-10 – 4-26 and classified Annex I.)

Implement as Part of an Integrated Strategy

The Albu Fahd are now one of the largest and most prominent Dulaym tribes in al-Ramadi. AQIZ and affiliated foreign insurgents currently have a strong presence in al-Ramadi and, as of June 2006, , the city is shaping up to be the next major battleground between the Coalition and insurgents in al-Anbar. Coalition efforts to engage and influence the Albu Fahd tribe should be integrated with the overall counter insurgency and reconstruction strategies for the al-Ramadi area, for adjacent areas, for al-Anbar Governorate, and for the entire country. The local tribal influence plan for the Albu Fahd in al-Ramadi should also include the Albu Fahd tribal lands outside the city, to include the lands along the Iraqi-Syrian border.

Ensure an In-Depth Understanding of Iraqi and Tribal Culture

Any effort to work with the Sunni Arab tribes of Iraq's al-Anbar Governorate should begin with an in-depth understanding of Iraqi culture and the Arabic language, the interaction of the various components of Sunni Arab Iraqi identity, the nature and influence of tribal society, and the interests and motivations of the target population. The degree of in-depth understanding necessary to successfully engage Iraq's Sunni Arab tribes requires considerable experience, education, and training. Therefore, a cadre of specialists may be required to provide this expertise either as an adjunct to, or in place of, conventional military forces. Even with the support of such specialists, all personnel involved in counter insurgency operations must have a minimal level of cultural awareness, in order to operate within the accepted culture and traditions. Training in cultural awareness should begin before deployment and continue throughout the deployment, incorporating the detailed characteristics of a unit's specific AOR. (See pp. 7-4 – 7-7)

Identify Tribes and Tribal Interests

The Albu Fahds are a subtribe of the Dulaym Tribal Confederation. All of the Dulaym tribes have the same general Sunni Arab tribal interests (see pp. 7-7 – 7-8), but they each have individual local interests, which they do not necessarily



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share with each other. Similarly, the Albu Fahd tribe has its own local interests, which all of its subtribes would likely subscribe to, such as:

- Protecting its tribe members from attack;
- Protecting its tribal lands from being stolen or destroyed;
- Increasing its power and influence in its local area;
- Providing economic and community support for its members;
- Preventing enemies from undermining tribal authority and causing cleavages within the tribe and subtribes; and,
- Avenging wrongs using tribal customs and law.

In addition, the Albu Fahd are currently at war with AQIZ and its affiliated foreign fighters because of AQIZ's attempts to impose extremist Islamist views in al-Ramadi and AQIZ's flagrant kidnapping and murder of Albu Fahd tribal members. These murders include the assassination of the highly respected Albu Fahd Shaikh General Nasser Abdul Kareem al-Mukhlif on January 16, 2006 for his attempts to cooperate with the Coalition to bring peace to al-Ramadi. Therefore, it is in the tribe's interest to cooperate with, and receive support from, other organizations who can assist in fighting AQIZ. Unfortunately, this interest is not shared by all Albu Fahd tribe members because it is likely that some members of the Albu Fahd tribe, like some members of many tribes in al-Anbar, continue to support AQIZ. (See pp. 4-18 – 4-26.) Because of this, the Coalition should conduct a detailed study of the various tribes and subtribes of the Albu Fahd to determine which ones it should attempt to engage and influence. Likewise, the Coalition should identify tribes allied with the Albu Fahd who might be willing to cooperate as well. (See pp. 4-11 – 4-19.)

Leverage Traditional Authority

In order to gain the support of the Albu Fahd tribe and subtribes, the Coalition must first identify the key shaikhs who represent the traditional authority for the tribe and gain the support of these shaikhs. It is crucial to properly identify the legitimate key shaikhs who can assist in Coalition objectives. The first step in identifying the key shaikhs is to identify the Shaikh General and the most prominent shaikhs of the Albu Fahd. These shaikhs are normally the easiest to identify, though care must be taken to ensure that they have real power and are not just figureheads. The shaikh generals can identify the influential and authentic shaikhs in the provinces and assist in engagement with these shaikhs. There has been some confusion as to the identity of the new shaikh general of the Albu Fahd tribe, following the assassination of Shaikh Nasser.

This study identifies many subordinate leaders of the Albu Fahd tribe (see pp. 4-11 – 4-19 and classified Annex I). Committing dedicated resources on the ground to seek out those leaders to determine their commitment to the ongoing



objectives of the Coalition and support to the Iraqi government would be an excellent starting point for any tribal engagement and influence program. For this approach to be effective, it is necessary to understand that this is a long term project and will take weeks, if not months, of constant engagement to gain trust among the tribal leaders.

Those dealing with the tribes should have a comprehensive picture of what the shaikhs' interests are, as well as the interests of their tribesmen. Three levers of influence on shaikhs that this study identifies are personal interests, the ability to extend patronage, and the ability to wield traditional authority for the benefit of the tribe. All three are intertwined and should be exploited.

Use a Compelling Ideology

In order to employ (or counter) ideology effectively, the cultural narratives of the insurgent group and society must be understood. To effectively counter the insurgents' message, utilizing Arabists with a comprehensive knowledge of not only the Middle East, but also Iraq specifically, and more importantly Islam, is a prerequisite for an effective Information Operations Campaign. The current narratives are tied to the group's identity, which is defined by the key factors that have shaped the tribe's unique ideological characteristics, combined with other factors from the group's history.

Since the Albu Fahd (or at least most of them) are at war with AQIZ, partly due to religious extremism, the following ideological messages should resonate with Albu Fahd tribe members:

- For the past few hundred years, Iraqis have been repeatedly attacked by extremist Wahhabis, who have come to Iraq to steal, murder, and impose an aberrant form of Islam on Iraqis – these are the real enemies of Iraq;
- The foreign terrorists affiliated with AQIZ are not Salafis as they claim, they are Wahhabis and, even worse, Takfiris, and they want to spread their distorted religious beliefs in Iraq in order to establish their own rule over Iraqis (being called a Salafi is not necessarily a derogatory term in al-Anbar, but being called a Wahhabi or a Takfiri is derogatory); and,
- Iraq was a great center of Islamic culture and jurisprudence under the Abbasid Empire – the “Golden Age of Islam.” The Wahhabis and Takfiris reject the accomplishments of that golden age and want to take Muslims and Iraq back to the “Age of Ignorance (*Jahiliyya*)” – the era on the Arabian Peninsula before the advent of Islam.



Use Appropriate Coercive Force

A key reason the Albu Fahd tribe is fighting the AQIZ is because of AQIZ attacks and crimes against Albu Fahd shaikhs and tribe members – the result of a lack of government or Coalition provided security in al-Ramadi. In response, the Albu Fahd have formed their own militias and security forces to protect their tribe members and attack AQIZ. To take advantage of this, the Coalition should explore ways to provide training, equipment, transportation, and logistics support for Albu Fahd tribal fighters against AQIZ and its tribal allies (See pp. 7-16 – 7-18).

The Coalition's failure to use proportionate and precise force in al-Anbar has caused tribes to join the insurgency. While the Coalition has searched for tactics to thwart the insurgency in Iraq, they have continued to mount grievances daily, not realizing that in the Iraqi culture, a wrong rarely fades. For the Iraqis, few occurrences of mistreatment have caused more anger and carved a deeper divide than the arrests of wanted men's relatives or "Dragnet" arrests of entire villages. There have been Coalition commanders who believed that if every male was put in jail, they would catch the insurgents and lessen the attacks. The drawback to this methodology has been that the detainees stay in prison for six months to a year, and when they are released, they are angry and impose tribal justice – blood feud – on the Coalition.

Some Iraqis insist that their relatives have been arrested and held as hostages to force fugitives to turn themselves in. While this has been an ongoing theme among the Iraqis since 2003, whether this is an actual practice or not, it is an alleged activity that has had no Information Operation Campaign directed at it to alleviate the perception – and perceptions have the force of reality, regardless of the actual facts.

Whatever the reality, tribal culture states that revenge is requisite. A local shaikh of the Albu Fahd tribe from Husseiba, Nasrallah Mukhlif, claims there are two red lines in the tribal code that have been infused with new vigor since the fall of Saddam Hussein's government: killing an innocent person or mistreating someone's family. Mukhlif has stated that neither of these injustices pass without a reprisal.

Mukhlif has allegedly been used to mediate at least one arrest by the American military. He was reported as saying he told US officials that they were creating enemies for themselves. If they don't exist already, these tactics will make them exist. As US forces try to gain support of the Iraqi tribes, these perceived actions do nothing but fuel resentment and reprisals against American forces.



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The arrests underline the competing demands of US counter insurgency efforts: military effectiveness balanced with “hearts and minds”, and tactical necessities balanced with cultural mores.

The area of al-Anbar remains fiercely conservative and strongly tribal. To many of its residents, the US-led occupation and presence of American soldiers — often described as Christians or infidels — inflame sentiments. Stories build on themselves and even rumors — of soldiers breaking down doors, stealing gold and money — stand as undisputed truths. Whether real or perceived, Iraqis believe that the US-led Coalition is determined to reshape Iraqis' identity in an unacceptable way.

These perceptions need to be fought not only with a very focused and effective information campaign, but also with a significant change in how the Coalition uses force on Iraqi civilians.

Use Economic Incentives and Disincentives

Shaikhs have responded well to financial incentives, particularly when they are given the means to extend financial patronage, as well as enhance their personal well-being. The prospect of allocating provincial reconstruction funds partially along tribal patronage networks is a powerful inducement for cooperation. In today's Iraq, shaikhs' success especially depends on how well they can manage the idle young men in their communities.

The Coalition must research the specific economic situation concerning the Albu Fahd tribe in order to effectively use economic incentives and disincentives to influence the tribe.

Explore the Use of Non-Iraqi Tribal Intermediaries

No information was identified that could enable the Coalition to leverage non-Iraqi tribal intermediaries to influence the Albu Fahd tribes. This information may be accessible through additional research and analysis.

