

COUNTRY
PROFILE



PANGEA GROUP
International

IRAQ



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History

The modern history of Iraq has been characterized by conflict, political instability, and economic hardship. Following the overthrow of the monarchy in 1958, Iraq was ruled by a series of military regimes, culminating in the Ba'thist regime of Saddam Hussein, which came to power in 1979. Hussein's government was characterized by authoritarianism, human rights abuses, and regional aggression, leading to international conflicts, including the Iran-Iraq War and the Gulf War.

After the Gulf War, the United Nations imposed economic sanctions on Iraq, which further exacerbated the country's economic and political problems. Hussein's regime was toppled in 2003 by a US-led invasion, which sparked a new era of instability and violence in the country.

In the aftermath of the invasion, Iraq was governed by a US-led coalition, which struggled to establish a stable government and rebuild the country's infrastructure. The coalition's efforts were complicated by a number of factors, including sectarian tensions between Sunni and Shia Muslims, a growing insurgency led by groups like Al-Qaeda in Iraq, and the emergence of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

Despite these challenges, Iraq held democratic elections in 2005, which saw the rise of Nouri al-Maliki as prime minister. Maliki's government was characterized by corruption, authoritarianism, and sectarianism, which fueled further unrest and violence in the country. In 2014, ISIS seized control of large parts of northern and western Iraq, prompting a new wave of conflict and displacement.

Since the defeat of ISIS, Iraq has struggled to rebuild and stabilize the country. The government has been plagued by corruption and political gridlock, while the country's economy has been hampered by low oil prices and the ongoing effects of war. In 2019, mass protests erupted across Iraq, calling for political and economic reforms and an end to corruption. The protests were met with a violent crackdown by security forces, which only further inflamed tensions.

In recent years, Iraq has also been affected by tensions between the United States and Iran, which have played out on Iraqi soil. In January 2020, the United States killed Iranian General Qasem Soleimani in a drone strike in Baghdad, which led to a retaliatory missile strike by Iran on Iraqi bases hosting U.S. troops. The incident underscored the precarious security situation in Iraq and the country's vulnerability to regional conflicts.

In conclusion, the modern history of Iraq has been marked by conflict, instability, and economic hardship. The overthrow of the Ba'thist regime in 2003 led to a new era of violence and instability in the country, while the rise of ISIS and ongoing sectarian tensions have further complicated efforts to stabilize the country. Despite these challenges, Iraq has shown resilience and determination in the face of adversity, and there are signs of progress towards a more stable and prosperous future.

Demographics

The demographic structure of Iraq has undergone significant changes in the post-Ba'thist era, due in part to the impact of conflict and political instability on the country's population.

One of the most significant demographic changes in Iraq has been the displacement of millions of people due to conflict and violence. Since the US-led invasion in 2003, over 5 million Iraqis have been displaced within the country, while over 1 million have fled to neighboring countries. The displacement has had a significant impact on the demographics of Iraq, as families have been uprooted from their homes and communities and forced to seek refuge elsewhere.

The displacement has also had a disproportionate impact on certain segments of the population, particularly ethnic and religious minorities. Christians and Yazidis, for example, have been targeted by ISIS and other extremist groups, leading to large-scale displacement and emigration. The displacement of minorities has raised concerns about the long-term viability of these communities in Iraq, and the potential of losing their cultural and religious heritage.

Another significant demographic change in Iraq has been the aging of the population. As the country has faced years of conflict and economic hardship, many young people have left the country in search of better opportunities abroad. The exodus of young people has left behind an aging population, which is increasingly reliant on government support and social services.

The changing demographics of Iraq have also had an impact on the country's political landscape. Ethnic and religious divisions have long been a source of tension in Iraq, and the displacement of populations has only aggravated these tensions. The country's political system, which is based on sectarian quotas, has also been criticized for reinforcing these divisions and contributing to political gridlock.

Despite these challenges, there are signs of progress towards a more stable and diverse demographic structure in Iraq. The government has launched initiatives to encourage the return of displaced people, and efforts are underway to promote economic growth and job creation, particularly in the country's more marginalized regions.

The changing demographics of Iraq also present opportunities for the country to embrace greater diversity and inclusivity. The government has taken steps to promote gender equality, and there are increasing calls for greater representation of minority groups in the country's political system.

In conclusion, the modern demographic structure of Iraq has been shaped by the impact of conflict and political instability on the country's population. The displacement of millions of people has had a significant impact on the country's ethnic and religious

diversity, while the aging of the population has raised concerns about the long-term sustainability of the country's social services. Despite these challenges, there are signs of progress towards a more diverse and inclusive demographic structure, and Iraq has the potential to emerge as a more resilient and prosperous society in the years ahead.

Geography



Iraq is a Middle Eastern country located in the heart of the Arab world. It is bordered by Iran to the east, Kuwait to the southeast, Saudi Arabia to the south, Jordan to the west, Syria to the northwest, and Turkey to the north. The country's terrain is mostly desert, but there are fertile river valleys that provide some of the most arable land in the region. The Tigris and Euphrates rivers are two of the country's most prominent natural features and have been integral to the development of civilization in the region.

The total area of Iraq is approximately 438,317 square kilometers. It is divided into 19

Governorates, each with its unique geography, demographics, and cultural identity. These Governorates are the primary administrative divisions of the country and are responsible for the provision of public services, such as healthcare, education, and transportation. The Governorates of Iraq, listed per the above map are:

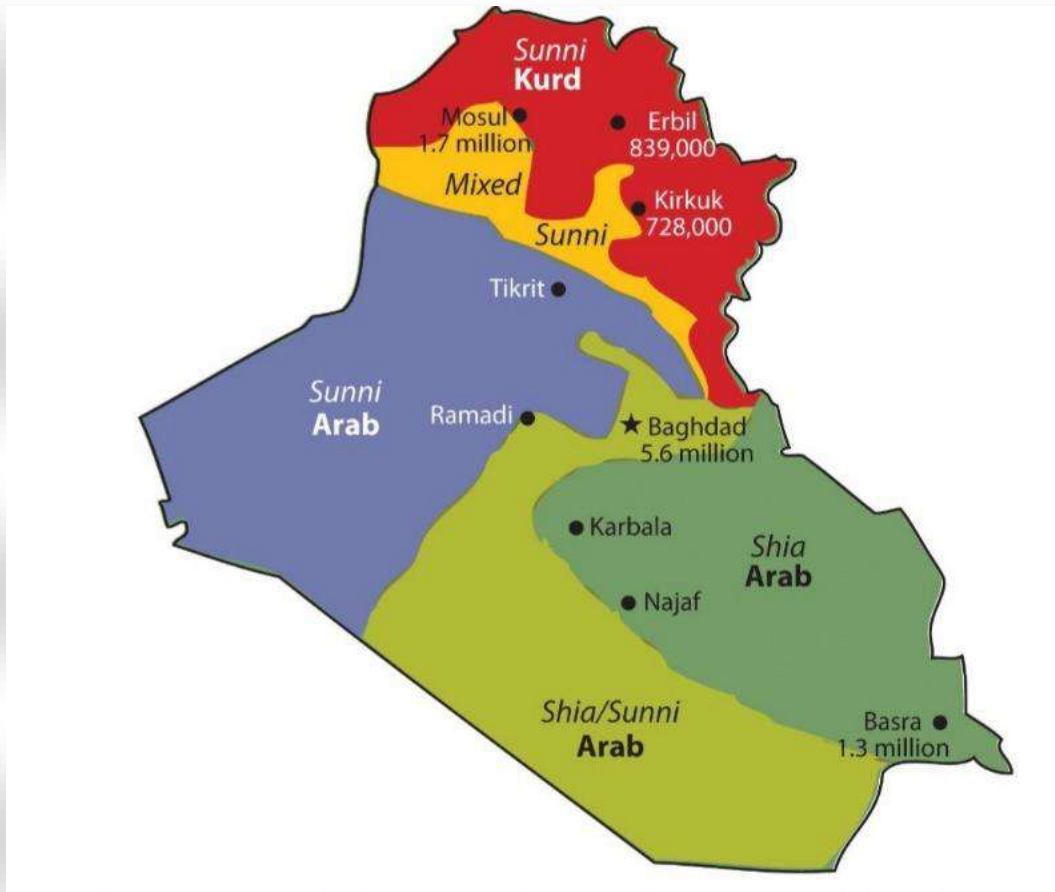
1. Baghdad: Located in central Iraq, Baghdad is the capital of the country and is one of the most populous Governorates, with an area of approximately 3,334 square kilometers. It is situated on the banks of the Tigris River and is the center of government, commerce, and culture in Iraq. The Governorate is home to several historical sites, including the Al-Mustansiriya School, one of the oldest universities in the world.
2. Salah-ad-Din: Located in central Iraq, Salah-ad-Din covers an area of approximately 24,363 square kilometers. Its capital is Tikrit, and the Governorate is known for its agriculture, particularly the cultivation of wheat and barley. It is also home to several historical sites, including the tomb of the former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.
3. Diyala: Located in central Iraq, Diyala covers an area of approximately 17,685 square kilometers. Its capital is Baqubah, and the Governorate is known for its agriculture, particularly the cultivation of citrus fruits, grapes, and wheat. It is also home to several historical sites, including the ancient city of Ctesiphon.
4. Wasit: Located in central Iraq, Wasit covers an area of approximately 17,153 square kilometers. Its capital is Al-Kut, and the Governorate is known for its agriculture, particularly the cultivation of wheat and barley. It is also home to several historical sites, including the ancient city of Isin.
5. Maysan: Located in southern Iraq, Maysan covers an area of approximately 16,072 square kilometers. Its capital is Amarah, and the Governorate is known for its agriculture, particularly the cultivation of dates and rice. It is also home to several historical sites, including the ancient city of Larsa.
6. Basra: Located in southern Iraq with an area of approximately 19,000 square kilometers and a population of around 4.5 million people. It is the country's main port city and is known for its oil industry, which is a major contributor to the economy. Basra also has a rich cultural heritage, with numerous historic sites and landmarks, but faces challenges related to infrastructure, environmental pollution, and political instability.
7. Dhi Qar: Located in southern Iraq, Dhi Qar covers an area of approximately 12,900 square kilometers. Its capital is Nasiriyah, and the Governorate is known for its agriculture, particularly the cultivation of dates and wheat. It is also home to several historical sites, including the ancient city of Ur.
8. Al-Muthanna: Located in southern Iraq, Al-Muthanna covers an area of approximately 51,740 square kilometers and is predominantly desert. It is known for its historical sites, including the ancient city of Uruk, which dates back to the fourth millennium BCE. Its capital is Samawah.
9. Al-Qadisiyah: Located in central Iraq, Al-Qadisiyah covers an area of approximately 8,153 square kilometers and is known for its agricultural production. Its capital is Al-Diwaniyah. The Governorate is home to several historical and religious sites, including the ancient city of Nippur and the tomb of

- the famous Shia scholar Al-Kadhimiya.
10. Babil: Located in central Iraq, Babil covers an area of approximately 6,468 square kilometers and is predominantly agricultural. It is known for its production of rice and dates, and its capital is Hilla. The Governorate is home to several historical sites, including the ancient city of Babylon and the Imam Al-Askari Shrine.
 11. Karbala: Located in central Iraq, Karbala covers an area of approximately 5,034 square kilometers. Its capital is Karbala City, and the Governorate is an important religious center for Shia Muslims, as it is home to the shrine of Imam Hussein, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad.
 12. An-Najaf: Located in central Iraq, An-Najaf is an important religious center for Shia Muslims and is home to the shrine of Imam Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad. It covers an area of approximately 28,824 square kilometers, and its capital is Najaf. The Governorate is known for its agriculture, including the cultivation of wheat, barley, and dates.
 13. Al-Anbar: Located in western Iraq, Al-Anbar is the largest Governorate in the country, covering an area of approximately 138,501 square kilometers. It borders Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Syria, and is predominantly desert. Its capital is Ramadi, and it is home to several powerful and well-armed tribes.
 14. Ninawa: Located in northern Iraq, Ninawa covers an area of approximately 37,323 square kilometers. Its capital is Mosul, and the Governorate is home to several historical sites, including the ancient city of Nineveh and the ruins of the city of Hatra.
 15. Dohuk: Located in northern Iraq with an area of 10,000 square kilometers and a population of approximately 1.3 million people. It is known for its diverse ethnic and religious communities, historic sites, and natural beauty. The economy is largely based on agriculture and tourism, with crops such as wheat, barley, and cotton being grown in the region. Dohuk is a significant Governorate in Iraq with a rich cultural heritage and a promising future.
 16. Irbil: Located in northern Iraq, Irbil is part of the Kurdistan Region and covers an area of approximately 17,074 square kilometers. It is known for its historical sites, including the ancient city of Irbil, which dates back to the third millennium BCE. Its capital is Irbil. The Governorate is also a major center for the oil and gas industry.
 17. As-Sulaymaniyah: Located in northern Iraq, As-Sulaymaniyah is also part of the Kurdistan Region and covers an area of approximately 8,651 square kilometers. It is known for its mountainous terrain and natural beauty, and its capital is As-Sulaymaniyah. The Governorate is home to several historical sites, including the ancient city of Sharazur and the Qalaat-e-Julundi fortress.
 18. Kirkuk: Located in northern Iraq, Kirkuk covers an area of approximately 9,679 square kilometers. Its capital is Kirkuk City, and the Governorate is known for its oil production.
 19. Halabja: Located in northern Iraq, Halabja, on 23 March 2023, was declared an independent Governorate from Kirkuk by the Iraqi Council of Ministers. It covers an area of approximately 7,121 square kilometers. Its capital is Halabja City and is part of the Kurdistan Region. It is known for its mountainous terrain and natural beauty, and it was the site of a chemical attack by Saddam Hussein's regime in

1988.

In conclusion, Iraq's 19 Governorates vary in size, geography, and demographics. Each has its unique cultural identity, history, and landmarks that make them distinct from each other.

Religious/Sectarian Structure



The religious and sectarian structure of Iraq has been a key factor in the country's history and continues to play a major role in its politics and society. Since the US-led invasion in 2003, Iraq has faced significant sectarian divisions, particularly between Sunni and Shia Muslims.

Islam is the official religion of Iraq, and according to official statistics from 2020, Muslims make up 95-98 percent of the population, with approximately 64-69 percent identifying as Shia and 29-34 percent as Sunni. Iraq is home to various religious, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic minorities, particularly in the northern regions. Some of these minorities include Turkmen, Iraqis of African descent, Yazidis, Christians, Shabak, Kaka'i, Sabean-Mandaeans, Baha'is, Zoroastrians, Bidoon, Fayli Kurds, Roma, Assyrians, and Jews, among others.

Under the Ba'thist regime, Iraq was largely a secular state, with religion playing a limited role in public life. However, the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime and the subsequent political vacuum created by the US-led invasion created space for the emergence of religious and sectarian forces.

The rise of sectarianism in Iraq has been driven in part by the country's political system, which is based on sectarian quotas. Under this system, government positions and resources are distributed among Iraq's various religious and ethnic groups, reinforcing divisions and creating a winner-takes-all mentality.

In the post-2003 era, Shia Muslims emerged as the dominant political force in Iraq, with the majority of the country's political leaders and officials coming from the Shia community. This has led to a perception among many Sunni Muslims that they are marginalized and excluded from political power.

The rise of sectarianism has also been fueled by external actors, particularly Iran, which has sought to expand its influence in Iraq through support for Shia political parties and militias. Iran's involvement in Iraq has contributed to a sense of Sunni-Shia rivalry and raised concerns about the potential for proxy conflicts in the region.

The rise of sectarianism in Iraq has had a profound impact on the country's religious and ethnic diversity. Minorities, particularly Christians and Yazidis, have been targeted by extremist groups such as ISIS, leading to large-scale displacement and emigration. The displacement of minorities has raised concerns about the long-term viability of these communities in Iraq and the potential for their cultural and religious heritage to be lost.

Despite the challenges posed by sectarianism, there are also signs of progress towards a more inclusive and tolerant society in Iraq. The government has taken steps to promote religious and sectarian reconciliation, including efforts to increase the representation of Sunni Muslims in government positions.

There are also efforts underway to promote greater religious and cultural diversity in Iraq, particularly in the country's more marginalized regions. Civil society organizations are working to promote interfaith dialogue and cooperation, while the government has launched initiatives to protect the rights of minorities and promote greater religious tolerance.

In conclusion, the rise of sectarianism in Iraq has been a major factor in the country's recent history, creating divisions and fueling conflict. However, there are also signs of progress towards a more inclusive and tolerant society, with efforts underway to promote religious and sectarian reconciliation and protect the rights of minorities. As Iraq continues to rebuild and recover from years of conflict, the country's religious and sectarian structure will remain a key challenge, but also an opportunity for greater unity and diversity.

Military Structure



Iraq underwent significant changes in its military structure as it faced numerous challenges, including the rise of ISIS in 2014 and the subsequent campaign to counter the terrorist group. The military structure has evolved to address these security threats and rebuild the country's armed forces while making efforts to address issues of corruption, sectarianism, and lack of professionalism that plagued the Iraqi security forces.

