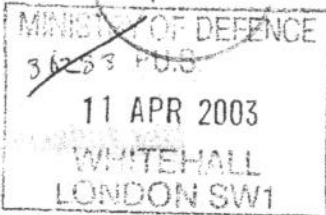


D/COSSEC/40/1/4

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11 Apr 03

**PSO/CDS
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Cabinet Office (fao Desmond Bowen)		
FCO (fao William Ehrman)		
GCHQ (fao)		

OP COS ACTION: TRIBAL FACTIONS IN IRAQ

1. CDI was tasked at the Op COS on 09 Apr 03 to provide a brief for CDS on the political and tribal factions in Iraq, the geographical position and to indicate their political allegiance and degree of influence. Attached is a brief on Tribal Dynamics in Iraq, which concentrates on the UK's AOR.
2. The paper refers to a couple of DIS products, which can be provided to addresses should they wish.

SECCOS

Enclosures:

1. Tribal Dynamics in Iraq

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TRIBAL DYNAMICS IN IRAQ¹

Key Judgements

- Despite social change, tribal identities remain very important in modern Iraq. An estimated 75% of the population identify themselves with a specific tribe. (R)
- The regime relied partly on the support of tribal leaders in order to remain in power. A majority of tribal shaykhs were co-opted into supporting the regime through a combination of patronage and repression. (R)
- Most tribes in Iraq, from all confessional groups, are united at the present time by their opposition to the regime. (R)
- The main axis for inter-tribal conflict in the post-regime aftermath will be between formerly pro- and anti-regime tribes. (R)
- The regime was controlled largely by senior figures from Saddam's own tribe, the Albu Nasir, located in and around Tikrit, and the Duri confederation. Some smaller tribes were also considered to be very close to the regime. (R)
-
-
-
-
- There are likely to be prevailing tensions between other Shi'a tribes in the south which are not currently apparent. The creation of new political institutions will require careful management, and success will depend partly on ensuring a broad representation of tribal groups during the consultative phase and within the institutions themselves. (R)

¹ Readers are referred to the DI Human Factors Memoranda *Iraqi Tribes: An Anthropological Overview* and *Iraqi Tribes: A Summary of Recent Intelligence*, which contain more detail on Iraqi tribes and tribal dynamics.

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- Significant differences between Iraqi and Iranian Shi'ism render it highly unlikely that Iraqi Shi'as will align themselves with Iran in the aftermath period. (R)
- Most Kurdish tribes are tied into the respective ambits of the two main Kurdish parties, the Kurdish Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, which themselves operate in a similar way to tribal confederations. The political stance of pro-regime Kurdish tribes is stems largely from their opposition to one or both of the two parties, and/or the tribes supporting them. (R)

DETAIL

1. Motivated in part by Saddam's 'rediscovery' of his own tribal ancestry following the 1991 Shi'a uprising, tribal identity in Iraq has undergone a resurgence in recent years. Although the main symbols of Iraqi identity espoused by the Ba'ath until the early 1990s explicitly excluded tribalism, emphasising instead pan-Arabism and later, 'Mesopotamianism' and Islam as the main components of Iraqi nationalism, the regime had always relied partly on the support of the tribes to maintain power.² (R)
2. Three quarters of the population identify with a specific tribe. For much of the Iraqi populace, tribal identity represents a 'default' identity, one which they return to when other forms of identities (those formed around community structures, business links, political affiliations etc.) unravel. This is particularly true of urban Iraqis; in rural Iraq, tribalism is likely to be more significant on a day-to-day level. For all Iraqis, however, the family - and by extension, the tribe - provides the individual with a support structure which is not found to the same degree in other forms of social relationship in Iraqi society. (R)
3. A majority of tribal shaykhs were co-opted into supporting the regime through a combination of patronage and repression. Some, however, were considered closer to the regime than others. Seven out of ten members of the Ba'ath party's national leadership were from Saddam's own tribe, the Albu Nasir, located in and around Tikrit. The Duri tribe also had significant representation in the top echelons of the regime. (R)
4. A number of senior regime positions were also held by members of the large Sunni tribal confederations, most notably the Dulaym, Jibur, Shammam and Ubayd. These confederations also formed the bulk of the officer corps of the regular army and Republican Guard, but also incorporated significant anti-regime elements.³ (R)
5. Inter-tribal tensions in the aftermath period are likely to be focused around the degree of support particular tribes and their members gave to the regime. Although some of the large Sunni

² See *Iraqi Tribes: An Anthropological Overview*, pp 10-14

³ More details on Sunni tribes are contained in the *Iraqi Tribes: An Anthropological Overview*, pp 20-22

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confederations of central Iraq may break-up into pro- and anti-regime elements, the principal flash-points for such disputes will be in the South and the north. (R)

6.