Understand Insurgent Use of Tribes

The insurgents exploit their implicit understanding of tribal culture to influence and recruit tribes to their efforts. For many tribe members, insurgent payments for military attacks against Coalition targets are increasingly seen as the only means to provide for one's family, and are often used as recruitment tools, due to high unemployment. The insurgents understand tribal customs, social activities and relationships, and need only ask if the ruling authorities respect tribal honor



to provide an argument for resistance. Promises of special status for all tribes may give hope to the disenfranchised tribal members for a better future.

Insurgent's control of the tribes is established through a network of loyal tribal leaders. Attempts are made to make every member of the tribe feel that the Coalition has shamed them and to regain their honor by becoming part of the struggle. The greatest danger to the insurgency movement is if its popular base of loyal tribes can be won away and realigned with the Coalition. (See pp. 7-18 – 7-19.)

To defeat such insurgent influence, the Coalition must generate strong narratives that also resonate with the target audience, and modify its behavior to avoid inflaming Iraqi tribal hatred against it – particularly in the use of force.

Concluding Observations

As with the other tribes, the most likely motivation in the foreseeable future for the tribal leaders to cooperate with the Coalition is to rid their areas of the foreign insurgents. This must not be construed as unconditional support for the Coalition, but more than likely the Iraqis now feel that they are strong enough to "Go it alone." Recent polling in Iraq indicates that the general consensus among the Sunni Arabs in al-Anbar remains that the Coalition should withdraw from Iraq.

However, any draw down of Coalition forces, for any reason, will be perceived as a victory for the insurgency movement supported by the Iraqi nationalists. The most likely propaganda to come from a draw down is summed up by Khalaf al-Fahdawi, a leader of the Albu Fahd tribe in al-Anbar. Referring to the formation of a tribal militia to respond to the increasing threat from foreign insurgents, al-Fahdawi stated, "Forming the group did not come from nothing. It came from a need to destroy al-Qaida, **which we thought the Marines might have been able to do. We were wrong**, since these armed men became stronger and raped other cities." This attitude, already prevalent in al-Anbar, will manifest itself into a larger propaganda campaign. Focusing on the perceived weakness of the US, the Iraqi insurgency will continue to motivate sympathizers to support their movement, increasing the long term threat to the US troops that remain.



Albu Mahal Tribe

The Albu Mahals were active members of the insurgency cooperating with a number of insurgent factions against the Coalition until late 2005 when they began opposing AQIZ's killing and kidnapping of locals. The Albu Mahals have formed and participated in local militias in an effort to drive the foreign insurgents from their tribal areas in and near al-Qaim. This change in attitude opened a window for an effective Coalition information operations campaign and civil affairs activities within the area to leverage local leaders and establish effective relationships that can evolve from a position of trust over time. The difficulty is that the support from the tribe will inevitably be based on personal relationships that will change during the next Coalition troop rotation. (Note: For an detailed assessment of the Albu Mahal Tribe, see pp. 4-26 – 4-34 and classified Annex II.)

Implement as Part of an Integrated Strategy

The Albu Mahal tribe is a key tribe in the al-Qaim area, which has become a critical area of insurgent activity in al-Anbar. The Coalition is currently allied with the Albu Mahals against AQIZ and its allied tribes. The Coalition operations with the Albu Mahals seem to be increasingly integrated with the overall counter insurgency and reconstruction strategies for the al-Qaim area. Care should be taken to also ensure integration for adjacent areas, for al-Anbar Governorate, and for the entire country.

Ensure an In-Depth Understanding of Iraqi and Tribal Culture

Any effort to work with the Sunni Arab tribes of Iraq's al-Anbar Governorate should begin with an in-depth understanding of Iraqi culture and the Arabic language, the interaction of the various components of Sunni Arab Iraqi identity, the nature and influence of tribal society, and the interests and motivations of the target population. The degree of in-depth understanding necessary to successfully engage Iraq's Sunni Arab tribes requires considerable experience, education, and training. Therefore, a cadre of specialists may be required to provide this expertise either as an adjunct to, or in place of, conventional military forces.

The most effective information operations campaign can begin months before a unit deploys – and should be aimed at US troops. Before deploying troops to theater, it is recommended that a comprehensive training program be implemented to afford the service members a deeper understanding of the Iraqi culture and respect for the traditions of Islam, with in-depth training on their projected AOR and the tribes there. The Iraqis are deeply rooted in their culture and traditions and they are driven by their beliefs in Islam. When Coalition



soldiers appear to be critical of or judgmental towards the Iraqi traditions and religion, they are immediately labeled and contribute to the stereotype of the arrogant American.

Even with the support of such specialists, all personnel involved in counter insurgency operations must have a minimal level of cultural awareness in order to operate within the accepted culture and traditions. Training in cultural awareness should begin before deployment and continue throughout the deployment, incorporating the detailed characteristics of a unit's specific AOR. (See pp. 7-4 – 7-6)

Identify Tribes and Tribal Interests

The Albu Mahals are a subtribe of the Dulaym Tribal Confederation. All of the Dulaym tribes have the same general Sunni Arab tribal interests (see pp. 7-6 – 7-8), but they each have individual local interests, which they do not necessarily share with each other. Similarly, the Albu Mahal tribe has its own local interests, which all of its subtribes would likely subscribe to, such as:

- Protecting its tribe members from attack;
- Protecting its tribal lands from being stolen or destroyed;
- Increasing its power and influence in its local area;
- Providing economic and community support for its members;
- Preventing enemies from undermining tribal authority and causing cleavages within the tribe and subtribes; and,
- Avenging wrongs using tribal customs and law.

In addition, the Albu Mahal are currently at war with AQIZ and its affiliated foreign fighters because AQIZ has often overstepped its bounds with the local Iraqis. In some cases, Zarqawi's people attempt to skim from the profits of criminal enterprises, often well in excess of 50%. In addition, the terrorists have increasingly attempted to install their draconian form of Taliban-like rule in local communities, and murder the residents for minor offenses of the law. AQIZ is also insensitive to the fact that Iraqi civilians are often caught in the crossfire of their horrific suicide attacks; in fact civilians are often the main targets. On top of all this, AQIZ has made the penultimate mistake of intimidating and killing insurgent leaders, shaikhs, and respected members of the tribes. (See pp. 4-31 – 4-32.)

Therefore, it is in the tribe's interest to cooperate with, and receive support from, other organizations that can assist in fighting AQIZ. In addition, the Albu Mahals have built alliances with other tribes to fight AQIZ and its allied tribes. These allies of the Albu Mahals would be a logical choice for the Coalition to attempt to pursue relationships. Because of this, the Coalition should conduct a detailed



study of the allied tribes of the Albu Fahd to determine which ones it should attempt to engage and influence. (See pp. 4-26 – 4-35 and classified Annex II.)

Leverage Traditional Authority

The Coalition is already working closely with the Albu Mahals and seems to have already leveraged some of the tribal shaikhs to begin building a relationship with the tribe. The Coalition should continue to identify more Albu Mahal shaikhs from subtribes and clans to build relationships with them and gain their support. The Coalition should also attempt to leverage the traditional authorities of tribes allied with the Albu Mahal to further expand their support base among the tribes.

Use a Compelling Ideology

In order to employ (or counter) ideology effectively, the cultural narratives of the insurgent group and society must be understood. To effectively counter the insurgents' message, utilizing Arabists with a comprehensive knowledge of not only the Middle East, but also Iraq specifically, and more importantly Islam, is a prerequisite for an effective Information Operations Campaign. The current narratives are tied to the group's identity, which is defined by the key factors that have shaped the unique ideological characteristics, combined with other factors from the group's history.

Since the Albu Mahals (or at least most of them) are at war with AQIZ, partly due to religious extremism, the following ideological messages should resonate with Albu Mahal tribe members:

- The foreign terrorists affiliated with Zarqawi are not Salafis as they claim, they are Wahhabis and, even worse, Takfiris, and they want to spread their distorted religious beliefs in Iraq in order to establish their own rule over Iraqis (being called a Salafi is not necessarily a derogatory term in al-Anbar, but being called a Wahhabi or a Takfiri is derogatory); and,
- Iraq was a great center of Islamic culture and jurisprudence under the Abbasid Empire – the “Golden Age of Islam.” The Wahhabis and Takfiris reject the accomplishments of that golden age and want to take Muslims and Iraq back to the “Age of Ignorance (*Jahiliyya*)” – the era on the Arabian Peninsula before the advent of Islam.

Use Appropriate Coercive Force

A key reason the Albu Mahal tribe is fighting the AQIZ is because of AQIZ attacks and crimes against Albu Mahal shaikhs and tribe members – the result of a lack of government or Coalition provided security in the al-Qaim area. In



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response, the Albu Mahal have formed their own militias and security forces – the Hamza forces and the DPF - to protect their tribe members and attack AQIZ and its allied Iraqi tribes. The Coalition is conducting joint operations with the Albu Mahal forces and is working to incorporate the forces into the Iraqi Army. This could serve as a model for alliances with other tribes in al-Anbar, such as the Albu Fahd.

As the Coalition has increased its cooperation and coordination with the Albu Mahal, the flow of intelligence on insurgent activities has significantly improved, and mistakes in the Coalition's use of force against Iraqis have decreased.

As with the other tribes, the most likely motivation in the foreseeable future for the Albu Mahal tribal leaders to continue to cooperate with the Coalition is to rid their areas of the foreign insurgents. This must not be construed as unconditional support for the Coalition, but more than likely the Iraqi nationalist, former regime associated, and other insurgent organizations now feel that they are strong enough to "Go it alone" without the assistance of AQIZ.

Use Economic Incentives and Disincentives

Shaikhs have responded well to financial incentives, particularly when they are given the means to extend financial patronage, as well as enhance their personal well-being. The prospect of allocating provincial reconstruction funds partially along tribal patronage networks is a powerful inducement for cooperation. In today's Iraq, shaikhs' success especially depends on how well they can manage the idle young men in their communities.

The Coalition must research the specific economic situation concerning the Albu Mahal tribe in order to effectively use economic incentives and disincentives to influence the tribe.

Explore the Use of Non-Iraqi Tribal Intermediaries

No information was identified that could enable the Coalition to leverage non-Iraqi tribal intermediaries to influence the Albu Mahal tribes. This information may be accessible through additional research and analysis.