The Iraqi Armed Forces are primarily divided into four main branches: the Iraqi Army, the Iraqi Air Force, the Iraqi Navy, and the Iraqi Special Operations Forces. Each branch has its specific roles and responsibilities in maintaining national security. In addition to these main branches, Iraq has various paramilitary forces that complement the regular military, the most important of which is the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU).

The military structure in Iraq has benefited from international support and assistance, particularly from the United States and its coalition partners. This support has included training, advisory missions, intelligence sharing, and equipment provision. International assistance has been instrumental in helping Iraq rebuild its military capabilities and improve its effectiveness in combating terrorism.

Following is a detailed look at each branch of the military:



Iraqi Ground Forces

The Iraqi Ground Forces (IGF), as the largest component of the Iraqi Armed Forces, bears the primary responsibility for conducting ground operations and safeguarding the nation's security. The structure of the ground forces is hierarchical, comprising divisions, brigades, and battalions.

The divisions serve as the highest level of organization within the IGF. They are responsible for overseeing and coordinating multiple brigades and their respective operations. Divisions have specialized units and assets to support a wide range of combat scenarios. These divisions are further divided into brigades.

Brigades, operating under divisional command, are composed of several battalions. They form the backbone of the ground forces and are highly maneuverable and self-contained units. Brigades are typically equipped with a mix of infantry, armored vehicles, and artillery assets, enabling them to carry out various types of military operations.

Battalions are the smallest tactical units within the IGF, consisting of several companies or platoons that are often focused on specific functions such as infantry, artillery, or engineering. Battalions play a crucial role in executing missions on the ground, ranging from combat operations to logistical support.

In recent years, considerable efforts have been made to enhance the capabilities of the IGF. Training programs, conducted by international coalition partners, have been instrumental in improving the effectiveness and professionalism of the ground forces. These programs have focused on areas such as tactical proficiency, leadership development, and adherence to human rights standards.

Another critical aspect of strengthening the IGF has been the provision of modern equipment and weaponry. Armored and mechanized divisions have been established to increase mobility, firepower, and protection on the battlefield. These divisions incorporate tanks, armored vehicles, and other mechanized assets that significantly enhance the army's combat capabilities.

Furthermore, the IGF has sought to improve its coordination and interoperability with international coalition forces. Close cooperation and joint exercises with partner nations have enabled the sharing of expertise, intelligence, and operational experience, thereby strengthening the overall effectiveness of the ground forces.



Iraqi Air Force

The Iraqi Air Force (IAF) plays a pivotal role in protecting Iraqi airspace, conducting air operations, and providing crucial support to ground forces. Over the years, it has undergone substantial modernization efforts to enhance its capabilities, both in terms of aircraft acquisitions and pilot training.

Following the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime, the IAF had to be rebuilt almost from scratch. Since then, the government has made concerted efforts to revitalize the air force to ensure national security and defense. These efforts have included the acquisition of new aircraft, refurbishing the existing assets, and investing in pilot training programs.

One of the key milestones in the modernization of the IAF has been the acquisition of advanced fighter aircraft. Iraq has procured a fleet of F-16 Fighting Falcons, a highly capable multirole fighter aircraft, which has significantly bolstered its air combat capabilities. The F-16s are equipped with modern avionics, precision-guided munitions, and advanced systems that enable the air force to engage a wide range of targets effectively.

In addition to the F-16s, Iraq has also acquired other types of aircraft to support various mission requirements. These include light attack aircraft such as the Cessna AC-208 Combat Caravan and armed reconnaissance aircraft like the Cessna AC-208B Armed Caravan. These aircraft provide close air support, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities, which are vital in counterinsurgency operations and combating terrorist threats.

Furthermore, the training of pilots has been a significant focus of the modernization efforts. Iraq has established training programs in collaboration with international partners to develop highly skilled and competent aviators. These programs include flight training, simulator exercises, and mission-specific training to ensure that pilots are proficient in operating advanced aircraft and executing complex aerial missions.

The IAF has played a crucial role in the fight against ISIS, as it conducted numerous airstrikes against ISIS targets, including infrastructure, supply routes, and high-value

targets. These airstrikes have been instrumental in degrading the capabilities of the terrorist organization and providing support to ground forces engaged in counterinsurgency operations.

Moreover, the air force has been actively involved in providing aerial support to ground forces, including close air support, intelligence gathering, and reconnaissance. The ability to coordinate and synchronize air operations with ground forces has been essential in improving operational effectiveness and reducing the threat posed by insurgent groups.

The modernization efforts and operational achievements of the IAF have demonstrated Iraq's commitment to building a capable and self-sufficient air arm. By protecting Iraqi airspace, conducting airstrikes against extremist groups, and providing critical support to ground forces, the air force has become an indispensable component of Iraq's overall defense strategy.



Iraqi Navy

The Iraqi Navy plays a crucial role in securing Iraq's territorial waters, protecting its coastline, and supporting maritime operations. With a fleet of patrol boats, offshore support vessels, and other maritime assets, the navy is responsible for maintaining maritime security and safeguarding Iraq's interests in the Persian Gulf.

One of the primary tasks of the Iraqi Navy is combating smuggling activities. Iraq's long coastline and strategic location make it vulnerable to various forms of illicit trade, including weapons smuggling, drug trafficking, and the smuggling of goods. The navy conducts patrols and surveillance operations to detect and intercept smuggling activities, working in coordination with other security agencies and international partners.

Protecting Iraq's oil infrastructure is another crucial responsibility of the navy. Iraq has significant offshore oil fields in the Persian Gulf, which are critical to its economy. The Navy ensures the security and integrity of these oil installations, preventing sabotage, attacks, and unauthorized access. This involves conducting regular patrols, establishing security perimeters, and coordinating with other maritime security forces in the region.

Maintaining maritime security in the Persian Gulf is of paramount importance for Iraq.

The Navy actively collaborates with other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and international naval forces to counter piracy, terrorism, and other threats to regional stability. Participating in joint exercises, sharing information, and conducting coordinated patrols are key components of these efforts to enhance maritime security in the region.

The Iraqi Navy also plays a vital role in search and rescue operations. With its fleet of patrol boats and specialized rescue assets, it responds to distress calls, rescues mariners in need, and provides assistance during maritime emergencies. These operations contribute to the safety and well-being of seafarers and enhance Iraq's reputation as a responsible maritime actor.

In recent years, efforts have been made to modernize and expand the capabilities of the Iraqi Navy. This includes the acquisition of new patrol boats and offshore support vessels, as well as investments in training and infrastructure development. International partners, including the United States, have provided assistance in capacity-building and training programs to enhance the Navy's effectiveness.

Additionally, the Iraqi Navy has participated in various international naval exercises and engagements, which have contributed to the development of interoperability with other navies and the exchange of best practices. These interactions foster regional cooperation and strengthen Iraq's maritime capabilities.

While the Iraqi Navy has made significant strides in securing Iraq's territorial waters and maintaining maritime security, challenges remain. These challenges include limited resources, infrastructure development, and the ongoing threat of piracy and smuggling. Addressing these challenges requires continued investment, international cooperation, and a comprehensive approach to maritime security.

Overall, the Iraqi Navy plays a critical role in protecting Iraq's territorial waters, combating smuggling, safeguarding its oil infrastructure, and maintaining maritime security in the Persian Gulf. The navy's efforts contribute to Iraq's overall national security, economic stability, and its standing as a responsible maritime actor in the region.



Iraqi Special Operations Forces

The Iraqi Special Operations Forces (ISOF), also known as the Counter Terrorism Service (CTS), are elite units within the military structure of Iraq that specialize in conducting counterterrorism operations. These forces have undergone extensive training and have received significant support from international partners, particularly the United States.

ISOF was established in 2003 with the aim of countering the rising threat of terrorism in Iraq. The force was initially trained and mentored by U.S. Special Operations Forces, providing them with the skills, tactics, and capabilities necessary for conducting high-risk operations in challenging environments.

The training of ISOF personnel has focused on a wide range of areas, including close-quarters combat, marksmanship, urban warfare, intelligence gathering, and hostage rescue. They have been trained to operate independently or in coordination with other security forces, both within Iraq and in coalition operations.

During the fight against ISIS, ISOF played a critical role in retaking key cities and territories from the terrorist group. Their specialized training and capabilities allowed them to conduct daring and precise operations to reclaim areas under ISIS control. ISOF units were at the forefront of major military offensives, such as the liberation of Mosul in 2017, where they played a pivotal role in driving out ISIS militants from the city.

ISOF's success in counterterrorism operations can be attributed to their advanced training, adaptability, and the experience gained from multiple engagements. Their ability to gather intelligence, conduct targeted raids, and neutralize high-value targets has significantly contributed to the degradation of ISIS's capabilities in Iraq.

International support has been instrumental in the development and success of ISOF. The United States, in particular, has provided extensive training, advisory assistance, and equipment to bolster the capabilities of the force. This support has included providing specialized equipment, such as night vision devices, communications systems, and armored vehicles, to enhance the effectiveness and survivability of ISOF operators.

ISOF's collaboration with international partners has also facilitated the sharing of intelligence, coordination of operations, and access to advanced technologies and resources. This cooperation has not only improved the overall effectiveness of ISOF but has also fostered closer ties between Iraq and its international allies.

The Iraqi Special Operations Forces, through their exceptional skills and dedication, have emerged as a highly respected and effective force in combating terrorism. Their successful operations against ISIS have demonstrated their professionalism, courage,

and commitment to restoring stability and security in Iraq.

Moving forward, the continued training, equipping, and support of ISOF will be crucial in sustaining their capabilities and enabling them to address evolving security challenges. Additionally, efforts to integrate ISOF with other Iraqi security forces and enhance interagency coordination will be important for maintaining long-term stability and countering future threats to Iraq's security.



Popular Mobilization Commission

The Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), also known as Al-Hashd Al-Sha'bi, were formed in 2014 in response to the rapid advance of ISIS in Iraq. The primary objective of the PMU was to mobilize volunteers and various factions to join the fight against ISIS and assist the Iraqi security forces in countering the terrorist group.

The PMU is composed of a diverse range of factions, including Shia militias, Sunni tribal fighters, and Christian forces. The Shia militias, often associated with Iran, form the majority of the PMU and have been active in combating ISIS. These militias have varying degrees of influence, ranging from smaller local groups to larger, more organized entities.

The PMU operates under the umbrella of the Iraqi Government, and its formation was authorized by a fatwa from the influential Shia cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani. The Iraqi Government has sought to integrate the PMU into the official security forces and has recognized it as a part of the country's defense apparatus. The PMU has been provided with support, resources, and training by the government, particularly in the fight against ISIS.

However, concerns have been raised regarding the influence and control of the PMU. Due to the diverse composition of the PMU, there have been instances where certain factions within it have acted independently or pursued their own agendas. This has led to concerns about the potential for factional rivalries, internal divisions, and challenges to the central government's authority.

Another concern has been the influence of external actors, particularly Iran, on some of the Shia militias within the PMU. Iran has provided support, training, and ideological guidance to certain factions, leading to perceptions of their loyalty lying more with Iran than with the Iraqi Government. This has raised concerns about the long-term implications for Iraq's sovereignty and stability.

Efforts have been made by the Iraqi Government to address these concerns and assert its control over the PMU. The government has sought to strengthen its oversight of the PMU by integrating it into the formal security structures, providing training programs, and promoting adherence to a unified command structure.

Nevertheless, the full integration and control of the PMU remains a complex challenge. Balancing the need for inclusive security measures, addressing the grievances of different factions, and ensuring accountability within the PMU is an ongoing process for the Iraqi Government.

The future of the PMU will depend on the ability of the Iraqi Government to effectively integrate and regulate the various factions, mitigate external influence, and address the concerns raised by both domestic and international stakeholders. It will be crucial for the government to establish clear lines of authority, strengthen the rule of law, and ensure that the PMU operates within the framework of a unified and accountable security apparatus.

Overall, since 2015, Iraq has made significant efforts to rebuild its military structure in response to the challenges posed by ISIS and other security threats. While there have been improvements, challenges remain, including the need for continued reforms, addressing sectarian tensions, and ensuring the professionalism and unity of the armed forces. The ongoing stability and effectiveness of Iraq's military structure will be crucial in maintaining national security and combating future security threats.

Key Military Leaders



Colonel General 'Abd-al-Amir Yarallah
Chief of the General Staff of the Iraqi Armed Forces

Colonel General 'Abd-al-Amir Rashid Yarallah, born 18 August 1964, is an Iraqi general who holds the position of Chief of the General Staff of the Iraqi Armed Forces. He assumed this role on 8 June 2020. As Chief of the General Staff, Yarallah is involved in overseeing and coordinating military operations, strategic planning, and ensuring the readiness and effectiveness of the armed forces. The Chief of the General Staff plays a vital role in shaping Iraq's defense policies, maintaining national security, and responding to various security challenges.

Yarallah's role puts him in the face of numerous challenges and responsibilities that include countering terrorism, ensuring border security, addressing internal and external threats, coordinating with international partners, and supporting stabilization efforts in conflict-affected areas.



**Staff Major General Qasim Muhammad Salih al-Mahmudi
Commander-in-Chief of the Iraqi Land Forces**

Staff Major General Qasim Muhammad Salih al-Mahmudi was born in the city of Fallujah. He has held many positions since joining the Iraqi army in late 1982 when he entered the First Military College and graduated from it with the rank of lieutenant in 1985. He participated in several battles during the Iraq war with Iran, including the Battle of Fao in 1986, the Battle of the Greatest Harvest in 1987, and the battles that followed. He joined the Staff College in its 60th batch, claiming first rank and becoming a teacher in the same college for nearly two years. After that, he held the position of commander of a commando regiment in the Seventh Infantry Division until 2003, and then he rose to the positions of commander of the Seventh Division and commander of Anbar Operations, and then the commander of Al-Hazira Operations, and was wounded twice during the operations against ISIS. Al-Mahmudi was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Iraqi Land Forces by former Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kazemi in 2020.



Major General Shihab Jihad Zankanah
Commander-in-Chief of IAFs

No information is available in public records.



**Staff Brigadier General Mazin 'Abd-al-Wahid Kabyan
Commander-in-Chief of Iraqi Naval Forces**

No information is available in public records.



**Colonel General Abdul-Wahab al-Sa'di,
Commander-in-Chief of Iraqi Special Forces**

'Abd-al-Wahhab 'Abd-al-Zahra Zabun al-Sa'di is a distinguished Iraqi soldier who rose to prominence as the Deputy Commander of the Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Service forces from 2014 to 2019. Born in 1963 in Sadr City, Baghdad, Al-Sa'di embarked on his educational journey by attending Uqba Bin Nafie Preparatory School on Palestine Street. He then pursued his undergraduate studies in Physics at the University of Mosul, before joining the Iraqi Military College where he achieved the rank of lieutenant. Al-Sa'di furthered his military education at the Iraqi Staff College, graduating in 1996 and subsequently becoming a lecturer there.

Throughout his career, Al-Sa'di continued to serve in the Iraqi forces following the occupation of Iraq. He emerged as a prominent leader within the Iraqi Special Forces, assuming various command roles in operations prior to 2014. Following the capture of Mosul and other regions by ISIS in 2014, he assumed the position of Deputy Commander of the Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Operations Forces. Al-Sa'di played a pivotal role in leading successful campaigns to liberate Baiji, Tikrit, and Fallujah. In early 2017, he commanded the operations that resulted in the liberation of Mosul, demonstrating his strategic prowess and decisive leadership.