7. The relationship between the majority-Shi'a tribes and confederations in the South is likely to require careful management during the reconstruction phase. Although the leaders of the anti-regime tribes in the South appear to co-operate well with one another, there are likely to be underlying tensions existing between them that are not currently apparent. Suspensions that the coalition is favouring one tribe above another may serve to exacerbate such tensions, and handicap the creation of new political institutions. It is important that any consultative process involves representation from as broad a cross-section of tribes in the region as possible, and also includes other influential figures - clerics, members of the judiciary etc. - in order to dilute any inter-tribal disputes which do arise. The large Shi'a tribes and confederations - notably the Albu Muhammad, Bani Tamim, Bani Malik, Bani Lam, Bani Mansur, Bani Sa'id, Bani Hujaym and Shammar Toqa - should certainly be represented in new political structures. (R)

8.

9.

- A. Tribal Dynamics in the UK AOR
- B. Details of Tribes in the UK AOR

⁴ Details of Shi'a tribes are contained in the DI HF Memorandum *Iraqi Tribes: An Anthropological Overview*, pp 26-29 and *Iraqi Tribes: A Summary of Recent Intelligence*, pp 7-20.

⁵ More details on Kurdish tribes are contained in the DI HF Memorandum *Iraqi Tribes: An Anthropological Overview*, pp 30-37.

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ANNEX A. TRIBAL DYNAMICS IN THE UK AOR

1. The population of the Dhi Qar, Maysan and Basrah governorates is predominantly Shi'a, and the overwhelmingly majority of tribes in the area have been opposed to Saddam's regime. However, tribes rarely act together as coherent units, and sections of a number of tribes have supported the regime on various occasions in the past. Shi'a tribes tend to be organised into fewer tribal confederations than their Sunni counterparts, and the tribal system in general is more complex and atomised. The policies of successive Iraqi governments have had a significant bearing on this, successfully breaking up many large confederations and exacerbating existing tribal conflicts. Sometimes, the political stance of a particular tribe is motivated by its relations with neighbouring tribes, as well as stemming from the relationship of its leaders with Baghdad. (R)

2. The main tribes and tribal confederations in the UK AOR are detailed below, together with an assessment of the prevailing tribal dynamics in the region. (R)

Assessment of Inter-Tribal Dynamics

3. The 1991 intifada prompted the regime to co-opt a number of Southern tribal shaykhs to support the regime, initially as a means to suppress the intifada and secondly, to control the most vociferous anti-regime tribes. This was achieved largely through the distribution of patronage to shaykhs and other key representatives, along with the use of repressive measures. The latter include arresting disloyal shaykhs and their families, destroying villages associated with anti-regime activity, rendering tribal homelands uninhabitable (e.g. through the draining of the Marshes), deporting anti-regime tribes *in toto* to areas controlled by pro-regime tribes and executing imprisoned opposition tribal members. (R)

4.

5. This has obvious implications for post-conflict stability in the region. It is assessed that there is a high probability of revenge attacks directed against members of these tribes. (R)

6.

7.

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Other pro-regime tribes.

8. A number of other Shi'a tribes have co-operated with the regime in recent years. (R)
- 9.
- 10.
- 11.
12. Other tribes with pro-regime sections are listed in the table on page 6. (R)

Relations between anti-regime tribes.

13. Most Shi'a tribes in southern Iraq are united at the present time by their opposition to the regime. However, present circumstances may mask significant underlying tensions between different groupings. The origins of inter-tribal disputes are multifarious, but most stem from traditional enmities arising from territorial disputes or more parochial conflicts involving blood-feuding between different clans or families. But such disputes are relatively insignificant, and have rarely led to anything more than very localised incidents involving small numbers of tribesmen. (R)

14. A particular aspect of tribal dynamics in the South - which may become significant in the future - relates to latent tensions between Bedouin and non-Bedouin tribes and confederations, focused specifically on those tribes with significant socio-cultural links with Iran. Non-Bedouin tribes that have brethren in Iran or are deemed to be unduly influenced by 'Persian' customs are apparently regarded as 'inferiors' by their Bedouin neighbours. The former includes a number of the Marsh Arab tribes, most notably the Fartus, and the large Albu Muhammad confederation. In regards to the latter, a history of intermarriage with Persian groups has led to them being labelled derogatorily as 'Persians' with 'mixed blood'. Albu Muhammad customs - particularly the practices of 'temporary marriage' and widespread polygyny among tribal shaykhs and sayyids⁶ - are also regarded as being of 'Persian' origin and contrary to Koranic teachings. (R)

⁶ Sayyids are tribal religious leaders, who usually claim descent from the Prophet.