Understand Insurgent Use of Tribes

The insurgents exploit their implicit understanding of tribal culture to influence and recruit tribes to their efforts. For many tribe members, insurgent payments for military attacks against Coalition targets are increasingly seen as the only means to provide for one's family, and are often used as a recruitment tool, due to high unemployment. The insurgents understand tribal customs, social



activities, and relationships, and need only ask if the ruling authorities respect tribal honor to provide an argument for resistance. Promises of special status for all tribes may give hope to the disenfranchised tribal members for a better future.

Insurgent control of the tribes is established through a network of loyal tribal leaders. Attempts are made to make every member of the tribe feel that the Coalition has shamed them, and to regain their honor by becoming part of the struggle. The greatest danger to the insurgency movement is if its popular base of loyal tribes can be won away and realigned with the Coalition. (See pp. 7-19 – 7-20.)

Concluding Observations

The Albu Mahal's change in attitude was caused by the loss of its lands to rival Iraqi tribes that have allied themselves with AQIZ, as well as by the hard-line methods and religious zealotry of AQIZ and the foreign insurgency, and should not be considered a change in support for the Iraqi insurgency which is primarily tied to an Iraqi nationalist ideology. The most likely course of action for the tribe is to depict its members as supportive of the Coalition effort with the ulterior motive of safeguarding its resources and allowing the US to take the brunt of the fight. (The Arab Proverb, *The Enemy of my Enemy is my Friend*.) With this understood, the alliance with the Coalition to rid the area of the foreign insurgency will allow the Iraqi insurgent groups to refit, maintain, and even increase force strength.

This is not meant to suggest that there are no opportunities or that it would be futile to develop relationships with the Albu Mahal tribal elders. On the contrary, this is the perfect opportunity to develop strong personal bonds and leverage the situation in favor of the Coalition. To accomplish this requires a long-term commitment to the effort. The current rotation of troops every 12 months, or in some cases sooner, is not conducive to implementing the suggested engagement strategy. In fact, attempting to develop close ties with the tribes and then changing personalities may well increase support for the insurgency's goal to force the US out of Iraq, because the "middle-of-the-road Iraqis" will view the constant turnover as a lack of commitment.

The most pressing engagement approach for the Albu Mahal should address ridding the area of the foreign insurgents. During the process, emphasis should be placed on creating strong personal relationships with the tribal leadership. Legitimizing the local government and police force utilizing the tribe can help stimulate employment concerns and reduce the direct involvement of would be insurgents. Developing long-term relationships and an effective Information Operations Campaign is necessary for any successful attempt to extend support for the Coalition's efforts.



Albu Issa Tribe

Of the three tribes in this study, the Albu Issa are the least likely to assist or endorse the Iraqi government or any Coalition activity. The tribal members are generally nationalistic and devoutly loyal to Iraq. They are committed to Islam, but it is the dedication to their country Iraq that is the driving factor of their motivation. (Note: For an detailed assessment of the Albu Issa Tribe, see, pp. 4-35 – 4-51 and classified Annex III.)

Implement as Part of an Integrated Strategy

The Albu Issa tribe is a Tayy tribe allied with the Dulaym Confederation located in Falluja and its surrounding villages. Coalition efforts to engage and influence the Albu Issa tribe, while probably futile, should be integrated with the overall counter insurgency and reconstruction strategies for the Falluja area, for adjacent areas, for al-Anbar Governorate, and for the entire country. The local tribal influence plan for the Albu Issas in Falluja should also include the Albu Issa tribal lands that stretch south of the city along the Euphrates River to the border of the Karbala Governorate.

Ensure an In-Depth Understanding of Iraqi and Tribal Culture

As with the Albu Fahd and Albu Mahal tribes, any effort to work with the Albu Issa tribe should begin with an in-depth understanding of Iraqi culture and the Arabic language, the interaction of the various components of Sunni Arab Iraqi identity, the nature and influence of tribal society, and the interests and motivations of the target population. The degree of in-depth understanding necessary to successfully engage Iraq's Sunni Arab tribes requires considerable experience, education, and training. Therefore, a cadre of specialists may be required to provide this expertise either as an adjunct to, or in place of, conventional military forces. Even with the support of such specialists, all personnel involved in counter insurgency operations must have a minimal level of cultural awareness, in order to operate within the accepted culture and traditions. Training in cultural awareness should begin before deployment and continue throughout the deployment, incorporating the detailed characteristics of a unit's specific AOR. (See pp. 7-4 – 7-7)

Identify Tribes and Tribal Interests

As part of the Dulaym Tribal Confederation, the Albu Issas have the same general Sunni Arab tribal interests as other Dulaym-affiliated tribes (see pp. 7-7 – 7-8). However, each tribe has its own individual local interests, which they do not necessarily share with the others. The Albu Issa tribe's local interests, which all of its subtribes would likely subscribe to, are:



- Protecting its tribe members from attack;
- Protecting its tribal lands from being stolen or destroyed;
- Increasing its power and influence in its local area;
- Providing economic and community support for its members;
- Preventing enemies from undermining tribal authority and causing cleavages within the tribe and subtribes; and,
- Avenging wrongs using tribal customs and law.

Leverage Traditional Authority

The dominant leader in the Albu Issa is Barakat Saadoun. Barakat has been outspoken against the Coalition since the fall of the former regime. When he was confronted with his alleged activities in June 2003, he was defiant and vocal about the withdrawal of Coalition forces from Iraq. Barakat was arrested by the Coalition in October 2003 for alleged involvement in anti-Coalition activities. It was near Barakat's village that the Chinook helicopter was shot down in November 2003, killing 16 servicemen.

Barakat and Jamal Nazzal (cleric of the large mosque in Falluja) were released from Abu Ghraib prison in April 2004. Both maintained close ties to Coalition forces until July 2004, but they were known to also meet with suspected insurgents in Falluja. Barakat and Jamal Nazzal were considered high-level leaders within the insurgency in Falluja. The tribe is closely allied to the al-Zoba tribe, which includes as a member Harith al-Dahri, the most recognized Sunni cleric in Iraq and the head of the Association of Muslim Scholars. The other visible leaders from the Zobas that appear to have a close relationship with the Albu Issas are Mahmood and Hamza al-Zoba from the Albu Ghraib area.

As mentioned in Chapter Four, the senior shaikh of the Albu Issa tribe is Khamis Hasnawi al-Eifan, but most tribal members consider him only a figurehead. Barakat dominates the leadership within the tribe. Jamal Nazzal was the religious leader apparently most closely associated with the Albu Issa tribal leadership. Jamal was nicknamed "The Sacrificer," after his release from Albu Ghraib in April 2004. He remained moderate in his Friday messages from the mosque until July 2004. The message that day was, "... the Coalition is chasing Zarqawi like they were chasing WMD, neither one exists..."

While the Albu Issa tribe does not seem likely to ally itself with the Coalition, the Coalition should conduct a detailed study of the various tribes and subtribes of the Albu Issa to determine if any would be susceptible to engagement and influence. Likewise, the Coalition should identify tribes allied with the Albu Issa, like the Zobas, who might be willing to cooperate as well. (See pp. 4-35 – 4-43.)



Use a Compelling Ideology

In order to employ (or counter) ideology effectively, the cultural narratives of the insurgent group and society must be understood. To effectively counter the insurgents' message, utilizing Arabists with a comprehensive knowledge of not only the Middle East, but also Iraq specifically, and more importantly Islam, is a prerequisite for an effective Information Operations Campaign. The current narratives are tied to the group's identity, which is defined by the key factors that have shaped the unique ideological characteristics, combined with other factors from the group's history.

Since the Albu Issa are extremely nationalistic, so messages emphasizing Iraqi nationalism against the influence of AQIZ and foreign insurgents should resonate with Albu Fahd tribe members:

- Iraq's history and heritage, which goes back thousands of years, should form the foundation of an Iraqi nationalist identity, undivided by ethnicity or religion;
- The Sunni Arab tribes have an important and honorable place in Iraq's history and should have one in Iraq's future;
- For the past few hundred years, Iraqis have been repeatedly attacked by extremist Wahhabis, who have come to Iraq to steal, murder, and impose an aberrant form of Islam on Iraqis – these are the real enemies of Iraq;
- The foreign terrorists affiliated with Zarqawi are not Salafis as they claim, they are Wahhabis and, even worse, Takfiris, and they want to spread their distorted religious beliefs in Iraq, in order to establish their own rule over Iraqis (being called a Salafi is not necessarily a derogatory term in al-Anbar, but being called a Wahhabi or a Takfiri is derogatory); and,
- Iraq was a great center of Islamic culture and jurisprudence under the Abbasid Empire – the “Golden Age of Islam.” The Wahhabis and Takfiris reject the accomplishments of that golden age and want to take Muslims and Iraq back to the “Age of Ignorance (*Jahiliyya*)” – the era on the Arabian Peninsula before the advent of Islam.

However, the Coalition should be careful that messages with Iraqi nationalist themes do not backfire and turn Albu Issa tribal members even more against the Coalition.



Use Appropriate Coercive Force

The Coalition's failure to use proportionate and precise force in al-Anbar has caused tribes to join the insurgency. While the Coalition has searched for tactics to thwart the insurgency in Iraq, they have continued to mount grievances daily, not realizing that in the Iraqi culture, a wrong rarely fades. For the Iraqis, few occurrences of mistreatment have caused more anger and carved a deeper divide than the arrests of wanted men's relatives or "Dragnet" arrests of entire villages. There have been Coalition commanders who believed that if every male was put in jail, they would catch the insurgents and lessen the attacks. The drawback to this methodology has been that the detainees stay in prison for six months to a year, and when they are released, they are angry and impose tribal justice – blood feud – on the Coalition.

The Coalition must reduce points of friction with Iraqi tribe members, if it wants to increase support for its operations and decrease support for the insurgency.

Use Economic Incentives and Disincentives

Shaikhs have responded well to financial incentives, particularly when they are given the means to extend financial patronage, as well as enhance their personal well-being. The prospect of allocating provincial reconstruction funds partially along tribal patronage networks is a powerful inducement for cooperation. In today's Iraq, shaikhs' success especially depends on how well they can manage the idle young men in their communities.