Renowned CNN National Security Analyst Peter Bergen acknowledged Al-Sa'di's instrumental role in defeating ISIS in Iraq. However, in September 2019, Prime

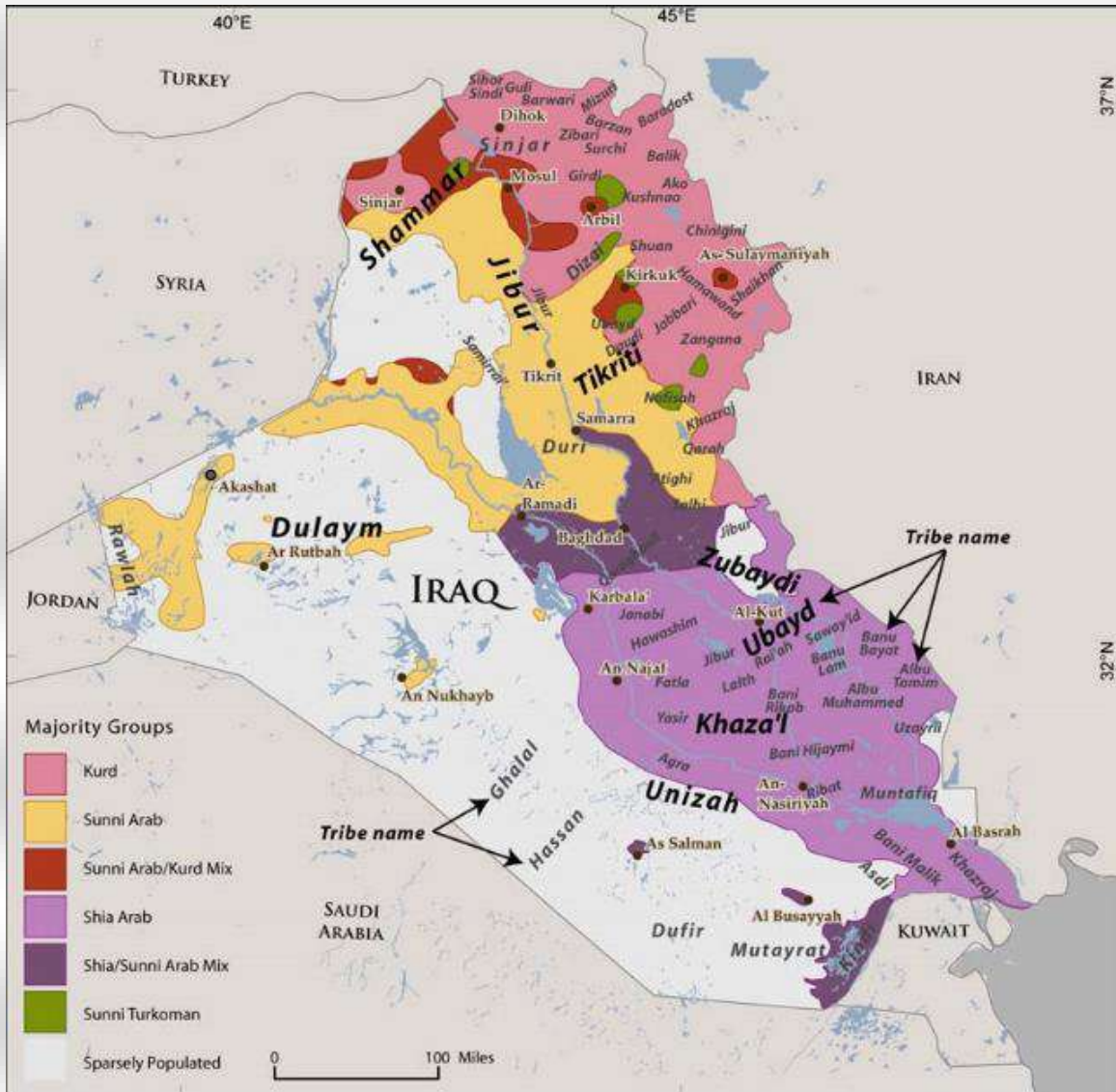
Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi unexpectedly relieved Al-Sa'di of his position, reassigning him to the Ministry of Defense without providing a specific rationale. Al-Sa'di regarded this decision as an affront to his military legacy, and it drew widespread criticism from politicians, media professionals, and activists who deemed it unjust. Yet, on May 9, 2020, Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi rectified the situation by reinstating Abdul-Wahhab Al-Saadi to the Counter-Terrorism Service and promoting him to head the Counter-Terrorism Agency, a testament to his exceptional abilities and contributions to the country's security.



Falih al-Fayyadh
Head of the Popular Mobilization Commission

Falih al-Fayyadh is the head of the PMC, which is a body created by Iraqi legislation to bring the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) militias under central government control. Although the PMF was established to fight ISIS, many PMF militias are increasingly focused on advancing their own economic interests and supporting Iran's regional agenda in Iraq, rather than protecting the Iraqi state or its citizens. Al-Fayyadh was the head of the PMC when many of its subcomponents fired live ammunition at peaceful protesters in late 2019, resulting in the deaths of hundreds of Iraqis. Al-Fayyadh was a member of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Quds Force (IRGC-QF)-supported crisis cell with previously sanctioned militia leaders Qays al-Khaz'ali and Husayn Falah al-Lami, as well as the now-deceased IRGC-QF commander Qasem Soleimani and PMC deputy leader Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis. Until July 2020, Al-Fayyadh was also the Iraqi Prime Minister's National Security Advisor.

Tribal Structure



Tribalism has been an integral part of Iraqi society for centuries, with tribal affiliations often trumping national identity. The tribal structure in Iraq has been shaped by historical, social, and political factors, and has played a significant role in shaping Iraqi society and politics. Since the year 2000, Iraq has experienced significant changes in its tribal structure, influenced by events such as the United States invasion, the rise of ISIS, and sectarian tensions. The tribal structure in all of Iraq is characterized by a mix of sedentary and nomadic tribes, with strong ties to land and kinship. In this report, we will provide an overview of the modern tribal structure in Iraq, including the most prominent tribes in each region.

Tribal Structure in Central Iraq: Central Iraq, including the Governorates of Baghdad, Salah al-Din, Diyala, and Babil, has a complex tribal structure that has evolved over centuries of history.

One of the most prominent tribes in central Iraq is Shammar, which has a significant presence in Baghdad and Diyala. The Shammar tribe has a long history in Iraq, with roots in the Arabian Peninsula and a reputation for being skilled warriors and traders. In addition to Shammar, there are several other large tribes in central Iraq, including Dulaym, Jiburi, and Jibur.

Tribal affiliations in central Iraq are often linked to geography, with different tribes having distinct territories and land holdings. For example, the Dulaim tribe is predominantly located in Anbar Governorate, while the Jiburi tribe has a strong presence in Baghdad. However, tribal affiliations can also be fluid, with tribes forming alliances or breaking away from one another depending on political and economic interests.

The tribal structure in central Iraq also plays a significant role in politics and governance. Historically, tribal leaders have wielded significant influence over local affairs and have often served as intermediaries between the central government and their communities. Tribal leaders have also played a role in resolving disputes and conflicts within their tribes, using customary laws and traditional methods of conflict resolution.

In recent years, however, the role of tribes in governance has diminished as the central government has strengthened its control over the country. The post-2003 political landscape in Iraq has been dominated by party politics and sectarian affiliations, which have marginalized the influence of tribes in national politics. Nevertheless, tribal leaders continue to have a role in local politics and have been involved in efforts to promote stability and security in their communities.

Another important aspect of the tribal structure in central Iraq is the relationship between tribes and the state. Historically, tribal leaders have had a complex relationship with the central government, sometimes serving as allies and sometimes as adversaries. During the Ba'thist era, for example, the regime sought to co-opt tribal leaders and use them as a means of exerting control over their communities. However, this approach was not always successful, and in some cases, it led to armed resistance and rebellion.

Today, the relationship between tribes and the state is more complex, with tribal leaders seeking to balance their allegiance to their communities with their obligations to the central government. In some cases, tribal leaders have sought to use their influence to advance their own interests, while in others, they have worked to promote the interests of their communities.

Tribal Structure in Southern Iraq: Southern Iraq, including the Governorates of Basra, Maysan, and Dhi Qar, has a complex tribal structure that is deeply intertwined with the region's history and culture.

One of the most prominent tribes in southern Iraq is the Bani Lam, which has a significant presence in Basra and other southern Governorates. The Bani Lam tribe has a long history in Iraq, dating back to ancient times, and is known for its agriculture and

trade. In addition to the Bani Lam, there are several other large tribes in southern Iraq, including the Zubayd, the Al-Bazzaz, and the Al-Jibur.

In southern Iraq, tribal associations are frequently intertwined with geography, where specific tribes possess unique territories and properties. For example, the Zubaid tribe is predominantly located in Maysan, while the Al-Bazzaz tribe has a strong presence in Basra. Nevertheless, tribal connections can be dynamic, where tribes can unite or dissolve alliances depending on political and financial interests.

The tribal composition in southern Iraq has a notable role in politics and administration. Throughout history, tribal leaders have exerted considerable power over regional affairs and have frequently acted as intermediaries between their communities and the central government. They have also been instrumental in resolving disagreements and tensions within their tribes, utilizing traditional approaches to conflict resolution and customary laws.

However, the role of tribes in governance has dwindled in recent years as the central government has bolstered its authority over the nation. Since 2003, party politics and sectarian associations have dominated Iraq's political landscape, relegating the influence of tribes to the sidelines in national politics. Nevertheless, tribal leaders still have a significant role in local politics and have contributed to initiatives aimed at enhancing stability and security in their regions.

Another noteworthy aspect of the tribal structure in southern Iraq is the dynamic between tribes and the state. Historically, tribal leaders have had a complex relationship with the central government, often serving as either allies or adversaries. During the Ba'thist regime, for instance, the government attempted to assimilate tribal leaders and exploit them as a means of controlling their communities. Nonetheless, this strategy was not always successful, and, in certain instances, it resulted in armed insurrection.

Today, the relationship between tribes and the state is more intricate, with tribal leaders striving to balance their obligation to their communities with their allegiance to the central government. In some cases, tribal leaders have attempted to leverage their influence to advance their personal interests, whereas, in others, they have worked to promote their communities' welfare.

Tribal Structure in Northern Iraq: Northern Iraq, including the Governorates of Dohuk, Irbil, and Sulaymaniyah, has a rich and diverse tribal structure that has been shaped by the region's geography, history, and culture. The tribes in northern Iraq are predominantly Kurdish, with a small number of Arab and Turkmen tribes also present.

One of the most prominent Kurdish tribes in northern Iraq is the Barzani tribe, which has a significant presence in the Irbil and Dohuk Governorates. The Barzani tribe is one of the oldest and largest tribes in Iraq and is known for its agricultural and pastoral practices. The Barzani tribe is also closely associated with the Kurdistan Democratic

Party (KDP), one of the two main political parties in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

In addition to the Barzani, there are several other large Kurdish tribes in northern Iraq, including the Talabani, the Jaff, and the Shaykh Mahmud. Each of these tribes has a distinct history and culture, with unique customs and traditions that are closely tied to the land and the environment.

Northern Iraq's tribal structure is a blend of sedentary and nomadic tribes, with some tribes adopting a hybrid of both lifestyles. The Qashqai, who are the nomadic tribes in northern Iraq, move their flocks of sheep and goats periodically to find adequate grazing land.

Tribal affiliations in northern Iraq are often based on kinship ties and geographic proximity. Tribes in the same area often have similar dialects, customs, and traditions, and they often have close social and economic relationships with one another.

The tribal structure in northern Iraq also plays a significant role in politics and governance. Tribal leaders in northern Iraq have historically served as intermediaries between their communities and the central government, using their influence to advocate for their communities' interests and resolve disputes. However, the role of tribes in governance has diminished in recent years as political parties have become the dominant force in Kurdish politics.

Despite this, tribal leaders in northern Iraq continue to play an important role in local affairs and maintain close relationships with their communities. Tribal leaders are often viewed as figures of authority and respect, and they are frequently called upon to resolve disputes and conflicts within their communities.

The relationship between tribes and the state in northern Iraq has been complex and often fraught with tension. Historically, Kurdish tribes have been marginalized and oppressed by the central government, leading to armed resistance and rebellion. The Kurdish liberation movement, which emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, sought to establish a Kurdish state in northern Iraq and promote Kurdish autonomy.

Today, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) governs the Kurdish areas of Iraq, and tribal leaders play a key role in shaping the region's political and economic landscape. Tribal leaders are often consulted by the KRG on matters related to development, security, and governance, and they are frequently involved in efforts to promote stability and security in the region.

Tribal Structure in Western Iraq: Western Iraq is primarily composed of the Al-Anbar Governorate, which has a complex tribal structure that has been shaped by its unique geography, history, and culture. The tribal structure in western Iraq is predominantly Arab, with a small number of other ethnic and religious groups also present.

One of the most prominent tribal confederations in western Iraq is the Abu Nimr tribe,

which is known for its long history of resistance against foreign rule. The Albu Nimr tribe has a significant presence in the Al-Anbar Governorate and is made up of several sub-tribes. The tribe is known for its strong cultural identity and its deep connection to the land.

Another important tribal confederation in western Iraq is the Dulaym tribe, which is one of the largest Arab tribes in the country. The Dulaym tribe is composed of several sub-tribes, each of which has its own distinct culture and history. The tribe is known for its military prowess and its long history of resistance against foreign invaders.

Tribal affiliations in western Iraq are often based on geographic proximity and kinship ties. Tribes in the same area often have similar dialects, customs, and traditions, and they often have close social and economic relationships with one another.

The tribal structure in western Iraq is characterized by a mix of sedentary and nomadic tribes, with some tribes practicing a combination of both lifestyles. The nomadic tribes in western Iraq are known as the Al-Shammar, and they typically move their herds of camels seasonally in search of grazing land.

In western Iraq, tribal leaders frequently act as intermediaries between their communities and the central government, utilizing their authority to promote the interests of their communities and resolve conflicts. However, the role of tribes in governance has been somewhat limited in recent years as political parties and armed groups have become more dominant in the region.

The relationship between tribes and the state in western Iraq has historically been marked by tension and conflict. Tribal leaders have frequently clashed with the central government over issues of representation, autonomy, and resource allocation. Additionally, some tribal leaders have been accused of supporting armed groups and engaging in criminal activity, which has further strained their relationship with the state.

Despite the difficulties, tribal leaders in western Iraq still have a significant impact on local matters and have strong connections with their communities. Tribal leaders are regarded as figures of power and esteem, and they are frequently requested to settle disputes and conflicts within their communities.

In recent years, there have been efforts to integrate tribal structures into the political and governance systems in western Iraq. The Iraqi government has established tribal councils in several areas of the country, including western Iraq, in an attempt to give tribes a greater voice in local affairs. Additionally, some armed groups in the region have attempted to co-opt tribal structures as a means of gaining legitimacy and support.

Tribal Structure in Eastern Iraq: Eastern Iraq is a region with a diverse tribal structure, comprising both Arab and Kurdish tribes. The tribal affiliations in this region are often linked to geography, with different tribes having distinct territories and land holdings.

Historically, tribal leaders in eastern Iraq have played a significant role in local governance and resolving disputes within their tribes. They have used customary laws and traditional methods of conflict resolution to maintain peace and stability in their communities. Tribal leaders have also served as intermediaries between their communities and the central government, negotiating with officials on behalf of their tribes and ensuring that their voices are heard in the halls of power.

The tribal structure in eastern Iraq has also been influenced by the country's recent history of conflict and political upheaval. The fall of Saddam Hussein's regime in 2003 and the subsequent sectarian tensions that erupted in the country brought about a shift in the political landscape. Party politics and sectarian affiliations have come to dominate national politics, leading to a marginalization of the role of tribes in governance.

Despite this, tribal leaders in eastern Iraq continue to play a role in local politics and are often involved in efforts to promote stability and security in their communities. They work closely with local security forces to prevent crime and maintain order, and they have played a key role in the fight against terrorism and extremist groups such as ISIS.

One of the challenges facing the tribal structure in eastern Iraq is the ongoing issue of disputed territories, particularly in areas that are claimed by both the central government and the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG). This has led to tensions between Arab and Kurdish tribes, as well as between tribes and the central government. In some cases, tribes have formed alliances based on shared interests and grievances, while in others, they have become divided along ethnic and sectarian lines.

In recent years, there have also been concerns about the influence of external actors on the tribal structure in eastern Iraq. Iran, in particular, has been accused of providing support to Shia militias and using them to exert influence over the region. This has led to fears of further sectarian tensions and instability, as well as concerns about the long-term viability of the tribal structure in eastern Iraq.

Despite these challenges, the tribal structure in eastern Iraq remains an important part of the country's social and political fabric. Tribal leaders continue to wield significant influence over local affairs, and their traditional methods of conflict resolution and governance remain an important part of the region's culture and history. However, the tribal structure is also evolving in response to changing political and social realities, and its future remains uncertain.

In conclusion, the tribal structure in Iraq is a complex and diverse system that reflects the region's history and culture. While the role of tribes in governance has been somewhat limited in recent years, tribal leaders continue to play an important role in local affairs and maintain close relationships with their communities. As eastern Iraq continues to navigate its complex political and social landscape, the role of tribes is likely to remain an important factor in shaping the region's future.

Tribal Conflicts in Iraq: Since 2020, Iraq has witnessed an escalation of tribal conflicts

that have posed a significant challenge to the country's security and stability. These conflicts have taken place in various regions of the country, including the central, western, and southern parts of Iraq. The primary causes of these conflicts are multiple, ranging from disputes over land, water, and resources, to political and sectarian tensions, to competition over smuggling routes and control of illegal activities.

One of the most significant tribal conflicts in Iraq is the conflict between the Bani Mansour and Albu Fahd tribes in the central Governorate of Diyala. The conflict started in late 2020 and escalated in early 2021, resulting in dozens of deaths and injuries on both sides. The two tribes have a long history of tension, with disputes over land and resources being a major source of conflict. The conflict has also been exacerbated by the involvement of armed groups and militias affiliated with various political factions in the region, making it more difficult to resolve.

Another tribal conflict that has been ongoing since 2020 is the conflict between the Albu Mahal and Albu Nimr tribes in the western Governorate of Anbar. The conflict started in early 2020, with both sides accusing each other of encroaching on their territory and committing acts of violence. The conflict has escalated over time, with both sides using heavy weapons and causing significant damage to property and infrastructure. The Iraqi security forces have attempted to intervene and mediate a resolution to the conflict, but with limited success.