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Iraq and Iranian Shi'ism.

15. Previous analyses contend that only a small minority of the Shi'a population would be likely to align themselves with Iran in the aftermath of regime change. Shi'ism in Iraq and Iran differ from each other in several important respects:

- Iranian Shi'a religious practices are far more integrated with the social and political values of the society than is the case among Iraqi Shi'a. In many ways, Shi'ism in Iran arose from the socio-political system, rather than being imposed upon it as was the case in Iraq. The Iraqi Shi'a population has retained its Arab tribal identity, which evolved historically in explicit opposition to Persian (Iranian) identity. Iraqi Shi'ism is essentially a syncretic religion, incorporating many elements of Arab rituals and practices which pre-date conversion, a characteristic which is absent from the Iranian religion. (R)

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- The process of conversion to Shi'ism in Iran was completed by the beginning of the eighteenth century, well before that in Iraq, and it encompassed a far greater proportion of the country's population. (R)
 - Shi'ism has been the state religion in Iran since 1501. The rise of the modern Sunni state in Iraq, in contrast, restricted the development of Shi'ism in the country. During the twentieth century, the decline of Shi'a religious and intellectual institutions in Iraq accelerated, further polarising Iraqi Shi'a from their Iranian counterparts. (R)
 - Iraqi Shi'a traders and merchants have been generally far less willing to support religious institutions and causes than has been the case in Iran. (R)
 - The identification of Iraqi Shi'a with the Iraqi state from late Ottoman times onwards also blunted the development of Shi'a religious identity. The Shi'i formed the bulk of the Iraqi armed forces during the Iran-Iraq war, and the population's self-identification as Iraqis, first and foremost, is at least as strong as that of the Sunni population. (R)
16. All this is not to suggest, however, that Iraqi Shi'a clerics do not wield considerable influence with the population. Indeed, the widespread unrest which followed the murder of Iraq's Shi'a religious leader Grand Ayatollah Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr in 1999 demonstrated the importance of religious figures, which in some ways outstrips that of tribal shaykhs. (R)

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ANNEX B. DETAILS OF TRIBES IN THE UK AOR⁷

Maysan Governorate

Albu Daraj

1.

2.

Albu Muhammad

3. The Albu Muhammad confederation is one of Iraq's oldest Shi'a confederations, and is centred on the east bank of the Tigris south of al-Amarah. Its tribesmen are heavily represented in the town of al Zubayr, Al Amarah and Suq al Shuyukh. The confederation broke off from the Zubayd confederation in the late 17th century, its constituent tribes settling around the marsh region from Qal'at Salih to al-Qurnah and converting almost completely to Shi'ism in the late 18th century. The confederation is strongly opposed to the regime, with one of the major tribal guerrilla groups, the Abu Hatim, emerging from the tribe.

⁸. (S)

4. Albu Muhammad tribesmen have traditionally been regarded as inferiors by neighbouring tribes. This is principally because of their association with the Marsh Arabs; indeed, the confederation is often described (incorrectly) as being made up of Marsh Arab tribes. A history of intermarriage with Persian groups has also led to them being labelled derogatorily as 'Persians' with 'mixed blood'. Albu Muhammad customs - particularly the practices of 'temporary marriage' and widespread polygamy among tribal shaykhs and sayyids⁹ - are also regarded as being of 'Persian' origin and contrary to Koranic teachings. The tribe is strongly influenced by Iran, and a number of Albu Muhammad tribesmen are members of the Badr Corps. (R)

5.

⁷ Note that much of the information below is additional to that contained in the DI Human Factors Memoranda *Iraqi Tribes: An Anthropological Overview* and *Iraqi Tribes: A Summary of Recent Intelligence*.

⁸ Var. Uraybi.

⁹ Sayyids are tribal religious leaders, who usually claim descent from the Prophet.

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6.

Al-Sudan

7.

Al-Sharash

8.

Al-Ziraj

9.

10.

'Arabi

11.

'Awachi¹¹

12.

¹⁰ Var. Uraybi.

¹¹ Var. Uwachi, Uachi

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Bani Ka'b

13.

Sabah

14.

15.

Other Tribes

16.

Dhi Qar Governorate

17. **Al Humaid**

18.

19.