The Coalition must research the specific economic situation concerning the Albu Issa tribe in order to effectively use economic incentives and disincentives to influence the tribe.

Explore the Use of Non-Iraqi Tribal Intermediaries

The Albu Issas have tribal branches in the following countries:

- Palestine, in the al-Isawiyah area of northern Jerusalem.
- Algeria, in the town of al-Isawiyah.
- Egypt, where they are known as al-Isawiyah.
- Saudi Arabia and Yemen

No information was identified that could enable the Coalition to leverage these non-Iraqi tribal intermediaries to influence the Albu Issa tribes. This information may be accessible through additional research and analysis. (See p. 4-37 – 4-40.)



Understand Insurgent Use of Tribes

The insurgents exploit their implicit understanding of tribal culture to influence and recruit tribes to their efforts. For many tribe members, insurgent payments for military attacks against Coalition targets are increasingly seen as the only means to provide for one's family, and are often used as recruitment tools, due to high unemployment. The insurgents understand tribal customs, social activities, and relationships, and need only ask if the ruling authorities respect tribal honor to provide an argument for resistance. Promises of special status for all tribes may give hope to the disenfranchised tribal members for a better future.

Insurgent's control of the tribes is established through a network of loyal tribal leaders. Attempts are made to make every member of the tribe feel that the Coalition has shamed them, and to regain their honor by becoming part of the struggle. The greatest danger to the insurgency movement is if its popular base of loyal tribes can be won away and realigned with the Coalition.

To defeat such insurgent influence, the Coalition must generate strong narratives that also resonate with the target audience, and modify its behavior to avoid inflaming Iraqi tribal hatred against it – particularly in the use of force.

Concluding Observations

While this assessment of the Albu Issa is a generalization based on direct contact with all the individuals mentioned, there are individuals within the tribe that support the Coalition, and a dragnet arrest of all Albu Issas is strongly discouraged. Still, any attempt to coordinate with the tribal entity of the Albu Issas is probably futile. The hold that Barakat has on most Albu Issa tribe members is so pervasive that he will enforce total allegiance to the objective of forcing the Coalition out of Iraq.

If US troop strength is reduced this year, the Coalition and the Iraqi government should anticipate an increase in violence. A decrease in the US presence and the Iraqi's government inability to provide the security demanded by the citizens of al-Anbar will allow the politically backed militias, usually through the local police, to gain a stronger presence throughout al-Anbar. Such a Coalition force reduction would bolster Barakat's position as head of the Albu Issas. The propaganda message would be that the Albu Issas forced the US withdrawal, which would increase the pool of recruits for Barakat's activities. As a result, he would appear stronger because of his steadfast opposition to the US presence in al-Anbar. Therefore, in anticipation of a US draw down of forces, an effective information operations campaign must be developed and employed to counter the most probable course of action for the Albu Issas.



Iraq Tribal Study

*Example Application to
the Three Target Tribes*

The near term engagement strategy for the Abu Issa tribe should be directed at encouraging their acceptance of the central Iraqi government; however, there is little likelihood that the Coalition will be able to secure either the direct or indirect support of the Abu Issa tribe. An effective information campaign that addresses the central concerns of the tribal leadership – the presence of Coalition troops in Iraq and the formation of what is considered an unrecognized Iraq government supported by infidels – must stress that the US presence is necessary to ensure some level of security, and the US will leave once Iraq is stable.

Observations on the Impact of the Death of Zarqawi

The successful Coalition military operation resulting in the death of AQIZ leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi is a significant accomplishment in the war against the extremist Islamist groups fighting in Iraq. The Coalition could leverage their success in killing Zarqawi to gain more cooperation, and possible support, from anti-AQIZ Iraqi tribes in al-Anbar Governorate, and elsewhere. In order for this to succeed, the Coalition should take advantage of Zarqawi's death to seize the initiative against AQIZ and their supporters in Iraq while they may be in some degree of disarray, and while the anti-AQIZ tribal forces are jubilant in the wake of Zarqawi's death. If the Coalition does not follow up this successful operation with more success in rolling up the foreign terrorist networks in Iraq, the tribes may lose faith in the abilities of the Coalition and discontinue cooperation, instead relying on their own methods. This may also lead tribes to turn return to attacking Coalition forces if the Coalition attempts to interfere with their militias.



Iraq Tribal Study

Example Application to the Three Target Tribes

- 1 An example of this would be the state of government-tribe relations under the stronger Mamluk pashas such as Sulayman the Great and Sulayman Abu Laylah. Nieuwenhuis, 158.
- 2 Amatzia Baram, "The Iraqi Tribes and the Post-Saddam System", The Brookings Institute: *Iraq Memo #18*, July 8, 2003.
- 3 Patai, 241-242.
- 4 McCalister, 26-27.
- 5 See A. Dawisha, "Iraqi Politics: the Past and Present as Context for the Future," In, *The Future of Iraq*, Washington, DC: Middle East Institute, 1997, 7-16.
- 6 Ibid., 14.
- 7 Peter Paret, *French Revolutionary Warfare from Indochina to Algeria*, (London: Pall Mall Press, 1964), 46-52.
- 8 Jwaideh, 162.
- 9 Ibid., 162.
- 10 Montgomery McFate and Andrea Jackson distill Weber's writings on political power into a framework of four types of authority (coercive force, economic incentive and disincentive, legitimating ideology, and traditional authority) and discuss them in the context of counterinsurgency in, Montgomery McFate and Andrea Jackson, "The Object Beyond War: Counterinsurgency and the Four Tools of Political Competition," *Military Review*, January-February 2006, 13-26.
- 11 Amatzia Baram, "Victory in Iraq, One Tribe at a Time," *New York Times*, October 28, 2003.
- 12 McFate and Jackson, 13.
- 13 D.J. Kilcullen, "Twenty-Eight Articles: Fundamentals of Company-level Counterinsurgency," (accessed April 17, 2006); available from http://www.d-n-i.net/fcs/pdf/kilcullen_28_articles.pdf.
- 14 Qiraar at-tanthim ad-deen wa-l-hurriyya. November 14, 2003.
- 15 Ahmadi, H., 2003. "Yaum min-al-ayaam fi masjid al-a'azam." *Al-Hayat*. December 3. p. 5.
- 16 The ideas in this section are developed from an interview with Prof. Andrew Hess, Director – Program for Southwest Asia and Islamic Civilization, The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy; May 30, 2006.
- 17 McCalister, 20-21.
- 18 Ibid., 15.
- 19 Information based on interviews with former Coalition personnel responsible for dealing with Iraqi tribes 2003 – 2004.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Minutes of the Falluja Security Council Meeting held in Falluja, January 23, 2006.
- 23 Christian Science Monitor, by Annia Ciezadlo, Dec. 30, 2003, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2003/1230/p01s03-woiq.html>, and Defenselink, Feb. 17, 2004, by Gerry G. Gilmore; http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Feb2004/n02172004_200402172.html



APPENDIX ONE: UNDERSTAND HOW TO LIVE AND WORK WITH TRIBESMEN

RESPECT (*Ihtiram* in Arabic) is the key to working with tribesmen anywhere in the world. Whether they are Arab Bedouin, Afghan Pushtuns, Laotian Muong, or Somali herdsmen, it is always RESPECT that tribesmen look for from outsiders who come to their lands seeking their help and friendship. This is true whether tribesmen are nomads or villagers. Many tribal peoples have been encouraged by their governments to settle and take up farming agriculture as a way of life. In many cases, money and construction inducements have been provided in an effort to “tame” the tribesmen and make them easier for the governments to deal with. As a result, many tribal groups who were once nomadic are now living in villages. In some cases, parts of the tribe are now villagers and others, their relatives, still follow the rains and grass with their flocks. Some other tribes, like the mountaineers in Yemen, have always been villagers. Nevertheless, in all cases, tribesmen prefer their own folkways to those of the peoples of the cities in the countries in which they live. Usually the tribal peoples look down on non-tribal city dwellers, considering them to be no more than servants of the government. Carlton Coon, in his excellent book, *Caravan, the Story of the Middle East*, tells the story of the meeting of a Bani Sakhr Jordanian Bedouin with a Palestinian at a market place outside Amman, Jordan. According to Coon, the Palestinian city dweller lectured the Bedouin about his backwardness and lack of modernity. The Bedouin listened for a while with the courtesy natural to his kind, and then responded by saying that it was clear to him that “modernity” had cost the Palestinians their homeland and that God had cursed the Palestinians for their abandonment of traditional life. With that he walked away.

Do not assume that they want to be like you. People who live within a tribal social structure usually have chosen to do so and continue to live this kind of life because they find it satisfying and protective. If they had wanted to stop living within the tribal community, they would have done so. There is almost always a de-tribalized urban area available to them, into which they could have disappeared to become taxi drivers or some such thing. They often could have joined the local military if they wished, and some do so. The important thing is that you understand that they are living in accord with ancestral traditions because they want to.

Do not reject their ways as primitive or backward. Tribesmen you mix with will watch you for indications that you hold them in disdain, that you think yourself better than them. Accept their customs as yours while you are among them as their guest, and perhaps one day as an assimilated member of the group. To become that is quite possible, but that kind of status must be earned in the eyes of folk who expect to be treated badly by city dwellers and foreigners (*ajanib* in



Arabic). Stay away from their women except to thank them for their hospitality if you are invited to do so. Do not openly praise their children. They will think you envy them for having children. Watch them closely to see how they conduct themselves. Imitate them, and if you have doubts about some behavior, ask them if it is appropriate for you to act the same way. Remember that tribesmen are warrior peoples. Be the warrior that you are. Never show fear – again – never show fear. Do that and they will sing songs about you. They will fight for and with you.

Do not mistake a rural lifestyle for one of desperate poverty. People living in the country sheltered within the structures of family, clan, and tribe are provided a lot more in goods and social support by tribal members, and especially leaders, than often appears to be the case to casual outside observers. “I am a river to my people,” said the great Howeitat Chief Auda Abu Tayy to T.E. Lawrence, and he meant it. It is a very strong tradition among tribal leaders that they must provide well for their people. If they do not, they will not long be chief. Mud huts, concrete-block houses, simple dress, and a simple diet do not necessarily add up to a self-perception of poverty.