In the southern Governorate of Basra, tribal conflicts have been ongoing since 2020, with the main source of conflict being control over oil smuggling routes. The Governorate is home to some of Iraq's largest oil fields, and control over these resources is a significant source of income for local tribes. The conflict has been further complicated by the involvement of various political factions and militias in the region, who seek to control the lucrative smuggling trade.

In the Kurdish region of northern Iraq, tribal conflicts have also been ongoing since 2020, with disputes over land and resources being the primary source of tension. One significant conflict is between the Zangana and Barzani tribes in the Irbil Governorate, which has resulted in several casualties. The conflict has been exacerbated by the involvement of various political factions and militias affiliated with the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan.

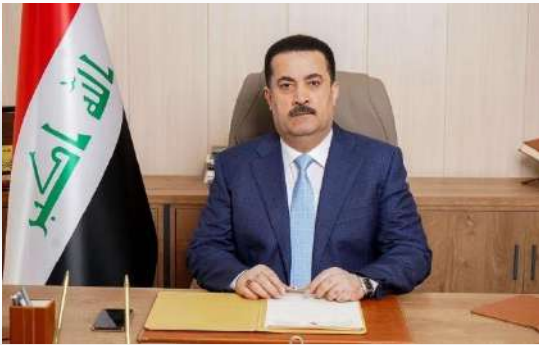
The Iraqi government has been attempting to address these tribal conflicts through various means, including mediation and dialogue between conflicting parties, deployment of security forces to affected areas, and implementation of development projects to address the underlying causes of conflict. However, these efforts have been hindered by the involvement of armed groups and militias affiliated with various political factions, who use the conflicts to further their political and economic interests.

In addition to the tribal conflicts, Iraq has also witnessed an increase in criminal activities, including kidnapping, extortion, and smuggling, which are often carried out by armed groups and militias affiliated with various political factions. These activities have

further exacerbated the tribal conflicts by providing a source of income for groups involved in the conflicts.

In conclusion, tribal conflicts have been ongoing in Iraq since 2020, posing a significant challenge to the country's security and stability. These conflicts have been driven by multiple factors, including disputes over land, resources, and political and sectarian tensions. While the Iraqi government has been attempting to address these conflicts, the involvement of armed groups and militias affiliated with various political factions has made it difficult to find a lasting solution. The ongoing tribal conflicts have also provided a fertile ground for criminal activities, which further aggravates the situation.

Primary Members of the Government



Prime Minister: Engineer Muhammad Shia' al-Sudani, a prominent Iraqi politician, assumed the position of Prime Minister on 27 October 2022, following an official assignment by President Abd al-Latif Rashid to form the government.

Al-Sudani hails from an esteemed Iraqi Maysan family and an honorable Iraqi-Arab clan, whose members, like other families and clans in Iraq, sacrificed martyrs and shed blood in the face of dictatorship, tyranny, and terrorism. Representing Baghdad, Al-Sudani successfully secured parliamentary membership for three consecutive terms (2014-2018-2021).

During his tenure, Al-Sudani actively participated in the parliamentary committee overseeing government program implementation and strategic planning. From 2014 to 2018, he served as Minister of Labor and Social Affairs while concurrently taking on the role of acting Minister of Industry, Commerce, and Finance.

Previously, Al-Sudani held the position of Minister of Human Rights from 2010 to 2014 and also acted as the Minister of Migration and Displacement, Minister of Agriculture, and head of the Political Prisoners Association. Al-Sudani embarked on his political career after the fall of the tyrannical Baath regime in 2003, serving in various civil service positions between 2004 and 2010, including the mayor of Amarah (governor of Maysan), member of the Maysan Provincial Council, and governor of Maysan.

In 2019, following the resignation of former Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi amidst

demanding protests in Baghdad, Al-Sudani emerged as a candidate for the prime ministerial role. He stood alongside the protesters, supporting their calls for political and economic reforms, enhanced services, employment opportunities, and social justice. Al-Sudani put forward a comprehensive government program focused on economic reforms, service improvement, and the fight against poverty, unemployment, and corruption. Embracing the principles of national dialogue and peaceful constitutional means for resolving political differences, Al-Sudani expressed his vision of a prosperous and united Iraq spanning from south to north.

His successful formation of a robust government, dedicated to delivering high-quality services and upholding social justice and civil peace, is a testament to his leadership. Al-Sudani's government program also emphasized the establishment of balanced and peaceful international relations with neighboring countries and the global community. In January 2019, Al-Sudani established the Euphrates political movement and holds the position of its elected general secretary. Al-Furaatin, the civil political party founded by Al-Sudani, advocates for the rights of citizenship, social justice, and equality for all Iraqis. In the 2021 parliamentary elections, the party secured three seats.

Al-Sudani has served as chairman and member of numerous government service committees, formulating local strategies and international relations, while exerting political and popular pressure to safeguard the Iraqi industry. He spearheaded its revival under the banner of "Made in Iraq."

Internationally, Al-Sudani has garnered acclaim as "the owner of the white hand," showcasing his resolute stance against corruption. Notably, he has managed to recover millions of dollars for the Ministries of Labor, Social Affairs, Industry, and Trade. Al-Sudani, as praised by the international press, holds a bachelor's degree in agricultural sciences from the University of Baghdad.



Interior Minister: Lieutenant General 'Abd-al-Amir Kamil al-Shammari, a highly esteemed figure in the Iraqi army and the current Minister of Interior in Muhammad Shia' al-Sudani's government, was born in the city of Diwaniyah in 1967. With a strong passion for serving his country, Al-Shammari embarked on his military career after graduating from the renowned Iraqi Military College in 1989. He entered the Iraqi army as an officer, marking the beginning of his dedicated service to the nation.

Driven by his ambition for professional growth, Al-Shammari pursued higher education to enhance his military knowledge and capabilities. In 1998, he successfully completed his studies at the Iraqi Staff College, earning a master's degree in military sciences. This academic achievement not only exemplified his commitment to continuous learning but also equipped him with the necessary expertise to take on greater responsibilities within the military hierarchy.

Throughout his career, Al-Shammari made substantial contributions to the Iraqi army, holding key positions of authority and demonstrating exemplary leadership. From 2009 to 2011, he served as the Deputy Commander of the First Division, showcasing his ability to guide and direct troops effectively. This role allowed him to further develop his leadership skills and establish a reputation as a capable military strategist.

Building on his success as Deputy Commander, Al-Shammari assumed the command of the tenth division in the Iraqi Army from 2011 to 2013. Leading this division, he demonstrated his proficiency in executing strategic military operations, overseeing the coordination of troops, and ensuring the division's readiness to face various challenges on the battlefield.

From 2013 to 2016, Al-Shammari served as the Commander of Baghdad Operations, a critical position during a time of intense conflict against ISIS. Through his strategic guidance and unwavering dedication, he played a pivotal role in the liberation battles against the terrorist organization. His leadership in these operations solidified his standing as a respected and influential figure within the military.

Al-Shammari's exceptional career continued to flourish in subsequent years. He assumed the role of Military Inspector in the Iraqi Army from 2017 to 2020, overseeing the implementation of operational standards and ensuring the army's efficiency. This position allowed him to contribute to the continuous improvement of the military's capabilities and readiness. From 2020 to 2022, he held the position of Deputy Commander of Joint Operations, demonstrating his ability to coordinate and execute strategic military initiatives at a national level. Additionally, his appointment as the head of the security committee responsible for the 2021 elections highlighted his commitment to upholding peace and stability during critical national events. Finally, on 27 October 2022, Al-Shammari was entrusted with the vital role of Iraqi Interior Minister in Muhammad Shia al-Sudani's government, assuming a crucial responsibility in safeguarding the nation's internal security.



Finance Minister: Tayf Sami Muhammad al-Shukraji, a distinguished Iraqi economist and politician, is currently serving as the Minister of Finance in Muhammad Shia' Al-Sudani's government. Born in 1963, al-Shukraji has dedicated her career to the field of finance, striving to bring about positive change and combat corruption within Iraq's financial sector. Her remarkable achievements and relentless efforts in this realm were recognized by the US State Department, which bestowed upon her the prestigious Woman of Courage Award on 8 March 2022. This esteemed accolade serves as a testament to her significant contributions to preventing and halting corruption within the country's financial system.

Al-Shukraji's journey in the field of finance commenced after she graduated from the College of Administration and Economics at the University of Baghdad. Initially aspiring to work in the diplomatic field, she unexpectedly found herself drawn to the Ministry of Finance in 1985, during the challenging years of the Iran-Iraq war. Notably, al-Shukraji reminisces that during that time, the majority of her team consisted of women, as many men were actively engaged in the war effort against Iran. This early experience laid the foundation for her subsequent dedication to public service and her commitment to addressing the financial challenges faced by Iraq.

Despite the tumultuous period of the US occupation of Iraq in 2003, which led to the removal of Saddam Hussein's government, al-Shukraji remained steadfast in her commitment to the Ministry of Finance. In fact, she was appointed as the Undersecretary of the ministry during this transformative period and continued to serve in this role for an impressive 19 years. This tenure exemplifies her resilience and unwavering dedication to her work, even amidst the challenges posed by sectarian quotas in post-invasion Iraq.

In 2005, al-Shukraji assumed the pivotal position of deputy director of the Budget Department at the Ministry of Finance. This role allowed her to contribute to the formulation and implementation of financial plans and policies, ensuring responsible budget allocation and expenditure. Her expertise and commitment to financial

management earned her the reputation of a meticulous and capable professional, guiding the Ministry of Finance through the complex economic landscape.

Recognizing her exceptional skills and leadership qualities, al-Shukraji was appointed as the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Finance in 2019. In this capacity, she played a crucial role in shaping fiscal strategies and overseeing the efficient management of Iraq's financial resources. Known for her distinctive speaking style, characterized by passion and conviction, al-Shukraji approaches her work with great enthusiasm, often expressing her views in a forceful yet compelling manner, seeking to advocate for transparency and accountability in financial matters.

Al-Shukraji's appointment as the Minister of Finance in Muhammad Shia' al-Sudani's government further solidifies her position as a prominent figure in Iraq's financial landscape. Her vast experience, coupled with her unwavering commitment to combating corruption, positions her to lead the ministry in implementing crucial economic reforms and ensuring responsible fiscal policies. As Minister of Finance, al-Shukraji will continue to be a driving force behind efforts to improve financial governance, promote economic growth, and foster transparency in Iraq's financial institutions.



Foreign Minister: Iraq's current foreign minister is Fuad Husayn. He assumed office in May 2020, replacing his predecessor, Mohammed Ali al-Hakim.

Fuad Hussein is a veteran Kurdish politician who has held several prominent positions in the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) as well as in the federal government of Iraq. He was born in 1946 in the city of Khanaqin, located in the Diyala Governorate of Iraq, which is predominantly Kurdish. He obtained a degree in civil engineering from the University of Baghdad in 1970 and later pursued graduate studies in the Netherlands.

Husayn's political career began in the 1970s when he joined the Kurdish resistance movement against the government of Saddam Hussein. He was one of the founders of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), which was led by the late Kurdish leader Jalal Talabani. Husayn served as the PUK's representative in Europe for many years and played a key role in lobbying the international community to support the Kurdish cause.

After the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime in 2003, Husayn returned to Iraq and became an advisor to President Jalal Talabani. He was later appointed as the national security advisor to the prime minister, a position he held from 2005 to 2014. In this role, he

played a crucial role in negotiating the withdrawal of US troops from Iraq in 2011 and in developing Iraq's national security strategy.

In 2014, Husayn was elected to the Iraqi parliament as a member of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), which is led by the current president of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Masoud Barzani. He served as the chairman of the parliament's finance committee and played a key role in negotiating the federal budget with the central government.

As foreign minister, Husayn's main priority has been to strengthen Iraq's relations with its neighboring countries and to increase its role in regional affairs. He has made several trips to neighboring countries, including Iran, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia, and has sought to promote economic and diplomatic cooperation.

Husayn has also played a key role in Iraq's efforts to resolve its disputes with the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. In September 2020, he led a delegation to Irbil, the capital of the Kurdistan Region, to discuss the implementation of the 2019 agreement between the federal government and the KRG on oil exports and budgetary issues.

Another important issue that Husayn has focused on is Iraq's relationship with the United States. In January 2020, he met with US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in Washington to discuss the US-Iraq strategic dialogue and to seek US support for Iraq's efforts to stabilize the country and promote economic development.

In addition to his diplomatic efforts, Husayn has also been involved in Iraq's domestic politics. In August 2021, he announced that he was resigning from his position as foreign minister to run in the upcoming parliamentary elections as a candidate for the KDP. However, as of my knowledge cutoff date of September 2021, it was not yet clear if his resignation had been accepted and if he would continue to serve as foreign minister until the elections.

Overall, Fuad Husayn's extensive experience in Kurdish politics and his previous positions in the federal government have made him a key player in Iraq's diplomacy and foreign policy. His efforts to promote cooperation with Iraq's neighboring countries and to resolve its internal disputes have been seen as critical to the country's stability and security.



Defense Minister: Thabit Muhammad Sa'id Rida al-Abbasi, a highly esteemed military

veteran and respected politician hailing from Ninawa Governorate, holds a significant position within the Iraqi government. In October 2022, he assumed the crucial role of the Ministry of Defense in Muhammad Shia' al-Sudani's administration. Al-Abbasi's extensive experience and profound knowledge of military affairs equip him with the skills necessary to effectively oversee the nation's defense strategies and operations, ensuring the safety and security of Iraq.

Al-Abbasi's illustrious journey in the military commenced with his graduation from the renowned Iraqi Military College. However, his unwavering opposition to Saddam Hussein's regime resulted in his arrest in 1998. Despite the challenges he encountered, Al-Abbasi remained resolute in his convictions and displayed immense strength of character. Eventually, he retired from the military at the distinguished rank of lieutenant colonel, a testament to his unwavering dedication and service to his country.

Throughout his distinguished career, al-Abbasi's exceptional service and commitment to his duties garnered recognition and accolades. Notably, he was honored with the prestigious Order of the Diyala Regiment for emergencies, underscoring his bravery and exemplary conduct in critical situations. This esteemed award symbolizes al-Abbasi's unwavering dedication and willingness to go above and beyond in service to his nation.

In addition to his notable military background, al-Abbasi has actively engaged in the political sphere, channeling his expertise and experience towards public service. As a member of the Iraqi Council of Representatives during the fourth session, he represented the constituents of Ninawa Governorate. In this capacity, Al-Abbasi played a crucial role in the Parliamentary Integrity Committee, working tirelessly to uphold transparency and accountability within the Iraqi political landscape.

Demonstrating his unwavering commitment to public service, al-Abbasi actively participated in the Iraqi parliament's fifth session following the elections held on October 10, 2021. His continued involvement in the political arena showcased his dedication to making a positive impact and driving meaningful change in Iraq's governance. Al-Abbasi's deep understanding of the nation's needs, coupled with his military background, positioned him as a strong advocate for defense and security-related matters.

The Iraqi parliament, recognizing al-Abbasi's exceptional qualifications, vast expertise, and unwavering dedication to his country, cast their votes in favor of instilling confidence in him as the Iraqi defense minister in Muhammad Shia' al-Sudani's government on 27 October 2022. This vote of confidence underscores the trust and faith placed in Al-Abbasi to fulfill this critical role, ensuring the country's defense strategies align with national interests and safeguard Iraq's sovereignty.

As the Iraqi defense minister, al-Abbasi assumes a pivotal position in shaping and implementing the nation's defense policies. His extensive experience in military affairs, coupled with his political acumen, equips him with the necessary tools to effectively navigate the complex landscape of defense and security. With al-Abbasi at the helm of the Ministry of Defense, Iraq can anticipate a strong and vigilant defense apparatus that

safeguards the nation's territorial integrity and ensures the well-being of its citizens.



Oil Minister: Hayyan 'Abd-al-Ghani is a veteran Iraqi oil executive and the new Oil Minister as of May 2023, and has played a significant role in the development of Iraq's oil industry over the past several decades. Born in Baghdad in 1952, Abdulghani earned a degree in chemical engineering from the University of Baghdad before beginning his career in the oil sector.

'Abd-al-Ghani spent the early part of his career working for the Iraq National Oil Company (INOC), where he held a variety of technical and managerial positions. In 1987, he was appointed as head of the South Oil Company, which is responsible for oil production in southern Iraq. During his time at the South Oil Company, 'Abd-al-Ghani oversaw the development of several major oil fields, including Rumaila and West Qurna.

In the aftermath of the first Gulf War in 1991, 'Abd-al-Ghani played a key role in negotiating contracts with foreign oil companies to develop Iraq's oil reserves. He also served as a member of the Iraqi delegation to the United Nations' oil-for-food program, which allowed Iraq to sell a limited amount of oil in exchange for humanitarian supplies.

After the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq, 'Abd-al-Ghani was appointed as director general of the INOC, where he was responsible for overseeing the country's oil production and export activities. In this role, he worked to rebuild Iraq's oil infrastructure and expand production to meet the country's growing energy needs.