Bani Lam

20. The Bani Lam is a large confederation of approximately 400,000 members. Although the main homelands lie east of Qal'al Sikar, there is likely to be a significant Bani Lam presence in the town and in the areas around it. (R)

21.

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Bani Rikab

22.

23.

Bani Sa'id

24. The Bani Sa'id is one of the largest Shi'a confederations in southern Iraq, and occupies territory in both the al-Basrah and Dhi Qar governorates. Tribal members are thought to constitute approximately one-third of the population of the latter. Much of the tribe, including its leadership, is anti-regime. (S)

25.

26.

Juwaybir

27.

28.

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Khafaji

29.

30.

31. The Khafaji is one of the most important pro-regime Shi'a tribes, with its leadership holding various prominent positions in the regime's political and security apparatus. (S)

- The Iraqi News Agency reported on the 13th March 2003 that Shaykh Husayn Shati Murad al-Khafaji, the head of what it described as the 'Dhi Qar Committee' has issued a fatwah against any aggression directed towards Iraq. (R)

32.

¹² The tribe may, in fact, be a small confederation.

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Khazraj

33. The majority-Sunni Khazraj is one of Iraq's oldest confederations, apparently pre-dating the Islamic period. The majority of tribal members are located in the Diyala governorate and west of the Tigris between Baghdad and Samarra, with a minority Shi'a section to the south of Al Basrah around al Zubayr.

(S)

Mawajid

34.

Ubayd

35.

36.

'Unays

37.

Other Tribes

38.

Basrah Governorate

Bani Asad

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39.

Bani Hasan

40.

Bani Malik

41.

42.

43.

44.

45.

Bani Mansur

46.

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47.

Bani Rabi'a

48. The Bani Rabi'a confederation is centred on the town of Al-Kut, but its members, believed to be well over 100,000, are distributed throughout southern Iraq. It is one of the major tribal groupings in al-Basrah city. The traditional homeland of the confederation is on both sides of the Tigris between Bughaia and Shaykh Sa'id. The tribe is believed to be strongly anti-regime. No information is available as to the identity of the current paramount shaykh (R)

Bani Tamim

49. The Bani Tamim is a large confederation with members distributed throughout southern Iraq. Its members are especially prominent in al-Basrah city - making up a significant proportion of the city's population - and its environs, including the town of al Zubayr. Bani Tamim members are also significantly represented in Baghdad, in the predominantly Shi'a districts of Qadimiya and Shu'la, and the confederation also holds lands to the north of the city. Bani Tamim members are also represented in Najaf and Ba'qubah. (S AUS/CAN/UK/US EO)

50.

Although he has appeared on state television with Ali Hasan al-Majid, he is known to be opposed to the regime, who keep him under close scrutiny. He is said to be interested in assuming a prominent role in any post-Saddam administration established in Basrah, and would take a pragmatic approach to the entry of coalition forces, although would be more receptive to the UK rather than US presence. (S AUS/CAN/UK/US EO)

51.

52. The paramount shaykh of the tribe, Hamid Muhammad Baqar al- Suhayl, resident in Baghdad, . Another prominent shaykh is reported to be Ja'far al-Suhayl, also based in the capital. (S AUS/CAN/UK/US EO)

Badur

53. An independent tribe, located in the al-Qati'ah region north of the city of al-Nasiriyah. Part of the Dhafir confederation until the early years of the twentieth century, since when the tribe has been opposed to the Dhafir and the Zaiyad. (R)

54.

The tribe contains a substantial pro-regime section. (C UK/US/FR/GE EO)

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Bazun

55.

56.

57.

Ghazi

58.

59. The tribe is independent, although may once have been part of the Bani Hujaym confederation. (R)

60.

Halluf

61. A generally anti-regime confederation located in and around Al Basrah City. The Halluf is one of the four largest confederations in the region, with an estimated 50,000 members. (S)

Jibur (Shi'a sections)

62. Whilst the Jibur confederation (Iraq's largest, with over 2 million members) is predominantly composed of Sunni tribes, it also contains a substantial Shi'a component. (R)

63.

Mishab

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64.

Nasirullah

65.

66.

Sa'dun

67. The Sa'dun is a Sunni shaykhly clan which was traditionally held the leadership rights to the Muntafiq 'super-confederation'. The clan has not been affiliated to the Muntafiq since the early twentieth century, but remains perhaps the most important pro-regime tribe in southern Iraq. Members hold various prominent positions in the government and security apparatus. The clan is a member of the Bani Malik confederation. (S AUS/CAN/UK/US EO).

68.

69.

70.

71.

Sarifi

72.

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Suwaid

73.

74.

75.

Other Tribes

76.

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