Understand and Respect Their Traditions. Tribesmen often operate within at least two sets of rules. These are the dictates of tribal customary law (*Urf* in Arabic), and also of whatever kind of religious belief they subscribe to. In the case of the Sunni Arab tribes of al-Anbar Governorate, their religion is Islam observed according to the Shafii school of Sharia law. Many of the tribes of al-Anbar are sections or sub-tribes of the Dulaym tribe. In the Dulaym tribe, all claim descent from a common ancestor. This is the essence of tribal membership. Sometimes such descent is genuine, and in other cases it is not and “memory” is shaped according to need for unity. These peoples have a powerful oral tradition and a lot of analysis of the character of the foreigner will be based on his willingness to sit and listen patiently and appreciatively to the elders, who will tell him the truth of tribal belief in their situation.

Tribal Customary Law. Among the tribal Arabs, *Urf* consists of the practices and traditions of behavior, ownership, personal status, recompense for an injury done, and most of all HONOR, that have grown up in the tribal group over many years. They are specific adaptations to environment and the harsh necessities of life in difficult rural conditions. In any tribe there will be elders whose main function is to be repositories of the usually unwritten *urf*. These men have a respected and revered status as judges whose collective judgment and consensus govern tribal life. These men were often great warriors or poets in their youth and by a general acclamation they have taken up the status of customary law judge in middle age or later in life. The opinions of such men carry a great weight within the tribe, and chiefs defy them at their own risk. Often the judges of *urf* are the authorities who choose the tribal chieftains.



The kinds of cases in which *urf* governs are things like; the shame induced in a family by the lack of chastity of a daughter. Tribesmen (and some town dwellers) will often feel so strongly dishonored by this that the girl's brothers believe that they must kill her to erase the shame, and they often do. Another example would be a matter of the division of the profits from some tribal commercial transaction such as the sale of livestock. There is no sanction in Sharia law for either of these things any more than there is for the seclusion of women, but it is the customary law that determines what happens. It is often maintained by Islamic religious authorities that judgments in *urf* lead to modifications of Islamic religious jurisprudence through the application of community consensus (*ijma* in Arabic). This may be true in some cases, but in many more cases *urf* directly governs tribal life in matters completely outside religious law. Because of the central role played in tribal life by *urf* and its judges, one must always remember that the traditions of the tribes (*taqaliid* in Arabic) are always present in the background, and that knowledge of these traditions and respect toward its practitioners will pay rich dividends.

Religion. Tribesmen are usually devoted to their ancestral explanation of the universe and to the power or powers that rule the universe. The tribesmen of al-Anbar Governorate have long been devout Muslims of the *Shafii Mathab* (path) of Islam. Understand that they truly believe in God, as only some of us believe. They are *Shafii* Sunnis. This refers to the legal school whose precepts their *Qadis* (judges) follow in making decisions based on the roots of the law (Sharia). These are; Quran, (Holy Scripture), *Hadith* (stories accepted by the Shafii school of the practice of the Prophet Muhammad and the early Islamic community), *Qiyas* (analogy from case law) and *Ijma* (consensus of the scholars). The Shafii school has always been a relatively moderate school of law, and the tribesmen's understanding of Islam has been that of reverence without fanaticism. The Al-Qaida and associated movements (AQAM) follow forms of Islam based on acceptance of a consensus of belief among AQAM of the opinions of Muslims far more extreme than any the tribesman of Anbar Province have ever followed. AQAM believes that ANY cooperation with non-Muslims is religiously impossible, and that only war to the death is possible between Muslims and infidels. AQAM extends this attitude toward Shia Muslims and any Muslims who do not accept their views. This is an opportunity for Americans or other foreigners to align themselves with moderate Muslims of the kind found among the tribesmen of Anbar. In their interactions with the tribesmen, the Jihadis have often over-played their hand by attempting to force the tribesmen into acceptance of puritanical interpretations of Islamic law and practice which are alien to them. Moderate Islam, like that of the Shafii School, accepts Jesus and the story of the Gospels as a sincere but distorted rendition of the story of one of God's (Allah's) prophets. They believe Jesus to have been a semi-divine being who though not truly divine was beloved by God. This belief and the abuse that the *Jihadis* have inflicted on



the tribesmen in the attempt to force them into extremism provide the opportunity for non-Muslim foreigners to associate themselves with the tribesmen in their resistance to *Jihadi* religiosity. An additional opportunity is provided by the tribesmen's belief in a common identity that they share with many of us as members of one or another of the "Three Divine Religions" (*Al-Ayan as-Sammawiya at-Thalatha*) (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam). To take advantage of this opportunity, American soldiers must accept their common theological patrimony with Muslims. The view which is sometimes elucidated in the United States that the God of Islam is not the God of Christians and Jews is a serious obstacle to ever finding workable bonds between our forces and those of Muslims anywhere. Soldiers who find that they cannot accept this should consider requesting other duty. American soldiers should not be afraid to show their own religiosity. They will be RESPECTED for it so long as they do not seek to proselytize.

Work With Their Traditional Leaders. One of the most common errors made by American soldiers in trying to work with tribesmen is to adopt the idea that traditional leaders are "dinosaurs" who are outdated relics of the past. Part of our (American) heritage is the notion that the past is dead and that the future leads onward and upward in a linear path in which we Americans are the model of future humanity. In order to work successfully with tribesmen, we have to abandon that idea, or at least temporarily suppress it. Why? These people, especially the Bedouin Arabs, live in history and legend. For them the past is not dead. "It is, in fact, not really past." (William Faulkner) The Arabic language lacks tenses and in so much as language shapes thought, Arabs have a difficult time focusing on how long ago things happened. For them, the people of the past are not dead. Saladin (Yusuf Salah ad-Din al-Ayoubi) lived only yesterday in their minds. For them, the opinion of the Muslim chronicler of the Crusades, Usama ibn Munqidh, that "The Franks (us) are mighty men, may God curse them," is a judgment on us that the skilful among us can make good use of. If we are "mighty men," let us show them that we are also men who can be trusted and relied on. Accordingly, we should understand that the notion that these desert fighters and tribal brothers will give up their ways for ours are illusory. Their leaders were chosen by them according to *urf* and by the *ijma* (consensus) of the people. We should not imagine that they would allow us to appoint leaders more to our taste. Saddam tried that in Iraq, as did the Hashemite kings. They all failed. In entering into relations with tribesmen, we should understand that one must begin by dealing with their own leaders. Without RESPECT paid to the elders, we can never expect to penetrate the tribes as friends and allies.

Bring Them the Help They Need. The tribesmen want to be the authors of their own destiny. "*Ma Sha Allah*" (What God wills be so) is understood to be the limit of their ability to govern their fate, but they still want to improve their security and to improve the material circumstances of their lives, if that can be achieved



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without giving up their way of life. If American soldiers succeed in insinuating themselves into the confidence of tribesmen, they will depend on their new friends completely to bring them both the military help (fire support, supply, medical support, etc.) that they will need in doing what the US will urge them to do (and which they want to do), and also in bringing them infrastructure improvements (through their traditional leaders) that will make them a better life (and our friends forever). If Americans prove to be faithful friends, they will take the tribesmen away from the *Jihadis* forever. If the tribesmen end by believing that they were betrayed by false friends, they will curse our memory.

W. Patrick Lang
Colonel (ret.) US Army
Tribesman of the S'tiengan and Mnong Gar Peoples



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APPENDIX TWO: AN OPERATIONAL VIEW OF ISLAM

Theology. The Islamic faith believes itself to be one of “The Three Heavenly Religions.” (al-adyan at-thalatha as-sammawiya) (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam). According to Muslim tradition, Allah (in their view, the same God as the God worshipped by Jews and Christians) attempted over many millennia to send messages to mankind specifying the rules of conduct by which he desired humans to live. The prophets of the Old Testament and Jesus are believed by Muslims to have been messengers sent by God to warn mankind against sin. The Muslims believe that humanity largely ignored these warnings and as a result, a last and most complete warning was sent down from heaven in the form of a “reading” (the Quran) revealed to a final prophet in Arabia. This was Muhammad. The Muslims believe that the Quran is an uncreated text. That means that they do not accept that it was composed either by God or humans, but rather that it existed in its present form and words in God’s mind for all eternity and merely “descended” to earth to be delivered to Muhammad.

In pursuit of the vision of the universe presented by the Prophet Muhammad and their understanding of the eternal and un-created Quran, Arab armies exploded out of the Arabian Peninsula (Shibbat Jazirat al-Arab in Arabic) in the 7th Century A.D. and in a few decades overran all the territories of Sassanian Persia, Byzantine North Africa to the Straits of Gibraltar, and went all the way to the Gates of Constantinople. We should never forget the military potency of that vision and its continuing ability to motivate fighters.

This view of the Quran as uncreated and eternal is held by all Muslims, but for some, the fundamentalism of this belief causes them difficulties in adapting their faith to modern life. Another result of this understanding of the nature of the Quran was the establishment of the Arabic Language as the sacred language of Islam. For the great majority of Muslims, the Quran is an Arabic document and must not be translated. Since the Quran is believed to be, in essence, an aspect of God’s mind, the question has often been asked in a jocular way if God thinks in Arabic.

For the great majority of Muslims, the truth is un-changing and not subject to revision. In Shia Islam, the possibility has always existed of a re-interpretation of basic Islamic concepts, but it has never occurred. We must teach ourselves to have patience.

An Exclusive Belief System. Islam is a proudly monotheistic faith. Most Muslims are so wary of assigning any great importance to worldly things that there is a long-standing prohibition among the majority against the depiction of animals or humans in art. The sin of “Attribution of Importance” (*Shirk* in Arabic)



is thought to attach to devotion to earthly objects. In other words, pious Muslims fear that importance given to art or poetry or mere possessions detracts from devotion to God (the Shia do not observe this prohibition). Muslims tend to think of Christians as polytheists who will not admit their belief in more than one God. They think that because of the Christian belief in the Triune nature of God, and no amount of exposition of Christian theological argument for the Trinity satisfies the general Muslim (or Jewish) opinion that Christians are not really monotheists.