In 2016, 'Abd-al-Ghani was appointed as the chairman of the Basra Oil Company, which is responsible for managing Iraq's oil fields in the Basra region. In this role, he has overseen the development of several major oil fields, including Majnoon and West Qurna 2. He has also worked to strengthen the relationship between the Basra Oil Company and foreign oil companies operating in Iraq.

'Abd-al-Ghani is widely respected in the Iraqi oil industry for his technical expertise and his ability to navigate the complex political and economic landscape in the country. He has played a key role in attracting foreign investment to Iraq's oil sector and in developing partnerships between Iraqi oil companies and international oil companies.

In addition to his work in the oil industry, 'Abd-al-Ghani has also served as a member of Iraq's Higher Education Advisory Council and as a member of the board of directors of the Iraqi Private Banks League. He is widely regarded as one of Iraq's most influential

and respected oil executives and has received numerous awards and accolades throughout his career for his contributions to the industry.



Communications Minister: Iraq's current Communications Minister is Arkan Shihab Ahmad, who has held the position since 2020. He was born in the city of Kut in eastern Iraq in 1971. He holds a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from the University of Technology in Baghdad and a master's degree in business administration from Al-Mansour University College in Baghdad. Prior to becoming Communications Minister, Ahmad worked in various positions in the telecommunications sector, including serving as the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Iraq Telecommunications and Post Company (ITPC) and as a member of the Board of Directors of the Kurdistan Regional Government's Ministry of Communications.

As Communications Minister, Ahmad has outlined several goals for his tenure. One of his main priorities is to increase internet access and speed throughout Iraq, particularly in rural areas where access is limited. He has also emphasized the importance of expanding Iraq's fiber optic network to improve connectivity and reduce the country's reliance on satellite-based services. Additionally, Ahmad has expressed his commitment to modernizing Iraq's telecommunications infrastructure, including updating outdated technologies and improving customer service.

Under Ahmad's leadership, Iraq's telecommunications sector has made progress in several areas. In 2020, the Ministry of Communications launched a new mobile application to track the spread of COVID-19 in Iraq. The app, called "Fawzi," uses geolocation data to help identify potential outbreaks and alert users to nearby cases. Additionally, the ministry has been working to establish a national fiber optic network, improving internet speeds and increasing connectivity across the country.

Despite these advancements, Iraq's telecommunications industry still faces several challenges. One of the main issues is the lack of competition in the sector, with most services being provided by state-owned companies. This has led to higher prices and slower innovation compared to other countries in the region. Another challenge is the ongoing security situation in Iraq, which can make it difficult to maintain and expand telecommunications infrastructure in certain areas.

In addition to his work in the telecommunications sector, Ahmad is also active in politics. He is a member of the Iraqi Communist Party and has been involved in various political

campaigns and social movements throughout his career. He has been a vocal advocate for democratic reforms and human rights in Iraq, particularly with regards to the rights of women and minority groups.

In conclusion, under Ahmad's leadership, Iraq's telecommunications sector has made progress in expanding internet access and modernizing infrastructure. However, the industry still faces challenges related to competition and security, which will need to be addressed in order to further improve connectivity in the country.



Culture Minister: Iraq's current culture minister is Hassan Nazim. He was appointed to the position on 6 May 2020, as part of Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi's cabinet. Nazim is an academic and writer, and he has published several books on culture and literature in Iraq.

Prior to his appointment as culture minister, Nazim was a professor at the University of Basra, where he taught Arabic language and literature. He also served as the head of the university's Arabic Language Department. In addition to his academic work, Nazim has written several novels and short stories, including "The Lanterns of the Ancient City," which won the State Prize for Literature in 2004.

As culture minister, Nazim is responsible for promoting and preserving Iraq's cultural heritage, including its historical sites, museums, and artistic traditions. He has stated that his top priority is to restore Iraq's cultural heritage, which has been damaged by years of war and conflict.

One of Nazim's first initiatives as culture minister was to launch a campaign to restore the ancient city of Babylon, which is located about 85 kilometers south of Baghdad. The campaign aims to restore and preserve the site's historical buildings and landmarks, including the Ishtar Gate and the Hanging Gardens of Babylon. The restoration project is being carried out in partnership with UNESCO, and it is expected to take several years to complete.

In addition to his work on cultural heritage, Nazim is also focused on promoting contemporary Iraqi art and literature. He has said that he wants to support and encourage Iraqi artists and writers, and to provide them with the resources they need to create and share their work. To this end, he has launched several initiatives aimed at supporting the arts, including a program to provide grants to artists and writers, and a plan to establish

cultural centers throughout Iraq.

One of Nazim's key challenges as culture minister is to promote cultural exchange and understanding between Iraq and other countries. Iraq has a rich and diverse cultural heritage, but it has also been isolated from the rest of the world for many years due to war, conflict, and sanctions. Nazim has said that he wants to foster greater cooperation and dialogue between Iraq and other countries, and to showcase Iraq's cultural traditions to the world.

To achieve this goal, Nazim has worked to promote cultural exchanges and partnerships with other countries, including France, Italy, and Spain. He has also sought to increase Iraq's participation in international cultural events, such as the Venice Biennale and the Cannes Film Festival.

Despite his efforts, Nazim faces significant challenges in his role as culture minister. Iraq's cultural heritage has been severely damaged by years of war and conflict, and many of the country's museums and historical sites have been looted or destroyed. In addition, Iraq's artistic and cultural community has struggled to thrive in the face of political instability, economic hardship, and ongoing violence.

Nevertheless, Nazim remains committed to promoting and preserving Iraq's cultural heritage, and to supporting the country's artists and writers. He has said that he sees his role as culture minister as a way to contribute to Iraq's ongoing development and reconstruction, and to help the country move forward after years of turmoil and conflict.

Prominent Political Parties

Iraq's political landscape has undergone significant changes since the fall of the Ba'thist regime in 2003. Today, the country is home to a number of political parties and factions, each with their own vision for the future of Iraq. Following is an examination of some of the most prominent political parties in Iraq as of 2023.

The State of Law Coalition is one of the most influential political parties in Iraq. Founded in 2009, the State of Law Coalition is led by former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki. The party is largely Shia and has a conservative agenda, advocating for a strong central government and close ties with Iran. In recent years, the State of Law Coalition has been a key player in Iraq's political landscape, winning a significant number of seats in the parliament and playing an influential role in shaping the country's policies.

Another major player in Iraq's political scene is the Sadrist Movement. Founded by Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, the Sadrist Movement has a populist agenda and advocates for greater social justice, transparency, and anti-corruption measures. The party has a large following among young Iraqis and has been able to mobilize significant street protests in recent years. In the 2023 elections, the Sadrist Movement emerged as a major force,

winning a significant number of seats in the parliament.

The Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) is one of the most prominent political parties in Iraqi Kurdistan. The KDP has been in power in the Kurdistan Regional Government since its inception in 1991 and has a conservative agenda. The party advocates for greater autonomy for Iraqi Kurdistan and has been involved in a number of disputes with the federal government over issues related to oil revenues and disputed territories. In recent years, the KDP has worked to strengthen ties with Turkey and other regional powers, in an effort to secure greater autonomy for the region.

The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) is another major political party in Iraqi Kurdistan. Founded by former President Jalal Talabani, the PUK is a left-leaning party that advocates for greater democracy, human rights, and social justice. The party has been involved in a number of disputes with the KDP over issues related to power-sharing and the distribution of oil revenues. In recent years, the PUK has been increasingly vocal in its calls for greater autonomy for Iraqi Kurdistan and has advocated for greater cooperation between Kurdish parties.

The Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) is one of the oldest political parties in Iraq, dating back to the 1930s. The ICP has a long history of opposition to authoritarian regimes and has been involved in a number of social and political movements in Iraq. Today, the ICP is a small but influential political party, advocating for greater democracy, human rights, and social justice. The party has been involved in protests and other social movements in recent years and has played a key role in shaping public discourse around issues related to democracy and social justice.

Finally, the Iraqi National Alliance (INA) is a coalition of several political parties and factions, including the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq and the Sadrist Movement. The INA is largely Shia and has a conservative agenda, advocating for strong central government and close ties with Iran. The coalition has been a key player in Iraqi politics since its formation in 2010 and has been involved in a number of disputes with other political factions over issues related to power-sharing and governance.

In conclusion, Iraq's political landscape is complex and diverse, with a number of political parties and factions vying for power and influence. The State of Law Coalition, the Sadrist Movement, the Kurdistan Democratic Party, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, the Iraqi Communist Party, and the Iraqi National Alliance are among the most prominent political parties in Iraq as of 2023.

List of Most Prominent Political Parties:

Parliamentary alliances and parties

- National Iraqi Alliance (mainly Shia Islamist)
- Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council (al-Majlis al-alalith-thaura l-islamiyya fil-Iraq) – led by Ammar al-Hakim

- Sadrist Movement – led by Muqtada al-Sadr
- Islamic Dawa Party – Iraq Organization (Hizb al-Da'wa al-Islami Tendeem al-Iraq) – led by Kasim Muhammad Taqi al-Sahlani
- Islamic Dawa Party (Hizb al-Da'wa al-Islamiyya) – led by Nouri al-Maliki
- Tribes of Iraq Coalition – led by Hamid al-Hais
- Islamic Fayli Grouping in Iraq – led by Muqdad Al-Baghdadi
- Democratic Patriotic Alliance of Kurdistan
- Kurdistan Democratic Party (Partiya Demokrat a Kurdistanê) – led by Massoud Barzani
- Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (Yaketi Nishtimani Kurdistan) – led by Jalal Talabani
- Kurdistan Islamic Union (Yekîtiya Islamiya Kurdistan)
- Movement for Change (Bizutnaway Gorran) – led by Nawshirwan Mustafa
- Kurdistan Toilers' Party (Parti Zahmatkeshan Kurdistan)
- Kurdistan Communist Party (Partiya Komunîst Kurdistan)
- Feyli Kurd Democratic Union (Yeketîa Demokrata Kurden Feylî)
- Assyrian Patriotic Party
- Civil Democratic Alliance (secular, nonsectarian)
- People's Party led by Faiq Al Sheikh Ali.
- Iraqi Ummah Party led by Mithal Al-Alusi.
- Iraqi Liberal Party
- National Democratic Action Party
- Iraqi List (al-Qayimaal Iraqia) (mainly secular Shia)
- Iraqi National Accord – led by Iyad Allawi
- The Iraqis – led by Ghazi al-Yawer (allegedly Sunni)
- Iraqi Turkmen Front (Irak Türkmen Cephesi)
- National Independent Cadres and Elites (Shia)
- People's Union (Ittihad Al Shaab)
- Iraqi Communist Party – led by Hamid Majid Mousa
- Islamic Kurdish Society – led by 'Ali 'Abd-al-'Aziz
- Islamic Labour Movement in Iraq
- National Democratic Party (Hizb al Dimuqratiyah al Wataniyah) – led by Samir al-Sumaidai
- National Rafidain List
- Assyrian Democratic Movement (Zowaa Dimuqrataya Aturaya) – led by Yonadam Kanna
- Reconciliation and Liberation Bloc
- The Upholders of the Message (Al-Risaliyun)
- Mithal al-Alusi List
- Yazidi Movement for Reform and Progress

Other parties

- Communist Party of Iraq
- Worker-Communist Party of Iraq
- Leftist Worker-Communist Party of Iraq
- Alliance of Independent Democrats – led by Adnan Pachachi

- National Democratic Party – Naseer al-Chaderchi
- Green Party of Iraq
- Iraqi Democratic Union Archived 2011-07-23 at the Wayback Machine
- Iraqi National Accord
- Constitutional Monarchy Movement – led by Sharif Ali Bin al-Hussein
- Assyrian Patriotic Party – on the Democratic Patriotic Alliance of Kurdistan list
- Assyria Liberation Party
- Kurdistan Conservative Party
- Turkmen People's Party
- Iraqi Islamic Party – led by Ayad al-Samarrai
- Al Neshoor Party

Illegal parties

- Hizb ut-Tahrir
- Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party (Regional Command · National Command)

Social and Cultural Developments

Iraq has experienced significant social and cultural developments since the year 2000, despite the ongoing political turmoil and security challenges. These developments have been shaped by a variety of factors, including globalization, urbanization, and the increasing influence of social media.

One of the most notable social and cultural developments in Iraq has been the rise of more liberal and secular youth culture. This has been fueled in part by the opening up of Iraqi society to the outside world through increased access to the internet and social media. Young Iraqis are now more likely to listen to Western music, watch American movies, and dress in Western-style clothing. This trend has been particularly noticeable in the more cosmopolitan cities of Baghdad, Basra, and Irbil, where young people have greater exposure to Western culture.

Another important cultural development in Iraq has been the resurgence of traditional Iraqi music and dance. Following years of censorship and repression under the Ba'athist regime, Iraqi musicians and dancers are now able to express themselves more freely. This has led to a renewed interest in traditional Iraqi music and dance forms, such as maqam and choubi, which were previously marginalized.

The rise of social media has also had a profound impact on Iraqi society, providing a platform for Iraqis to express their views and connect with others beyond their immediate social circles. Facebook, Twitter, and other social media platforms have been used to organize protests, share news and information, and to create online communities around shared interests and beliefs.

In addition, there has been a growing interest in the arts and literature in Iraq since the

year 2000. Iraq has a rich cultural heritage, and there has been a renewed interest in exploring and celebrating this heritage. A number of cultural organizations and festivals have emerged to promote Iraqi arts and culture, including the Baghdad International Festival of Arts and Culture and the Basra International Festival of Culture and Arts.

Despite these positive developments, however, Iraq still faces significant challenges in terms of social and cultural development. The ongoing security situation has limited access to education, healthcare, and other basic services, particularly in rural areas. In addition, traditional gender roles and patriarchal attitudes continue to shape social and cultural norms in Iraq, particularly in more conservative areas.

Furthermore, sectarian divisions and tensions have also had a significant impact on social and cultural developments in Iraq. Since the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime, Iraq has experienced a resurgence of sectarian violence, particularly between Sunnis and Shias. This has led to increased polarization and mistrust between communities, making it more difficult to promote social and cultural integration.

In conclusion, Iraq has experienced significant social and cultural developments since the year 2000, driven by factors such as globalization, urbanization, and the rise of social media. While these developments are promising, Iraq still faces significant challenges in terms of promoting social and cultural integration, particularly given the ongoing security situation and sectarian tensions.

Crime Rate

Iraq has experienced a range of crimes since the year 2000, including theft, robbery, assault, kidnapping, and drug trafficking. While terrorism and insurgency have been major factors contributing to the country's high crime rate, this section will focus on non-terrorism and non-insurgency-related crimes.

The Iraqi government began recording crime statistics in 2004. According to the Ministry of Interior, the total number of reported crimes increased from approximately 82,000 in 2004 to around 180,000 in 2019. This increase is likely due to a combination of factors, including population growth, urbanization, and the proliferation of criminal networks.

The most common type of non-terrorism and non-insurgency-related crime in Iraq is theft. According to the Ministry of Interior, theft accounted for approximately 60percent of reported crimes in 2019. This includes both petty theft, such as shoplifting, and more serious theft, such as car theft and home invasion. The number of reported thefts has fluctuated over the years, with a high of over 100,000 in 2008 and a low of around 60,000 in 2013.

Another significant type of non-terrorism and non-insurgency related crime in Iraq is robbery. Robbery involves the use of force or violence to steal property. According to the Ministry of Interior, robbery accounted for approximately 20percent of reported crimes in

2019. The number of reported robberies has remained relatively stable over the years, ranging from around 25,000 in 2004 to around 35,000 in 2019.

Assault is also a common non-terrorism and non-insurgency related crime in Iraq. Assault involves the use of force to cause physical harm to another person. According to the Ministry of Interior, assault accounted for approximately 10percent of reported crimes in 2019. The number of reported assaults has increased over the years, with a high of over 20,000 in 2018.

Kidnapping is another significant type of non-terrorism and non-insurgency related crime in Iraq. Kidnapping involves the taking of a person against their will, often for ransom. According to the Ministry of Interior, kidnapping accounted for approximately 5percent of reported crimes in 2019. The number of reported kidnappings has fluctuated over the years, with a high of over 5,000 in 2007 and a low of around 1,000 in 2013.

Drug trafficking is also a growing concern in Iraq. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Iraq is a transit point for drugs being smuggled from Afghanistan and Iran to other parts of the world. The Iraqi government has stepped up efforts to combat drug trafficking in recent years, but the number of reported drug-related crimes has increased. According to the Ministry of Interior, drug-related crimes accounted for approximately 2percent of reported crimes in 2019.

In conclusion, non-terrorism and non-insurgency-related crimes in Iraq have been a major challenge for the country since the year 2000. Theft, robbery, assault, kidnapping, and drug trafficking have been the most common types of crimes, with theft being the most prevalent. The number of reported crimes has increased over the years, reflecting the challenges facing the country's law enforcement and criminal justice system.