Nevertheless, Muslims are enjoined in the Quran itself to tolerate (and only that) Jews, Christians, and Sabaeans (a kind of Zoroastrian) as “People of the Book” (*ahl al-kitab* in Arabic). This toleration is often misunderstood. It is, in fact, only toleration. Historically, Christian and Jewish populations have lived in Muslim controlled states on the basis of their acceptance of what amounts to second-class status. There have been exceptions, such as Jordan under the rule of the Hashemite Kings, and ironically, countries controlled by the Baath Party, but, in the main, Christians and Jews in Muslim countries have lived under constant social pressure to convert. This pressure takes the form of exclusion from many enterprises and government posts, disqualification from military service, laws against the construction of churches, and disqualification from the office of president. A requirement that the Head of State be a Muslim is written into the constitution of many majority Muslim countries.

This kind of thinking should teach us that the obstacles that we must overcome in seeking to become friends and allies of the Muslims are deep seated, but not impossible to overcome. In many ways the situation of Christians in the Arab countries is indicative of the depth of the exclusivity of Muslim belief on the subject of the necessary supremacy of Islam. Christians in Lebanon and Egypt, for example, live in a constant state of anxiety concerning their status.

A Medieval Idea Set. Islam believes itself to be the living embodiment of God’s will on earth. It believes itself to be authoritative in all aspects of life. For the pious Muslim, life is a “seamless garment,” in which business, military affairs, family life, inheritance, and all other aspects of life are united into a pattern of obedience to God’s will as the particular Muslim community involved interprets it. This is much the same attitude toward life that Europeans had before the Reformation and the Renaissance broke the unitary pattern of European life that had persisted since the end of the Classical Period.

In dealing with the traditional Muslim communities, we should always remember that they live in a perceived universe in which change is neither beneficial nor virtuous.

Splits in the Community. The early Islamic community in its greatest period of expansion managed to hold itself together under the religious authority of the



successors of the Prophet, the “Caliphs” (*khulifa* in Arabic) until the Islamic Empire (*umma* in Arabic) became so extended that it contained peoples of widely varied interests and traditions. At that point, it started to break up in a pattern of fragmentation that has persisted to this time. Among the first to declare a separate identity were the Shia of southern Iraq. Their founding myth holds that their refusal to acknowledge the authority of the Caliphs derived from their deep loyalty to the bloodline of the Prophet.

Most scholarship holds that the Arabs of southern Iraq seized on this excuse because the invading desert Arab army of Islam denied them a fair share in the division of the “booty” seized in further conquests, even after they had converted to Islam. Islam sees itself as a universal, unitary community. To “split off” from that universal body is obviously a great sin. Therefore, groups of Muslims who wish to stop obeying religiously sanctioned authority have to embrace some other form of Islam and to reject the former ruler and his group as “not true Muslims,” in other words, heretics. That rejection makes disobedience and even war among Muslims acceptable.

There have been many such cases. They still occur and the results of many such previous divisions are still with us. Another example of this form of “rebellion” was the conversion of the Iranians from Sunni to Shia within about 50 years back in the 16th Century. Until then the Persians (Iranians) had always been Sunni, but in the early 16th Century the Ottoman Turkish Sunni Sultan in Constantinople accomplished two important things: 1) His armies reached the borders of Iran in the northwest (near Tabriz); and 2) He declared himself to be Caliph. The Iranian rulers of the day decided that the combination of effective military force and an ideological claim to authority that would be accepted by many was too much, and they too discovered in themselves a newfound devotion to the blood line of the Prophet. In fifty years nearly all Persians became Shia. They have remained that ever since, and have adopted all the Shia attitudes including a proclivity for Martyrdom (*Shihada* in Arabic).

Another example of this phenomenon is the Shiism of the Hazara People of the Hindu Kush mountains in Afghanistan. The Hazara are a Mongol people. They are in Afghanistan as a by-product of a Mongol invasion of long ago, probably that of Tamerlane (*Timur-i-Leng* in Turkic). After the withdrawal of their kinsmen from Afghanistan, the Hazara were always a small minority dominated by the Sunni Pushtuns and Tajiks. To escape their overlords, they retreated higher and higher into the mountains. Today, the Hazara all live at high altitudes above the level at which their oppressors wish to live. Nevertheless, the Pushtuns and Tajiks demanded tribute and obedience from them on the basis of religious obligation. As you would expect, the Hazara all converted to Shiism several hundred years ago and now receive support from Iran.



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of Islam*

What can we learn from these examples of behavior? 1) Politics, economics, and religion are closely linked in Islam. The religious identity of peoples reflects ancient deep-seated differences of perceived interest among the peoples. 2) The well-being of the people is often the basic determinant of religious and political orientation. A perception that alliance with the US would improve that well-being would be a powerful tool. That tool can be wielded with success by those who come to understand the cultural milieu in which they work.



APPENDIX THREE: HUMINT IN COUNTER INSURGENCY

HUMINT in Counter Insurgency

The importance of intelligence to all counter insurgency operations is unquestioned, but intelligence organization and collection during an insurgency place new demands on conventional concepts of intelligence.

In conventional war, a combat unit usually learns the location of the enemy from contacts between units on an established line of resistance, and intelligence is reduced to the standard technique of providing "essential elements of information." In counter insurgency, underground and guerrilla targets are elusive and transitory, and the life cycle and usefulness of intelligence are brief. A few hours determine the success or failure of an action. In short, rapid response to intelligence is of crucial importance in counter insurgency.

In conventional warfare, intelligence is not primarily concerned with individuals, whereas in counter insurgency operations it focuses on individuals and their behavior patterns. The identity and whereabouts of the insurgents are usually unknown and their attacks are unpredictable. The underground lines of communication and the areas of underground logistical support are concealed from view. It is to these highly specific unknowns that counter insurgency intelligence must address itself and, due to the nature of the information, human intelligence (HUMINT) is critical in collecting it.

Another feature of counter insurgency warfare that makes intelligence collecting difficult is that the underground operates autonomously or in small, compartmentalized units. In addition, because of the improvised nature of insurgent organization and the crudeness of its operations, counter insurgency intelligence does not easily fit into standard categories.

Finally, while all counter insurgency warfare should be fought as part of a country-wide integrated politico-military plan, the counter insurgency fight is implemented at the local level. Unlike most conventional military operations that use corps and divisions as the primary command and control headquarters for planning and implementing combat operations, counter insurgency operations are fought primarily at the brigade level and below. In fact, if military force levels are low, companies can be responsible for very large areas of operation (AORs) for which they are seldom resourced – especially with assets to collect and exploit HUMINT.

Therefore, at the tactical level, collection of specific short-range intelligence about the rapidly changing variables of a local situation is critical. Information on



the identification of members of the underground, their movements, and their modus operandi must be gathered. Biographies of suspected underground members, containing photographs, detailed information on their places of residence, their families, education, work history, and associates, are important features of short-range intelligence.

Some of this information can be gathered through patrolling, cordon and search operations, and interaction with the local population. All tips and leads, no matter how unreliable, are sought on the assumption that the information may be helpful to crosscheck or compare with other background information. Leads which are obviously false are eliminated, and those which are probable are followed up. Eventually the bits and pieces give a composite picture of the individual insurgents or cells and their patterns of behavior.

However, even more critical are professional HUMINT operations. The use of informants through HUMINT is one of the most reliable and rapid means of obtaining the specific data required in counter insurgency operations. In Malaya the British commonly recruited and/or placed informants within important villages. Through a process designed to protect their identity, informants were able to pass information about the movement, position, and activity of insurgents almost immediately. This intelligence was received by the local security forces, whose commander was authorized to take immediate actions under his own authority with no requirement to seek approval from higher headquarters. This was done because local level HUMINT is often a highly perishable commodity, a two – or three – hour delay in response is critical. Hence, HUMINT at the local level was not generally processed through normal intelligence organizations or procedures.

Intelligence Organization in Counter Insurgency

An analysis of counter insurgency operations indicates there have been several approaches used in developing intelligence organizations. A common type of intelligence organization is the unified system, where all collection and processing of intelligence are coordinated within one group under one command. In the Malayan insurgency, the intelligence efforts of the British Armed Forces and Malay security police were coordinated under the command of the British High Commissioner. All data and information were sent directly to one command for processing. Similarly in Algeria, French Army intelligence staffs performed all intelligence functions under a unified collection command.

The advantages commonly cited for the unified collection system are that intelligence information can be processed more rapidly, there is no duplication of effort, and fewer agents and staff personnel are required. However, a single channel for communicating intelligence is more vulnerable to compromise by



underground infiltration, and in the unified system there is no independent source for confirming or crosschecking intelligence information and estimates.

The multiple organization of intelligence divides responsibility for intelligence collection and assessment functions among the various branches of government – the armed services, the civilian police, and the security police. For example, during the counter insurgency operation against the Huks in the Philippines, intelligence functions were divided between the Military Intelligence Services (MIS) of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, the Philippine Constabulary, the National Bureau of Investigation, secret agents of the Philippine president, and intelligence agents of other countries. When Defense Minister Magsaysay initiated his program against the Huks, intelligence functions in the field were made the responsibility of the MIS, which assigned permanent intelligence teams to the Battalion Combat Teams; other agents operated out of MIS headquarters to augment a team or to work independent of the military commander in the area.

The multiple intelligence system has the advantage of providing independent crosschecks on intelligence and on the reliability of information, and it is less vulnerable to compromise. The diverse number of agencies serves to stimulate competition in the collection and dissemination of intelligence, which in turn improves the quality of output.

Coordination of the various arms of an intelligence organization is an essential prerequisite for the efficient and meaningful collection of information. The problem is, of course, always more difficult in a multiple system of intelligence organization. To coordinate their army and police efforts, the British in Malaya adopted a "war council" consisting of the chief officials of the civilian administration, the police, army, and air force, and headed by a director of operations. The day-today planning and coordinating sessions among the police, military, and civil authorities did much to bring about concerted political and military action.¹

Effective HUMINT Organization

While the US has a large and complex intelligence organization operating in support of Coalition operations in Iraq, unclassified discussions with company, battalion, and brigade commanders, as well as staff officers from battalion through corps levels, reveal the following issues concerning HUMINT support of counter insurgency operations in the country:

- Company commanders have the most direct contact with the Iraqi population, but they usually have no dedicated HUMINT or intelligence analytical assets. To address this need, they organize their own "HUMINT" and intelligence



analysis teams from organic resources. These teams have no HUMINT or analytical training, in-depth cultural training for Iraq, or Arabic language capability. HUMINT teams from higher headquarters operating in the Company AOR usually do not communicate or coordinate with company commanders.

- Battalion commanders have the next most direct contact with the Iraqi population after company commanders and are often involved in shaping and supporting the tactical counter insurgency battle. Battalion commanders often have no dedicated HUMINT teams and have a very small intelligence analysis capability in their S2 section. Battalion S2s usually have no HUMINT experience or training. To address this need, they also organized their own “HUMINT” and expanded intelligence analysis teams from organic resources. These teams have no HUMINT or analytical training, in-depth cultural training for Iraq, or Arabic language capability. As in company AORs, HUMINT teams from higher headquarters operating in the battalion AOR usually do not communicate or coordinate with the battalion commander or staff.
- Brigade commanders have the next most direct contact with the Iraqi population after battalion commanders and are involved in shaping and supporting the tactical counter insurgency battle and coordinating many higher echelon resources. Brigade commanders usually have dedicated tactical HUMINT teams and have a small intelligence analysis capability in their S2 section. Brigades also usually have other direct support military intelligence assets at their disposal. Brigade S2s usually have no HUMINT experience or training. Despite the dedicated HUMINT teams, brigade commanders often feel they need more teams. To address this need, they also organize their own “HUMINT” teams from organic resources. These teams have no HUMINT or analytical training, in-depth cultural training for Iraq, or Arabic language capability. HUMINT teams from division headquarters operating in the brigade AOR often communicate and coordinate with the brigade commander or staff. HUMINT teams from above division headquarters usually do not.
- Brigade, battalion, and company commanders develop their own HUMINT capabilities and run their own HUMINT operations because of the dearth of adequate information on their AORs being passed from higher headquarters. In addition, the information that did arrive was often too old for use.
- Even though some dedicated HUMINT support is available at the brigade level, the teams normally do not have personnel who are professionally trained HUMINT case officers with HUMINT experience. In addition, the teams normally do not have in-depth cultural training and experience or adequate Arabic language capabilities.



- Despite the additional HUMINT efforts by companies, battalions, and brigades, the fact that the units are largely confined to fortified cantonments for force protection reasons when not on active missions, severely limited their ability to conduct effective clandestine HUMINT operations.
- Division and corps staffs claim that lower level units do not report enough relevant information and intelligence about their AORs “up the chain” to them so that they can review, analyze and integrate the information into their existing intelligence databases to improve their understanding of and support for the AORs. These higher level staffs state that they can assist subordinate units in gaining a better intelligence picture of their AORs by validating or invalidating intelligence reporting with other reporting not available to the those units and by deconflicting HUMINT operations.
- HUMINT teams from higher headquarters that operate within brigade AORs seldom pass any information to the company, battalion or brigade commanders. Instead, their reporting is usually “stovepiped” directly to their higher headquarters HUMINT organization.
- Initially, reliable HUMINT sources developed at the brigade, battalion or company level that provided critical local intelligence were reported to higher headquarters in accordance with intelligence operating procedures. However, this often resulted in higher level HUMINT teams taking over the sources from the lower level organizations and the lower level organizations never receiving additional reporting from the source because the higher headquarters did not pass down the reporting. As a result, many lower level organizations stopped reporting their good sources to higher headquarters and continued to run the sources on their own.
- Foreign Area Officer and Civil Military Operations (FAO and CMO) reporting provide invaluable operational and intelligence related information that can augment professional HUMINT reporting. These two critical elements can assess and monitor the progress of political, diplomatic, informational, military and economic conditions. Additionally, their assessments and raw reporting can identify levels and locations of subversion that often shape the conditions leading to an increase in insurgent activity and levels of effectiveness.
- Gathering information from the local population is key to effective counter insurgency and supporting HUMINT operations and personal relationships are required to gain the trust of informants to gather that information. Due to the short rotation of personnel and units in Iraq (from seven to twelve months for the military and shorter for civilians) relationships with the local population and knowledge of local AORs are normally relatively superficial. Briefings and



handoffs from previous units are useful, but no well developed relationships with the population or even detailed, user friendly intelligence databases on the AOR, built over the course of all previous units deployed to the area are available.

In order to provide better HUMINT support to tactical commanders in Iraq conducting counter insurgency operations, a career HUMINT case officer offered the following description of the HUMINT organization employed by the US Army in Vietnam War as an example that could offer useful insights.

HUMINT Operations in Vietnam

In Vietnam, the theater army component intelligence collection architecture matured by the spring of 1968. There was a brigade level collection group for SIGINT and a battalion level reconnaissance photo exploitation unit. The theater level army clandestine HUMINT task was centrally managed by the 525th Military Intelligence Group (525th MIG).

HUMINT implies purposeful employment of human sources of information to learn things. Having a conversation with a source who is not under friendly control is not HUMINT. It is a chat.

In addition to the theater army clandestine HUMINT operation, combat arms divisions and separate brigades conducted force protection operations employing sources that were largely unvetted and untested. These activities were often conducted by the combat arms unit's counter-intelligence (CI) detachments. US Army counter-intelligence personnel in these detachments were not trained to conduct such operations, and the results were of uniformly low quality and reliability. SOF activities such as the 5th Special Forces Group and United States Military Assistance Command Vietnam Studies and Observations Group (USMACVSOG) also operated a variety of intelligence projects of varying quality. Often, the quality was directly proportional to the availability of well-qualified personnel to run them.

The major responsibility for clandestine HUMINT support to the US Army in Vietnam rested squarely on the 525th MIG. The group employed four numbered battalions to do clandestine HUMINT collection work on both unilateral and bi-lateral bases in the AORs of the Vietnamese Corps Tactical Zones (CTZs), which were numbered One to Four from North to South. There was a fifth battalion in 525th MIG responsible for countrywide and out of country operations. The 525th MIG had other, non-HUMINT responsibilities in the area of "housekeeping" for staff personnel attached to major headquarters, etc.



The 3rd Combat Battalion (Provisional), 525 MIG (3rd Bn) was responsible for an AOR which reached from the northeastern reaches of the Mekong Delta southwest of Saigon to a line about 50 miles east of Saigon, and from the South China Sea to the Cambodian border inland. In reality, the AOR extended into Cambodia because many of the targets addressed by the battalion's border detachments extended into Cambodia. The in-country AOR was exactly the same as that of the Vietnamese (ARVN) 3rd Corps Tactical Zone. Someone had decided to match the 525 MIG AORs to the responsibilities of the ARVN rather than to that of United States Military Assistance Command Vietnam (USMACV). US maneuver forces were commanded by I Field Force and II Field Force. These were army corps level headquarters. The US maneuver forces moved around a good bit throughout the country in ways not conducive to sound clandestine HUMINT practice. Effective clandestine HUMINT operations depend on stability of personnel and operating areas for success, and this may have been a major factor in this decision, as the ARVN CTZs never changed. In addition, the 525th MIG was responsible for advising the ARVN countrywide clandestine HUMINT activity, and the co-extensive boundaries of AORs were undoubtedly helpful in that task.

The 3rd Bn was organized with headquarters in Bien Hoa (near Saigon). The headquarters performed normal C2 functions and was co-located with an attached CI detachment for area support throughout 3rd CTZ. An operations section controlled the activities of subordinate detachments in the areas of source control, planning, and funding of operations. The 3rd Bn had an attached element from the 525th MIG's Aviation Detachment. This element operated half a dozen helicopters in support of the 3rd Bn's activities and was a great convenience.

The "guts" of the 3rd Bn's activities were carried out by four clandestine HUMINT Detachments, each of which had an AOR consisting of one or more South Vietnamese (SVN) Government provinces. Each detachment was commanded by a captain or major who was a clandestine HUMINT qualified and often experienced officer, and was manned by military case officers of various ranks junior to the commander, as well as by enlisted intelligence operations clerks whose function was to support case officer activities in report writing, file keeping, and other administrative and sometimes tactical duties in defense of the position. The case officers were a mixed lot. Some were long service MI personnel who had done this work in Germany and Japan for many years. Some were bright young men selected out of the basic training pool for this work. They were subsequently trained at the Army Intelligence School at Ft. Holabird and language school before deployment, and some were CIA "Career Trainees" (CTs) who were doing their military duty.



Each of the four Detachments was deployed in several team locations throughout its AOR. The four detachments were tasked from 525th MIG and 3rd Bn against a variety of targets. Some were general in nature, (report of all enemy activity in AOR), and some quite specific (report on the activities of enemy Line of Communications (LOC) between coordinate ##### and coordinate #####). The main function of such tasking was to serve as an authorization for the expenditure of operational funds. Headquarters far away in Saigon and Bien Hoa were ill equipped to have the detailed knowledge of the situation necessary to direct operational activities at the detachment level and **they had the good sense to realize that and leave detailed operational planning to detachment commanders.** Successful detachment commanders understood that US Army and US Air Force activities within their AORs were their real customers. As a result, ***detachment commanders made close and continuous liaison with both static activities (MACV Advisory Teams and USAF Forward Air Controller Teams (FAC)) and Combat Arms units temporarily located within the detachment's AOR. Tasking was sought and accepted from these directly supported activities, and reports were rendered directly to them on a timely basis, normally by hand delivery.*** The same material was then subsequently reported electronically to higher headquarters, where it contributed to the detachment's "box score," and eventually ended up at MACV J-2, PACOM, and the JCS. Evaluations of the reports were sent by supported units and activities to 525th MIG in Saigon.