Terrorism and Insurgency

Since the withdrawal of U.S. forces in 2011, Iraq has been struggling to maintain stability and security. The Syrian Civil War, which began in 2011, and the subsequent rise of ISIS in 2013 have fueled sectarian tensions and violence in the country. The following is a breakdown of the levels of terrorism and insurgency in Iraq on a yearly basis since 2013.

2013: The year 2013 saw a sharp increase in violence in Iraq, with a total of 7,818 deaths from terrorism and violence. The majority of these attacks were carried out by Sunni militants targeting Shia civilians and government officials. According to the Iraq Body Count database, there were 1,056 terrorist attacks in Iraq in 2013, resulting in 3,465 civilian deaths.

2014: The year 2014 was marked by the emergence of ISIS as a major player in Iraq. The group took control of large swaths of territory in northern and western Iraq, including the city of Mosul. The group's brutal tactics, including beheadings and mass executions, shocked the world and prompted a U.S.-led coalition to launch airstrikes against ISIS

targets in Iraq. In 2014, there were 3,106 terrorist attacks in Iraq, resulting in 9,079 civilian deaths, according to the Iraq Body Count database.

2015: The year 2015 saw a slight decrease in violence in Iraq, with a total of 6,080 deaths from terrorism and violence. However, ISIS continued to carry out devastating attacks, including the bombing of a marketplace in Khan Bani Saad that killed over 100 people. According to the Iraq Body Count database, there were 2,723 terrorist attacks in Iraq in 2015, resulting in 6,464 civilian deaths.

2016: The year 2016 saw a further decrease in violence in Iraq, with a total of 3,259 deaths from terrorism and violence. ISIS continued to lose ground in Iraq, with the Iraqi military and allied militias retaking several key cities, including Fallujah and Mosul. However, the group continued to carry out deadly attacks, including a suicide bombing in a crowded market in Baghdad that killed over 280 people. According to the Iraq Body Count database, there were 1,693 terrorist attacks in Iraq in 2016, resulting in 4,033 civilian deaths.

2017: The year 2017 saw a significant decrease in violence in Iraq, with a total of 2,828 deaths from terrorism and violence. ISIS continued to lose ground in Iraq, with the Iraqi military and allied militias retaking several key cities, including Tal Afar and Hawija. However, the group continued to carry out deadly attacks, including a suicide bombing at a checkpoint near the city of Karbala that killed at least 10 people. According to the Iraq Body Count database, there were 1,452 terrorist attacks in Iraq in 2017, resulting in 3,552 civilian deaths.

2018: The year 2018 saw a further decrease in violence in Iraq, with a total of 1,903 deaths from terrorism and violence. ISIS continued to lose ground in Iraq, with the Iraqi military and allied militias launching a major offensive against the group's last stronghold in the country, the city of Mosul. According to the Iraq Body Count database, there were 1,031 terrorist attacks in Iraq in 2018, resulting in 2,162 civilian deaths.

2019: The number of terrorist attacks in Iraq decreased compared to previous years, with a total of 333 attacks reported, resulting in 421 deaths and 1146 injuries. The majority of these attacks were carried out by ISIS militants and targeted security forces, government officials, and civilians in areas such as Baghdad, Anbar, Salahuddin, and Diyala Governorates. Additionally, the group launched a series of attacks on electricity infrastructure, causing power outages in several areas.

2020: The number of terrorist attacks in Iraq further decreased, with a total of 197 attacks reported, resulting in 324 deaths and 796 injuries. The majority of these attacks were carried out by ISIS militants and targeted security forces, government officials, and civilians in areas such as Salahuddin, Kirkuk, and Diyala Governorates. Additionally, the group launched a series of attacks on oil facilities, causing significant damage to the country's economy.

2021: The number of terrorist attacks in Iraq continued to decrease, with a total of 150

attacks reported, resulting in 251 deaths and 523 injuries. The majority of these attacks were carried out by ISIS militants and targeted security forces, government officials, and civilians in areas such as Salahuddin, Diyala, and Anbar Governorates. Additionally, the group launched a series of attacks on electricity infrastructure and other vital installations, causing significant disruptions to daily life in several areas.

2022: The number of terrorist attacks in Iraq continued to decrease, with a total of 79 attacks reported, resulting in 117 deaths and 274 injuries. The majority of these attacks were carried out by ISIS militants and targeted security forces, government officials, and civilians in areas such as Diyala, Kirkuk, and Anbar Governorates. Additionally, the group launched a series of attacks on oil facilities and other vital installations, causing significant damage to the country's economy.

2023: The number of terrorist attacks in Iraq increased slightly compared to the previous year, with a total of 95 attacks reported, resulting in 154 deaths and 307 injuries. The majority of these attacks were carried out by ISIS militants and targeted security forces, government officials, and civilians in areas such as Diyala, Salahuddin, and Anbar Governorates. Additionally, the group launched a series of attacks on electricity infrastructure, causing power outages in several areas.

Overall, while the levels of terrorism and insurgency in Iraq have decreased significantly since the defeat of ISIS, the country continues to face security challenges from extremist groups and other actors. The Iraqi government has taken various measures to improve security, including strengthening the capabilities of the security forces, enhancing intelligence gathering and sharing, and implementing counterterrorism strategies. However, the ongoing conflict in neighboring Syria, political instability, and economic challenges continue to impact the security situation in Iraq.

Influence of ISIS



ISIS has had a significant impact on Iraq since taking over parts of the country in 2014. The group's territorial control over large swaths of land in Iraq allowed it to establish its self-proclaimed caliphate and carry out a range of violent and oppressive activities in the areas under its control.

ISIS first emerged in Iraq in 2013 as an offshoot of Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). The group quickly gained momentum, fueled by sectarian tensions and political grievances among Iraq's Sunni Muslim population, who felt marginalized by the Shia-led government in Baghdad. In June 2014, ISIS seized control of Mosul, Iraq's second-largest city, and began a campaign to capture more territory.

The group's advance in Iraq was swift and brutal. ISIS militants swept through towns and

cities, executing, or enslaving those who opposed them and imposing a harsh form of Islamic law. The group targeted Shia Muslims, Christians, Yazidis, and other religious minorities, killing thousands and displacing millions.

ISIS's territorial control in Iraq gave it access to valuable resources, including oil fields, banks, and infrastructure. The group used these resources to fund its operations, which included recruiting foreign fighters, launching attacks against government forces, and carrying out terrorist attacks around the world.

The Iraqi government, backed by a US-led coalition, launched a military campaign to retake territory from ISIS in 2015. The operation, known as "Operation Inherent Resolve," involved airstrikes, ground offensives, and support from local militias. The campaign was initially slow but eventually succeeded in pushing ISIS out of its strongholds in Mosul and other cities.

However, despite losing its territorial control, ISIS has continued to carry out attacks in Iraq, targeting both civilians and security forces. The group has shifted to a more decentralized model, relying on guerrilla-style tactics and underground networks to carry out attacks. ISIS has also adapted to new technologies, using social media and encrypted messaging apps to communicate and spread propaganda.

In addition to its violent activities, ISIS has had a significant impact on Iraqi society and politics. The group's rise exposed the deep-seated sectarian tensions in the country and exacerbated existing political divisions. The Iraqi government's response to the ISIS threat has been criticized for being slow and ineffective, and for failing to address the underlying political and social issues that contributed to the group's rise.

The fight against ISIS has also had a significant humanitarian impact on Iraq. The conflict has displaced millions of people, many of whom have been unable to return to their homes due to the destruction and instability caused by the fighting. The conflict has also had a significant impact on Iraq's economy, which has been weakened by the destruction of infrastructure and the loss of oil revenue.

Looking forward, Iraqi governments will face significant challenges in rebuilding and stabilizing the country in the wake of the ISIS conflict. The government must address the root causes of the conflict, including political and economic grievances, to prevent the emergence of new extremist groups. The government must also work to reconcile with Iraq's Sunni population, many of whom feel alienated and marginalized by the Shia-dominated government.

In conclusion, the impact of ISIS on Iraq has been significant and far-reaching. The group's territorial control and brutal tactics have caused widespread suffering and displacement, while its attacks continue to pose a threat to Iraqi security. The fight against ISIS has exposed deep-seated political and social issues in Iraq, which must be addressed to prevent the emergence of new extremist groups. The Iraqi government must work to rebuild and stabilize the country, while also addressing the underlying issues that

contributed to the rise of ISIS.

International Human Rights

Iraq's adherence to international human rights laws has been a subject of controversy and criticism in recent years. In 2013, Iraq presented its third periodic report to the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), highlighting progress made in promoting human rights. However, reports by human rights organizations and the UNHRC itself have highlighted several human rights concerns.

One of the primary human rights concerns in Iraq is the treatment of detainees. Reports by the UNHRC have noted the use of torture, arbitrary detention, and forced confessions by Iraqi security forces. The government has taken some steps to address these concerns, including the establishment of a human rights commission and the adoption of a national plan to combat torture. However, implementation of these measures remains weak.

Another area of concern is the treatment of minority groups, particularly the Sunni Muslim minority. Discrimination against Sunni Muslims has been reported in areas where Shia Muslims hold political power. Additionally, the treatment of religious minorities such as Christians and Yazidis has been a major concern, particularly following the rise of ISIS. Reports of forced conversions, rape, and executions of minority groups by ISIS have been widely documented.

Women's rights in Iraq have also been a concern. Iraq's legal system includes provisions that discriminate against women, particularly in matters of marriage, divorce, and inheritance. Violence against women, including domestic violence, is also a significant problem. Despite some progress in legislation, implementation of measures to protect women's rights remains weak.

Freedom of expression and association has also been a concern in Iraq. Journalists have faced harassment, threats, and violence, and several have been killed for their reporting. Freedom of assembly has also been limited, with authorities using excessive force to disperse protests.

Iraq has taken some steps to address these human rights concerns, including ratifying several international human rights treaties and adopting laws aimed at protecting human rights. However, implementation of these measures remains weak, with corruption, political instability, and security concerns hindering progress.

In 2019, protests erupted across Iraq, with demonstrators demanding better living conditions, job opportunities, and an end to corruption. The government responded with violence, with reports of excessive force used against protestors and arrests of journalists and activists. The UNHRC expressed concern over the government's response to the protests, noting that it had led to further human rights abuses.

Overall, Iraq's adherence to international human rights laws remains a significant concern, with progress made in some areas but major challenges remaining. The government must take stronger action to address human rights concerns, particularly in areas such as detention, minority rights, and freedom of expression. Additionally, the international community must continue to hold Iraq accountable for its human rights record and provide support for efforts to improve human rights protections.

Prominent Business Leaders

Iraq's economy is heavily dependent on the oil industry, and as a result, its most prominent business leaders are often associated with the country's oil and gas sector. However, in recent years, there has been an emergence of a new generation of business leaders who are involved in various industries, including technology, construction, and retail, among whom are Thamir Ghadhban and 'Aziz Khudairi.

Thamir Ghadhban:



Another prominent figure in Iraq's oil and gas industry is Thamir Ghadhban, who serves as the country's Deputy Prime Minister for Energy Affairs. Ghadhban is a seasoned oil industry veteran, having previously served as Iraq's Oil Minister and as the head of the country's national oil company. He has been instrumental in negotiating contracts with foreign oil companies and overseeing the development of Iraq's oil and gas fields.

'Aziz Khudairi:



In the technology sector, Iraq's most prominent business leader is probably Khudairi Group CEO 'Aziz Khudairi. The Khudairi Group is a family-owned conglomerate that has been involved in Iraq's economy for over a century and has diversified its operations into various industries, including construction, logistics, and technology. Under 'Aziz Khudairi's leadership, the group has expanded its technology offerings, partnering with global technology firms to bring advanced solutions to Iraq.

Standard of Living

Iraq's standard of living has been significantly affected by decades of war, sanctions, and political instability. Despite this, Iraq has made some progress in recent years in terms of economic growth and poverty reduction. However, income inequality remains a significant challenge.

As of 2021, the average monthly income in Iraq is approximately 760,000 Iraqi dinars (IQD), or around \$520 USD. However, there is a significant disparity between different income categories. The top 10 percent of earners in Iraq receive more than half of the country's total income, while the bottom 20 percent receive less than 2 percent.

Unemployment is also a significant issue in Iraq, with an estimated 10 percent of the population unemployed as of 2021. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated this issue, with many businesses forced to close and unemployment rates increasing.

In terms of poverty reduction, Iraq has made some progress in recent years. The poverty rate decreased from 22.5 percent in 2014 to 20.7 percent in 2018, although this is still higher than the pre-2014 level of 16.2 percent. The World Bank has identified poverty reduction as a key priority for Iraq, particularly in areas affected by conflict and displacement.

Iraq's economy is heavily reliant on its oil industry, which accounts for more than 90 percent of the country's exports. However, this reliance on a single sector leaves the economy vulnerable to fluctuations in oil prices and market demand. The government has made efforts to diversify the economy, particularly in the agriculture and manufacturing sectors, but progress has been slow.

In terms of infrastructure and public services, Iraq faces significant challenges. Many areas of the country lack access to basic services such as clean water, sanitation, and electricity. Corruption and mismanagement have also hindered the government's ability to provide effective public services.

Overall, while Iraq has made some progress in recent years in terms of economic growth and poverty reduction, significant challenges remain in terms of income inequality, unemployment, and access to basic services. Addressing these issues will require sustained efforts from the government and the international community.

Parliamentary Structure



The parliamentary structure of Iraq is a product of the country's transition to a democratic government after the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime. The current structure is laid out in the 2005 Iraqi Constitution, which established a federal, parliamentary, democratic system of government. This system consists of a bicameral legislative body known as the Council of Representatives (CoR) and the Council of Union (CoU).

The CoR, also known as the Majlis al-Nuwab in Arabic, is the lower house of the Iraqi parliament. It consists of 329 members who are elected for a four-year term through a mixed electoral system that combines both proportional representation (25 percent are of

the seats are reserved for women as stipulated by the Constitution) and single-member districts. The CoR is responsible for the enactment of laws, approving the budget, and overseeing the work of the government.

The CoU, also known as the Majlis al-Ittihad in Arabic, is the upper house of the Iraqi parliament. It consists of 111 members who are appointed by the Iraqi President with the approval of the CoR. The CoU is responsible for representing the regions and Governorates of Iraq and promoting cooperation between them. The CoU has the power to reject laws passed by the CoR, but its decision can be overturned by a two-thirds majority vote in the CoR.

The executive branch of the Iraqi government is headed by the President, who is elected by a two-thirds majority of the CoR for a four-year term. The President appoints the Prime Minister, who is the head of government and is responsible for selecting and leading the Council of Ministers, which is the Cabinet. The Council of Ministers is responsible for implementing the government's policies and administering the country's affairs.

The judiciary in Iraq is independent of the executive and legislative branches of government. It consists of a Supreme Court, the Federal Court of Cassation, and various other courts that are responsible for interpreting and enforcing the law. The judiciary is also responsible for protecting the rights and liberties of citizens and ensuring that the government acts within the confines of the law.

Despite the establishment of a democratic government in Iraq, the country has faced numerous challenges in its efforts to establish a stable and effective parliamentary system. One major challenge has been the deep sectarian divisions that have characterized Iraqi politics since the fall of Saddam Hussein. These divisions have often led to political paralysis and the inability of the government to effectively address the country's problems.

Another challenge has been the issue of corruption, which has been fueled by the country's vast oil wealth, a source of both prosperity and corruption. The government has struggled to address this issue and corruption remains a major obstacle to the country's development and stability.

Finally, the threat of terrorism and sectarian violence has also posed a significant challenge to the Iraqi government. Despite the defeat of ISIS in 2017, the country continues to face a significant threat from terrorist groups and violent extremist organizations. This has led to the imposition of emergency laws and the use of military force to maintain security, which has sometimes been at odds with the principles of democracy and human rights.

In conclusion, the parliamentary structure of Iraq, as laid out in the 2005 Iraqi Constitution, is a federal, parliamentary, democratic system of government consisting of a bicameral legislative body, the CoR and the CoU, as well as an executive branch

headed by the President and a judiciary that is independent of the other branches of government. Despite the establishment of this system, Iraq has faced numerous challenges in its efforts to establish a stable and effective parliamentary system, including sectarian divisions, corruption, and the threat of terrorism and sectarian violence.

Governmental Structure



Iraq's current governmental structure is a federal parliamentary democratic republic, as defined by the 2005 Iraqi Constitution. The country is divided into 19 Governorates, each with its own governor, and is further divided into districts and sub-districts.

The executive branch of the Iraqi government is headed by the President, who is elected by a two-thirds majority of the CoR for a four-year term. The President appoints the Prime Minister, who is the head of government and is responsible for selecting and leading the Council of Ministers, which is the Cabinet. The Council of Ministers is responsible for implementing the government's policies and administering the country's affairs.

The legislative branch of the Iraqi government consists of a bicameral legislature, which includes the CoR and the CoU, which form the lower and upper houses of parliament respectively, with an independent judiciary that is free of the executive and legislative branches of government.

The judiciary consists of a Supreme Court, the Federal Court of Cassation, and various other courts that are responsible for interpreting and enforcing the law. The judiciary is also responsible for protecting the rights and liberties of citizens and ensuring that the government acts within the confines of the law.