Detachment A, 3rd Bn 525th MIG (Det A) was typical in its structure and operations. Det A had teams of two to four men in six surrounded and defended Vietnamese towns in Binh Long and Phuoc Long Provinces on the Cambodian border directly north of Saigon. The Detachment headquarters was located in Song Be, the provincial capital of Phuoc Long Province (some times known as the Siberia of SVN). No detachment personnel were co-located with US combat arms units because such units lived in their own defended positions (Landing Zones and Fire Bases) outside the Vietnamese towns, where there was no substantial access to indigenous inhabitants. The ability to recruit and then handle agents in this or any other situation is entirely dependent on extended access to a large group of people from whom to choose prospective sources, and a continuing ability to associate with them within the protection of plausible cover. None of that existed in the "world" of the Army conventional units. Consequently, it was decided to "cover" Army case officers as military or civilian members of the Civil Operations Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) apparatus located at province and district (county) levels of the SVN government. This organization was all-pervasive throughout SVN after 1967 and had many positions for advisory personnel in military training, agriculture, government operations, medical affairs, education, etc. throughout the country. The positions for American civilian personnel were particularly difficult to fill in the very parts of the country in which enemy presence and subsequent



danger were high. These were the parts of the country that the US Army was most interested in from the point of view of the need to support combat operations, and therefore there was a natural symbiosis between the needs of CORDS and the needs of 525th MIG. As a result, CORDS, especially in 3rd CTZ where John Vann was in charge, was quite willing to provide cover positions for 525th MIG personnel so long as they did the cover work better than the “real” civilian and military CORDS people did. Vann remarked on many occasions that the COs under cover were the best workers that he had. The way this system worked was that all the 525th MIG people were under CORDS cover in Det A’s operation, including the detachment commander.

The enemy never successfully penetrated this cover arrangement in the three years of the existence of Det A, 3rd Bn 525th MIG. Since all Americans in these surrounded border towns were targets for assassination or elimination, there was no significant increase in the risk for non-MI personnel.

The operating locations were all very dangerous places, subject to intermittent but frequent attacks by fire and weekly ground “probes.” In 1968-69, there were major ground assaults on all the Det A locations. All were defeated, but in the case of Song Be, the detachment headquarters location the VC held 2/3rds of the town for seven days before the 1st Cavalry Division drove them out with heavy casualties. Det A’s sources and case officers in the Song Be area continued to function and report throughout this episode. All US personnel of necessity took a lot of chances, but this was war and higher headquarters understood this fact.

Most of the Det A operations involved Vietnamese and Montagnard agents. The Montagnards often had to be taught the concepts of time, distance, and number before they were useful. The detachment had some Chinese and European agents. These were rubber plantation managers. The French consulate and its *Service de Documentation et Contre-Espionage* (SDECE) office in Saigon turned over to their control a rubber company apparatus of informants which had been maintained by the French Government for thirty years. It was useful. The detachment’s operations were fully documented with operations plans, recruiting plans, and contact reports, in addition to the product Intelligence Information Reports (IIR). Sources were frequently tested. Singleton sources were tested directly in safe houses in *situ* or in the coastal cities. Many operations had to be run as principal agent networks because of the inaccessibility of primary sources deep in enemy controlled territory outside the detachment’s operating locations. In these cases, the principal agents were directly tested and the primary sources were usually judged on the basis of the direct combat result of the employment of their information.



When fully developed, the detachment had four commissioned officers, five warrant officers, and about twenty enlisted soldiers. The detachment ran approximately one hundred agents at any given time.

Det A's operation earned high marks for productivity and accuracy. Anecdotal evidence of the performance of the 525th MIG throughout the country indicates that not all operations were as productive. The difference in performance seems to have been largely a function of leadership.

Observations

An examination of the organization and implementation of HUMINT operations in support of counter insurgency operations in Vietnam reveals the following observations which could be useful in Iraq:

- Critical intelligence in counter insurgency operations is highly perishable. Therefore, HUMINT operations should be organized to provide critical, time-sensitive information to the appropriate unit in a timely manner. While it is important to forward all HUMINT collected to higher HUMINT and non-HUMINT headquarters for collation, analysis, and dissemination, the local unit affected by the information should receive the information immediately for use in counter insurgency operations.
- The HUMINT organization should provide a central point for deconflicting taskings of limited HUMINT assets, coordinate requirements, and synchronize HUMINT operations with the overall intelligence effort. However, it should not micromanage operations and dictate requirements that are better understood at the tactical level by teams who know the AOR better.
- To be effective, HUMINT operations need to be conducted by professionally trained HUMINT case officers with HUMINT experience, who have in-depth and relevant cultural training, and appropriate language capabilities. Calling untrained and inexperienced teams of soldiers "HUMINT" teams does not make them HUMINT teams. The operations of these teams often interfere with and undermine operations by actual HUMINT teams operating within the same AOR.
- Just because information is gathered from the local population does not mean it is HUMINT. HUMINT operations are specific types of intelligence operations that require specific skills and assets to implement. Clandestine HUMINT operations are even more specialized.



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- HUMINT teams should establish close relationships with local supported units in their AOR to ensure identification of essential elements of information for collection operations and to develop good working relationships that will enhance communication and cooperation.
- Effective HUMINT requires clandestine operations conducted in the midst of the local population. Restricting military units and personnel to live on fortified cantonments for force protection reasons limits their ability to develop close relations with the local population and leads to the exposure of HUMINT personnel (the insurgents merely have to conduct surveillance on the gates of the local US cantonment to identify all personnel).
- Short personnel and unit rotations are not conducive to effective HUMINT. It takes time to acquire in-depth knowledge of a local area and to develop the close relationships necessary to conduct effective HUMINT operations. To accomplish this, HUMINT personnel and units should spend as long as possible in a given AOR. At the very minimum, an in-depth, user friendly database of useful information and intelligence on the AOR must be developed and passed along to units rotating into the AOR.



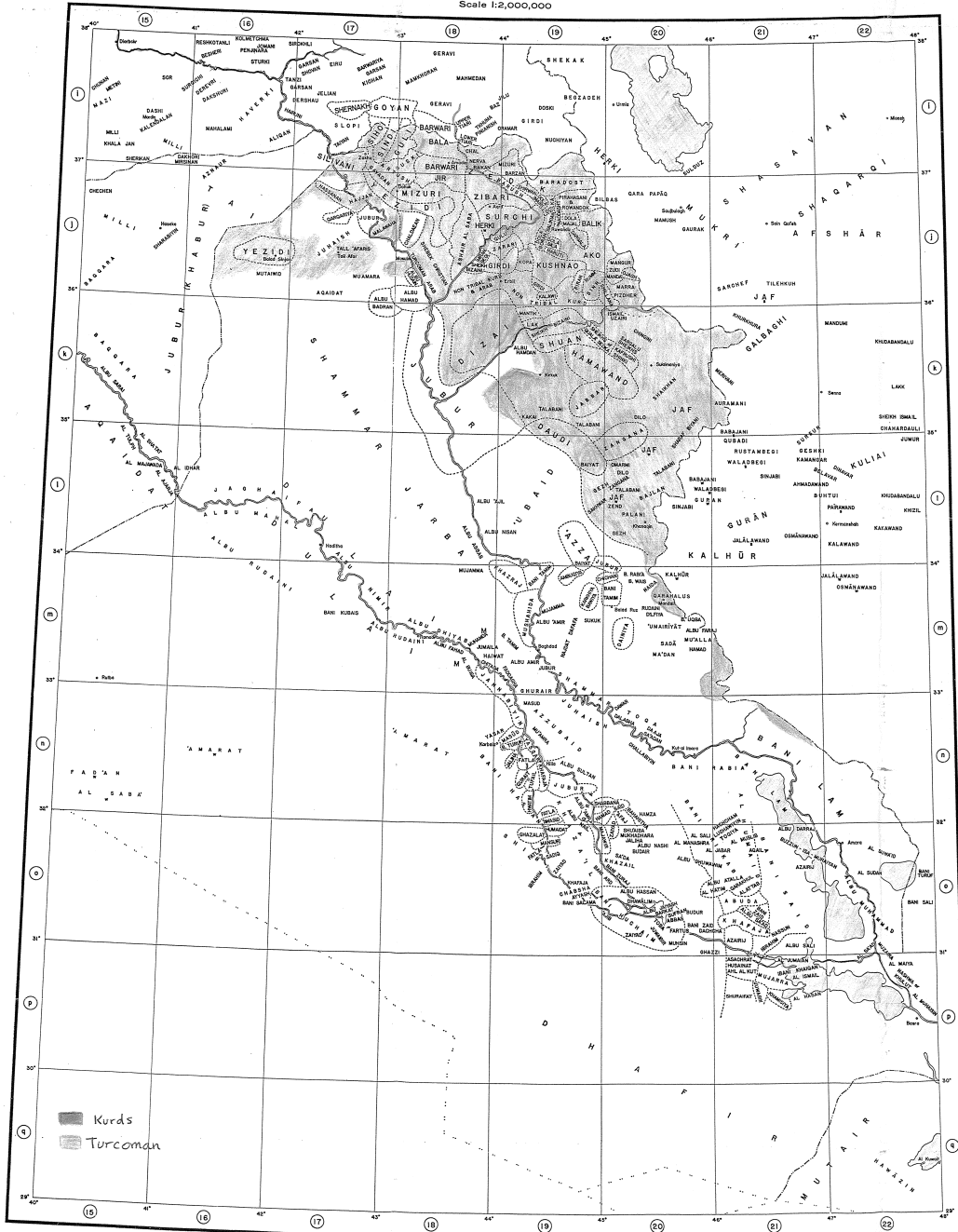
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HUMINT in
Counter Insurgency

¹ This introduction has been summarized and adapted from Department of the Army Pamphlet (DA PAM) 550-104, *Human Factors Considerations of Undergrounds in Insurgencies*, Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, September 1966, 233-237.

MAP A. DISTRIBUTION OF TRIBES IN IRAQ

To Accompany "The Anthropology of Iraq," by Henry Field
Field Museum of Natural History, Anthropological Series, Volume 30

Scale 1:2,000,000



Drawn by Richard A. Martin, 1938

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