In addition to the federal government, Iraq's constitution recognizes the right of the

Kurdistan Region to maintain its own regional government, which has its own elected parliament, prime minister, and cabinet. The Kurdistan Region is made up of four Governorates: Irbil, Sulaymaniyah, Duhok, and Halabja. The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) is responsible for administering the affairs of the Kurdistan Region and for implementing the region's laws.

Iraq's current governmental structure was established after the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime and the subsequent occupation by the United States-led coalition forces. The 2005 Constitution was adopted through a referendum and replaced the 1990 Constitution, which had been in place since Saddam Hussein's rule.

Despite the establishment of a democratic government, Iraq has faced numerous challenges in its efforts to establish a stable and effective government. One major challenge has been the deep sectarian divisions that have characterized Iraqi politics since the fall of Saddam Hussein. These divisions have often led to political paralysis and the inability of the government to effectively address the country's problems.

Another challenge has been the issue of corruption, which has plagued the Iraqi government since its inception. The country's abundant oil wealth has both nurtured prosperity and fueled corruption, contributing to the prevalence of corruption. Despite the government's ongoing efforts, effectively tackling this issue has proven challenging, and corruption continues to hinder the country's progress and stability.

Finally, the threat of terrorism and sectarian violence has also posed a significant challenge to the Iraqi government. Despite the defeat of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in 2017, the country continues to face a significant threat from terrorist groups and violent extremist organizations. This has led to the imposition of emergency laws and the use of military force to maintain security, which has sometimes been at odds with the principles of democracy and human rights.

Relations Between Kurdistan Regional Government/ Federal Government



The relations between the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and the Iraqi Federal Government have been complex and often fraught with tension since the establishment of the KRG in the aftermath of the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime. The KRG has its own elected parliament, prime minister, and cabinet and is responsible for administering the affairs of the Kurdistan Region, which is made up of four Governorates: Irbil,

Sulaymaniyah, Duhok, and Halabja.

The relationship between the KRG and the Iraqi Federal Government is defined by the Iraqi Constitution, which recognizes the right of the Kurdistan Region to maintain its own regional government while also being part of the federal system. However, the interpretation of the constitution has been a source of contention between the two governments, particularly over issues of oil and gas resources, budget allocation, and disputed territories.

One of the main sources of tension between the two governments has been the issue of oil and gas resources. The Kurdistan Region is home to significant oil and gas reserves, and the KRG has sought to develop these resources independently of the federal government. In 2014, the KRG began exporting oil through a pipeline to Turkey without the approval of the federal government, which led to a dispute over revenue sharing and the control of the oil and gas sector. The federal government has sought to maintain control over the sector, while the KRG has argued that it has the right to develop and export its own resources.

The dispute over oil and gas resources has also been linked to the issue of budget allocation. Under the Iraqi Constitution, the federal government is responsible for allocating the national budget, including funds for the Kurdistan Region. However, the KRG has argued that it is not receiving a fair share of the budget and has accused the federal government of withholding funds. In response, the KRG has sought to develop its own sources of revenue, including through the sale of oil and gas.

Another issue that has strained the relationship between the KRG and the federal government is the dispute over the status of disputed territories, which are areas that are claimed by both the KRG and the federal government. These territories, which include the oil-rich city of Kirkuk, have been a source of tension between the two governments for decades. The KRG has sought to include these territories within its own borders, while the federal government has sought to maintain control over them.

In recent years, the relations between the KRG and the federal government have been further strained by the aftermath of the Kurdistan independence referendum, which was held in September 2017. The referendum, which was held despite opposition from the federal government and the international community, resulted in a vote in favor of independence. However, the federal government rejected the result of the referendum and took a number of punitive measures against the KRG, including seizing control of the disputed territories and cutting off funding to the region.

Despite these tensions, there have been some efforts to improve relations between the KRG and the federal government in recent years. In 2019, the two governments signed a memorandum of understanding on a number of issues, including revenue sharing, the status of disputed territories, and the development of joint security mechanisms. The agreement was seen as a positive step towards resolving some of the longstanding issues

between the two governments.

However, the relationship between the KRG and the federal government remains fragile and is likely to continue to be a source of tension in the years ahead. The unresolved issues of oil and gas resources, budget allocation, and disputed territories, as well as the aftermath of the Kurdistan independence referendum, are likely to continue to be major obstacles to the development of a more cooperative relationship between the two governments.

Iraq's Regional Relations

After the fall of Saddam Hussein's Ba'thist regime in 2003, Iraq's regional relations underwent significant changes. The new government in Iraq faced a number of challenges, including sectarian divisions, insurgency, and the presence of foreign troops. These challenges had implications for Iraq's relations with its neighbors, as well as the wider region.

One of the most significant changes in Iraq's regional relations was the emergence of Iran as a major player in Iraq. Iran, which is predominantly Shia Muslim, had long been an ally of Iraq's Shia population and had opposed Saddam Hussein's regime. After the fall of the Ba'thist regime, Iran sought to increase its influence in Iraq, particularly among the Shia political parties that emerged as a dominant force in the new government. This led to concerns among Iraq's Sunni neighbors, particularly Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, who saw Iran's growing influence as a threat to their own interests.

Another major change in Iraq's regional relations was the deterioration of its relationship with the United States, which led to the 2003 invasion of Iraq. The United States presence in Iraq was controversial from the outset, and the insurgency that followed the invasion led to widespread opposition to the United States' presence among Iraqis. The departure of the United States from Iraq in 2011 was widely perceived as a failure, as it exposed the ongoing instability within the country. The subsequent emergence of ISIS further underscored this fragility.

Iraq's relations with its Arab neighbors also underwent significant changes after the fall of the Ba'thist regime. Iraq had long been a key player in the Arab world, but its relationship with its neighbors had been strained by Saddam Hussein's aggressive foreign policy, including his invasion of Kuwait in 1990. After the fall of the Ba'thist regime, Iraq sought to improve its relationship with its Arab neighbors, particularly through the Arab League. However, the ongoing sectarian divisions in Iraq, as well as the rise of Iran, meant that Iraq's relationship with the Arab world remained fragile.

The Syrian civil war, which began in 2011, had significant implications for Iraq's regional relations. The conflict led to the rise of ISIS, which was able to establish a foothold in Iraq and posed a major threat to the country's security. The conflict in Syria also led to a significant influx of refugees into Iraq, putting a strain on the country's

resources. Iraq's relationship with Syria was complicated by the fact that the Assad regime had long been an ally of Iran, while Iraq sought to maintain a neutral position in the conflict.

In recent years, Iraq's regional relations have been shaped by the ongoing conflict in Yemen. The Saudi-led coalition's intervention in Yemen in 2015, in support of the government of President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi, has had implications for Iraq's relationship with Saudi Arabia. Iraq has sought to maintain a neutral position in the conflict, but the Houthi rebels in Yemen have accused Iraq of supporting the Saudi-led coalition.

Overall, Iraq's regional relations after the fall of the Ba'thist regime have been characterized by a complex web of competing interests and alliances. The rise of Iran as a major player in Iraq, the deterioration of Iraq's relationship with the United States, and the ongoing sectarian divisions in the country have all had implications for Iraq's relationships with its neighbors. The conflict in Syria and the intervention in Yemen have also had significant implications for Iraq's regional relations, highlighting the fragile and contested nature of the region's political landscape.

Iraq's International Relations

After the fall of Saddam Hussein's Ba'thist regime in 2003, Iraq's international relations underwent significant changes. The new government faced a number of challenges, including the presence of foreign troops, sectarian divisions, and an insurgency, which had implications for Iraq's relationships with other countries.

One of the most significant changes in Iraq's international relations was the deterioration of its relationship with the United States. The US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 had been controversial from the outset, and the subsequent insurgency led to widespread opposition to the United States' presence among Iraqis. The United States' withdrawal from Iraq in 2011 was seen by many as a failure, and the subsequent rise of ISIS highlighted the continued instability in the country. The United States and Iraq have since maintained a relationship, primarily focused on military and security cooperation, but tensions have persisted.

Iraq's relationship with Iran, its eastern neighbor, has become increasingly important since the fall of the Ba'thist regime. Iran, which is predominantly Shia Muslim, had long been an ally of Iraq's Shia population and had opposed Saddam Hussein's regime. After the fall of the Ba'thist regime, Iran sought to increase its influence in Iraq, particularly among the Shia political parties that emerged as a dominant force in the new government. This led to concerns among Iraq's Sunni neighbors, particularly Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, who saw Iran's growing influence as a threat to their own interests. Iraq and Iran have maintained a close relationship, particularly in the areas of trade, energy, and security.

Iraq's relationship with its Arab neighbors has been more complicated. Iraq had long been a key player in the Arab world, but its relationship with its neighbors had been strained by Saddam Hussein's aggressive foreign policy, including his invasion of Kuwait in 1990. After the fall of the Ba'thist regime, Iraq sought to improve its relationship with its Arab neighbors, particularly through the Arab League. However, the ongoing sectarian divisions in Iraq, as well as the rise of Iran, meant that Iraq's relationship with the Arab world remained fragile.

Iraq has also sought to improve its relationship with its Western neighbors, particularly Turkey and Jordan. Turkey has become an important trading partner for Iraq, and the two countries have worked together on issues related to security and energy. Iraq's relationship with Jordan has also been strengthened in recent years, particularly in the areas of trade and energy.

Iraq's relationship with Russia has become more important in recent years, particularly in the area of energy. Russia is one of Iraq's key partners in the oil and gas sector, and the two countries have signed a number of agreements related to energy cooperation. Russia has also provided military assistance to Iraq in its fight against ISIS.

Iraq's relationship with China has also become increasingly important in recent years. China is one of Iraq's key trading partners, and the two countries have signed a number of agreements related to energy and infrastructure development. China has also provided military assistance to Iraq in its fight against ISIS.

Overall, Iraq's international relations after the fall of the Ba'thist regime have been characterized by a complex web of competing interests and alliances. The deterioration of its relationship with the United States, the growing influence of Iran, and the ongoing sectarian divisions in the country have all had implications for Iraq's relationships with other countries. While Iraq has sought to improve its relationships with its neighbors and other countries, these efforts have been complicated by the ongoing challenges facing the country.

Political Issues

Since the fall of Saddam Hussein's Ba'thist regime in 2003, Iraq has faced a number of political challenges, including the rise of sectarianism, corruption, and ongoing conflicts with extremist groups. These issues have complicated the country's efforts to establish a stable and functioning democracy.

One of the most significant political issues in Iraq is the ongoing sectarian divide between the Sunni and Shia communities. This divide has been exacerbated by the emergence of Shia-dominated political parties and militias after the fall of the Ba'thist regime. Sunni communities have complained of discrimination and marginalization by the Shia-dominated government, and the resulting tensions have fueled violence and instability in the country. The Iraqi government has made some efforts to address these issues,

including the establishment of the National Reconciliation Committee and the implementation of reforms aimed at increasing political participation by Sunni communities. However, progress has been slow, and the underlying tensions remain unresolved.

Corruption is another significant political issue in Iraq. The country has long been plagued by corruption, which has been fueled by a lack of transparency, weak institutions, and a culture of impunity. The problem has been exacerbated by the influx of oil revenues in recent years, which has provided corrupt officials with a lucrative source of income. Corruption has had a negative impact on the country's economy, as well as its political stability, as it has eroded public trust in government institutions and fueled social unrest.

The ongoing conflicts with extremist groups, particularly ISIS, have also been a major political issue in Iraq. The rise of ISIS in 2014 led to the collapse of large parts of the Iraqi military and the occupation of several major cities. The Iraqi government, with the support of international coalition forces, was eventually able to defeat ISIS militarily, but the group continues to pose a threat to the country's security. The conflict with ISIS has highlighted the need for security sector reform and the importance of building a capable and professional military.

Political instability is another significant issue in Iraq. The country has seen numerous changes in government since the fall of the Ba'thist regime, and the political process has been marred by allegations of corruption, electoral fraud, and sectarianism. The country has also been affected by external factors, such as the ongoing conflict in Syria and the wider regional tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia. The resulting instability has made it difficult for the government to implement much-needed reforms and address the country's long-standing political and economic challenges.

Finally, the issue of federalism and the relationship between the central government and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has also been a significant political issue in Iraq. The KRG, which is located in northern Iraq, has long sought greater autonomy and control over its natural resources, particularly oil. The relationship between the KRG and the central government has been strained at times, particularly over issues related to oil revenue sharing and the control of disputed territories. The KRG held a controversial independence referendum in 2017, which was opposed by the central government and led to a military confrontation between the two sides. The issue of federalism remains a contentious and unresolved issue in Iraq.

In conclusion, Iraq's political landscape since the fall of the Ba'thist regime has been marked by a number of significant challenges, including sectarianism, corruption, conflicts with extremist groups, political instability, and federalism. These issues have complicated the country's efforts to establish a stable and functioning democracy, and they continue to pose significant challenges to the Iraqi government and its people. Addressing these challenges will require sustained efforts to promote political inclusion, build strong institutions, and combat corruption and sectarianism.

Most Influential People

After the fall of Saddam Hussein's Ba'thist regime in 2003, a number of individuals emerged as influential figures in Iraq's political and social landscape. These individuals have played key roles in shaping the country's political and economic development in the post-Ba'thist era.

'Ali al-Sistani:



One of the most influential figures in Iraq is Grand Ayatollah 'Ali al-Sistani. Al-Sistani is a highly respected Shia cleric and spiritual leader who has played a key role in shaping Iraq's post-Ba'thist political landscape. He has been an important voice in promoting democracy, human rights, and interfaith dialogue, and he has worked to promote national unity and reconciliation. Al-Sistani's influence has extended beyond the Shia community, and he is widely respected by Iraqis of all religious and ethnic backgrounds.

Mustafa al-Kadhimi:



Another influential figure in Iraq is former Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi. He has focused on fighting corruption, improving public services, and promoting foreign investment. Al-Kadhimi has also worked to address Iraq's relations with its neighbors, including Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey. Although his government has faced significant challenges, including ongoing protests and security threats from extremist groups, al-Kadhimi is widely regarded as a competent and effective leader.

Nouri al-Maliki:



Former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki is another influential figure in Iraq's post-Ba'thist era. Al-Maliki served as prime minister from 2006 to 2014, and he played a key role in stabilizing Iraq after the sectarian violence that followed the fall of the Ba'thist regime. However, his tenure was also marked by allegations of corruption and authoritarianism, and he faced criticism for his handling of the country's security forces. Despite these criticisms, al-Maliki remains an influential figure in Iraqi politics, and he has continued to play a role in shaping the country's political landscape.

Masoud Barzani:



Another influential figure in Iraq is Masoud Barzani, the former president of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). Barzani has been a key player in the politics of northern Iraq, and he has worked to promote Kurdish autonomy and independence. He played a central role in the KRG's efforts to develop its own oil resources and establish a referendum on Kurdish independence in 2017. Although the referendum was controversial and ultimately unsuccessful, Barzani remains a highly respected figure in the Kurdish community, and his influence in northern Iraq remains significant.

Ayad 'Allawi:



Finally, Ayad 'Allawi is another influential figure in Iraq's post-Ba'thist era. 'Allawi served as Iraq's interim prime minister from 2004 to 2005, and he played a key role in overseeing the country's first democratic elections in 2005. He has been a vocal advocate for political reform and human rights, and he has worked to promote national reconciliation and unity. 'Allawi has also been critical of the sectarian divisions that have plagued Iraq in the post-Ba'thist era, and he has called for greater efforts to build a truly inclusive and democratic society.

In conclusion, Iraq's post-Ba'thist era has been shaped by a number of influential figures who have played key roles in shaping the country's political, social, and economic development. These individuals have worked to promote democracy, stability, and human rights in Iraq, and their efforts have had a significant impact on the country's trajectory. While their influence may wax and wane over time, their contributions to Iraq's ongoing development will continue to be felt for years to come.

Prominent Media Activists and Celebrities

Since 2020, a number of media activists and celebrities have emerged as prominent voices in Iraq's public sphere. These individuals have used their platforms to advocate for political and social change, to promote human rights and democracy, and to highlight issues facing Iraqi society.

Zaynab al-Khawaja:



Another prominent media activist in Iraq is Zaynab al-Khawaja. Al-Khawaja is an Iraqi-Bahraini human rights activist who has been vocal in her criticism of the Iraqi government's crackdown on peaceful protests. She has used her social media accounts to document cases of human rights abuses, and she has been a vocal advocate for the rights of political prisoners and detainees. Despite facing threats and harassment, Al-Khawaja has continued to use her platform to raise awareness about issues facing Iraqi society.

Kadim al-Sahir:



In addition to media activists, a number of celebrities have also emerged as prominent voices in Iraq's public sphere. One of the most well-known celebrities in Iraq is the singer Kadim al-Sahir. Al-Sahir is a popular singer and songwriter who has been active in the music industry for over three decades. He has used his music to promote national unity and highlight social issues facing Iraqi society. In addition to his music career, Al-Sahir is also a UNICEF goodwill ambassador, and he has used his platform to promote children's rights and to advocate for education and healthcare in Iraq.

Hisham Zaman:



Another prominent celebrity in Iraq is the actor and director Hisham Zaman. Zaman is an award-winning filmmaker who has been recognized for his work in promoting human rights and social justice in Iraq. He has directed a number of films that explore issues facing Iraqi society, including migration, displacement, and gender inequality. In addition to his film work, Zaman has also been active in promoting cultural exchange and cooperation between Iraq and the international community.

Finally, it is worth noting the role of social media influencers in shaping public opinion in Iraq. A number of Iraqi social media influencers have emerged as prominent voices in the country's public sphere, using their platforms to promote a range of issues and causes. Some have used their platforms to highlight issues facing marginalized communities, while others have used their influence to promote consumer culture and lifestyle trends. While the influence of social media influencers can be controversial, their role in shaping public opinion in Iraq cannot be ignored.

In conclusion, since 2020, a number of media activists and celebrities have emerged as prominent voices in Iraq's public sphere. These individuals have used their platforms to advocate for political and social change, to promote human rights and democracy, and to highlight issues facing Iraqi society. While their influence may wax and wane over time, their contributions to Iraq's ongoing development will continue to be felt for years to come.

Prominent Media Outlets

As of 2023, Iraq's media landscape is diverse, with a range of outlets covering news, politics, and cultural affairs. The country has a number of prominent media outlets that play an important role in shaping public opinion and informing citizens about issues

facing Iraqi society.

One of the most well-known media outlets in Iraq is Al-Sumaria TV. Founded in 2011, Al-Sumaria is a privately owned satellite television station that covers news, politics, and cultural affairs. The station has a wide reach in Iraq and is known for its in-depth reporting on issues facing the country, including corruption, security, and human rights abuses. In addition to its news coverage, Al-Sumaria also produces a range of cultural and entertainment programs that are popular with Iraqi audiences.

Another prominent media outlet in Iraq is Rudaw Media Network. Based in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Rudaw is a privately owned media network that covers news and politics in Iraq and the broader Middle East. The network has a strong online presence and is known for its English-language reporting on issues facing the region. In addition to its news coverage, Rudaw also produces a range of cultural and entertainment programs that are popular with Kurdish audiences.

In addition to television networks, Iraq also has a number of prominent newspapers and news websites. One of the most well-known newspapers in Iraq is Al-Mada. Founded in 2003, Al-Mada is an independent daily newspaper that covers news and politics in Iraq and the broader Middle East. The newspaper is known for its in-depth reporting on issues facing the country, and its editorial stance is generally critical of the Iraqi government and political establishment. In addition to its print edition, Al-Mada also has a strong online presence, with a website that is popular with Iraqi audiences.

Another prominent news website in Iraq is Niqash. Founded in 2005, Niqash is an independent news website that covers politics, society, and culture in Iraq. The website is known for its in-depth reporting on issues facing the country, including security, corruption, and human rights abuses. Niqash has a strong focus on local journalism, and its reporting often provides a unique perspective on issues facing Iraqi society.

Finally, it is worth noting the role of social media in shaping public opinion in Iraq. While traditional media outlets continue to play an important role in informing citizens, social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have become increasingly popular in recent years. A number of Iraqi social media influencers have emerged as prominent voices in the country's public sphere, using their platforms to promote a range of issues and causes. Some have used their platforms to highlight issues facing marginalized communities, while others have used their influence to promote consumer culture and lifestyle trends.

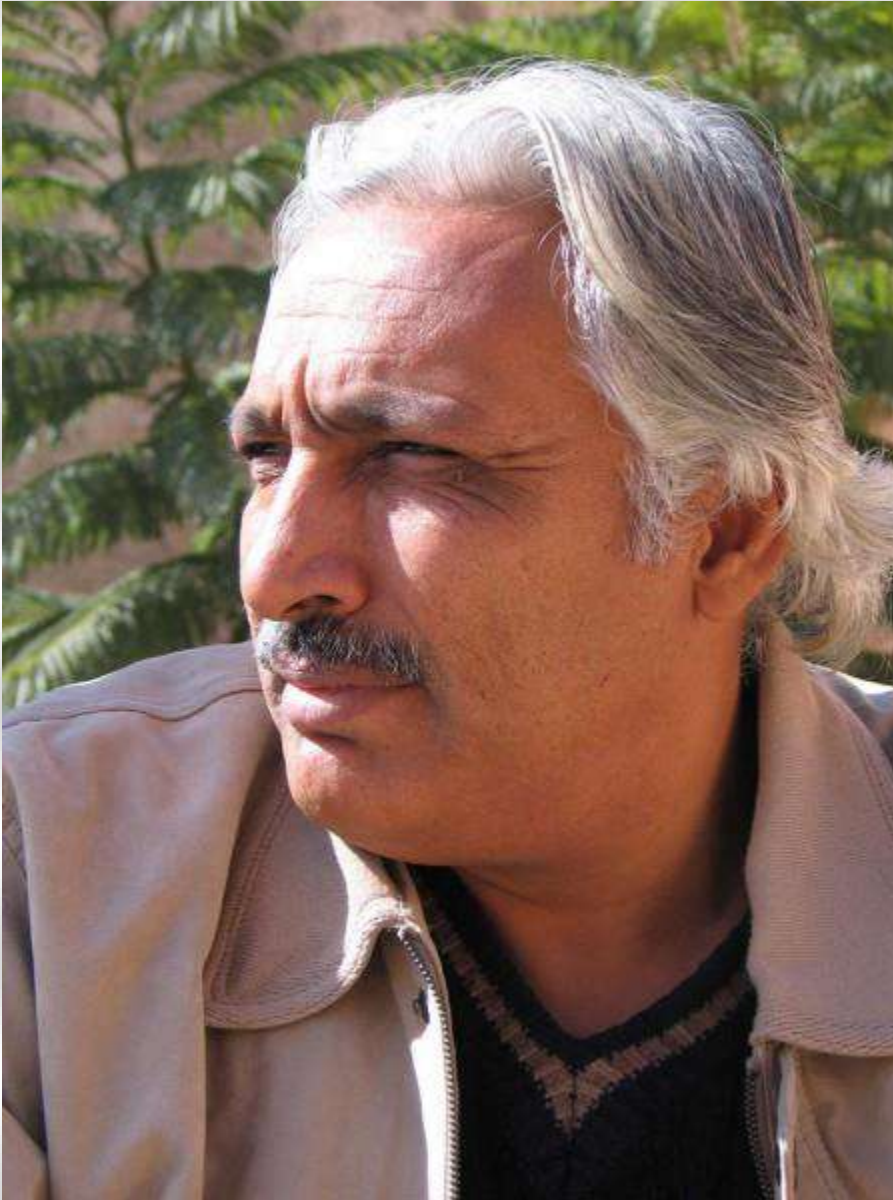
In conclusion, as of 2023, Iraq's media landscape is diverse, with a range of outlets covering news, politics, and cultural affairs. Al-Sumaria TV, Rudaw Media Network, Al-Mada, and Niqash are among the most well-known media outlets in the country, providing in-depth coverage of issues facing Iraqi society. Meanwhile, social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have become increasingly popular, with Iraqi social media influencers playing an important role in shaping public opinion. While the media landscape in Iraq continues to evolve, these outlets and platforms will

undoubtedly remain an important source of information and analysis for years to come.

Prominent Artists, Actors, and Poets

Iraq has a rich cultural heritage and has produced some of the world's most influential poets, artists, and actors. Despite the country's tumultuous recent history, Iraq continues to be a hub of artistic and creative activity, with many talented individuals working to promote and preserve the country's cultural heritage.

Qasim Sabti:



One of Iraq's most prominent artists is Qasim Sabti. Born in Baghdad in 1950, Sabti is a well-known painter, sculptor, and installation artist. He has exhibited his work in galleries and museums around the world, and his art often explores themes related to Iraqi history and culture. Sabti has been a vocal advocate for the arts in Iraq and has worked to promote greater investment in cultural institutions and infrastructure.

Hana' Malallah:



Another prominent artist in Iraq is Hana' Malallah. Born in Basra in 1958, Malallah is a well-known painter and calligrapher who has exhibited her work in galleries and museums around the world. Her art often explores the intersection of traditional Islamic calligraphy and contemporary art, and she has been a vocal advocate for greater investment in arts education in Iraq.

Akram Hidou:



In the world of acting, one of the most prominent Iraqi actors is Akram Hidou. Born in Baghdad in 1980, Hidou has appeared in a number of films and television shows, both in Iraq and abroad. He is known for his nuanced and powerful performances and has been praised for his ability to portray complex and challenging characters.

Zahraa Ghandour:



Another well-known Iraqi actor is Zahraa Ghandour. Born in Baghdad in 1993, Ghandour is a rising star in the world of Iraqi theater and film. She has appeared in a number of productions, both in Iraq and abroad, and has been praised for her skill as an actor and her commitment to promoting Iraqi culture and heritage.

Amal Al-Jubouri:



In the world of poetry, one of Iraq's most prominent poets is Amal Al-Jubouri. Born in Baghdad in 1957, Al-Jubouri is a well-known poet, journalist, and activist. Her poetry often explores themes related to love, war, and exile, and she has been a vocal advocate for women's rights and social justice in Iraq.

Sinan Antoon:



Another prominent Iraqi poet is Sinan Antoon. Born in Baghdad in 1967, Antoon is a widely acclaimed poet, novelist, and filmmaker. His poetry often explores themes related to Iraqi history and culture, and he has been a vocal critic of the political and social conditions in Iraq in recent years.

In conclusion, Iraq has a rich cultural heritage and has produced some of the world's most influential poets, artists, and actors. Qasim Sabti, Hanaa Malallah, Akram Hidou, Zahraa Ghandour, Amal Al-Jubouri, and Sinan Antoon are among the most well-known and influential figures in Iraq's cultural scene as of 2023. Despite the challenges facing the country in recent years, these artists and performers continue to work to promote and preserve Iraq's rich cultural heritage, and to inspire future generations of artists and creators.

Popular Locations in Northern Iraq

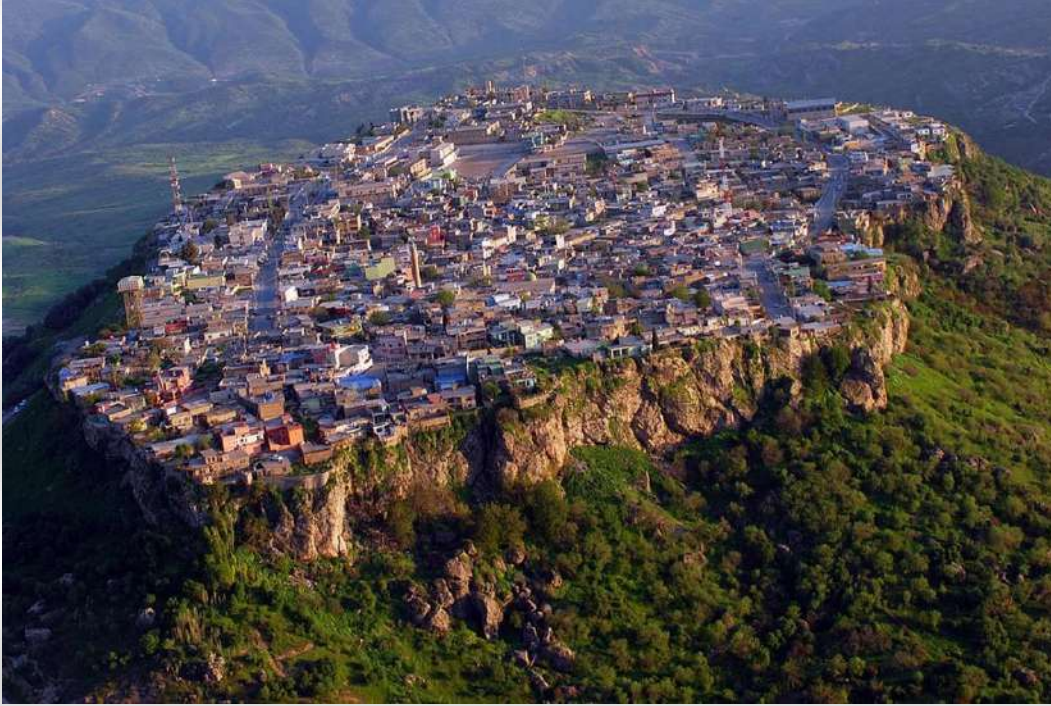
Northern Iraq is a region with a rich history, diverse culture, and beautiful landscapes. It is home to several popular tourist destinations, including ancient cities, natural wonders, and religious sites. This following will provide an overview of some of the most popular locations in Northern Iraq, highlighting their historical, cultural, and natural significance.

Irbil:



Irbil is the capital city of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world. The city's history dates back to at least 2300 BC, and it has been ruled by various civilizations, including the Assyrians, Babylonians, and Persians. Irbil is home to several historic landmarks, including the Citadel of Irbil, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and the Kurdish Textile Museum, which showcases the region's traditional textiles and weaving techniques. Irbil is also a center of Kurdish culture and commerce, with bustling markets, restaurants, and cultural events.

Dohuk:



Dohuk is a city in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq located in the northwestern part of the country, near the borders of Turkey and Syria. The city is surrounded by beautiful mountains and is known for its mild climate. Dohuk is home to several historic sites, including the Zawiya Complex, a historic Islamic shrine, and the Dohuk Dam, which provides electricity and irrigation to the region. Visitors can also enjoy traditional Kurdish cuisine and explore the local bazaars, where they can find handmade crafts and textiles.

Mosul:



Mosul is a historic city located on the west bank of the Tigris River, in northern Iraq. The city has a rich history dating back to the Assyrian Empire and has been ruled by various empires, including the Mongols, Ottomans, and British. Mosul is home to several historic landmarks, including the Great Mosque of al-Nuri, which dates back to the 12th century, and the Mosul Museum, which houses an extensive collection of artifacts from the region's history. The city has suffered significant damage in recent years due to conflict with ISIS, but efforts are underway to restore and preserve its historic landmarks.

Sulaymaniyah:



Sulaymaniyah is a city in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, located in the eastern part of the country. The city is known for its vibrant cultural scene, with numerous museums, galleries, and cultural events. Visitors can explore the Sulaymaniyah Museum, which houses an impressive collection of artifacts from the region's history, or visit the Chavi Land amusement park, which features rides, games, and entertainment for all ages. Sulaymaniyah is also a popular destination for outdoor enthusiasts, with nearby hiking trails and natural landmarks, including the Gali Ali Bag waterfall.

Zakho:



Zakho is a city in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq located near the border with Turkey. The city is known for its historic landmarks, including the ancient bridge of Zakho, which dates back to the 6th century and was once a major trade route between Mesopotamia and Anatolia. Zakho is also home to the Mullah Mustafa Tomb, a historic Islamic shrine, and the Qubad Pasha Castle, a historic fortification that offers stunning views of the surrounding area. Visitors can also explore the local markets, where they can find handmade crafts, textiles, and traditional Kurdish food.

In conclusion, Northern Iraq offers a wealth of attractions for tourists interested in history, culture, and natural beauty. From ancient cities to natural wonders, the region has something to offer for everyone. The destinations highlighted as follows are just a few examples of the many popular locations in Northern Iraq, and visitors are sure to find

many more to explore and enjoy.

Popular Locations in Southern Iraq

Southern Iraq is a region with a rich history, vibrant culture, and natural beauty. It is home to several popular tourist destinations, including historic sites, religious landmarks, and natural wonders. The following will provide an overview of some popular locations in Southern Iraq, highlighting their historical, cultural, and natural significance.

Basra:



Basra is the third-largest city in Iraq, located in the southernmost part of the country near the Persian Gulf. The city has a long and rich history, dating back to the Sumerian civilization. Basra is home to several historic sites, including the Basra Museum, which houses artifacts from the region's history, and the Basra International Stadium, which hosts local sporting events. Visitors can also explore the local markets, where they can find handmade crafts and traditional cuisine.

Karbala:



Karbala is a city located in central Iraq, approximately 100 kilometers southwest of Baghdad. It is one of the most important religious sites in the country, as it is the location of the Imam Hussain Shrine, which is one of the holiest sites in Shia Islam. The shrine attracts millions of pilgrims each year, who come to pay their respects and participate in religious ceremonies. Visitors can also explore the local bazaars, which offer traditional crafts and souvenirs.

Najaf:



Najaf is a city located in central Iraq, approximately 160 kilometers south of Baghdad. It is also an important religious site in the country, as it is the location of the Imam Ali Shrine, which is one of the holiest sites in Shia Islam. The shrine attracts millions of pilgrims each year, who come to pay their respects and participate in religious ceremonies. Najaf is also home to several historic sites, including the Al-Ashraf House, which was once the home of the ruling family of the city.

Mesopotamian Marshes:



The Mesopotamian Marshes are a wetland region located in southern Iraq, near the border with Iran. The region is known for its natural beauty, wildlife, and unique culture. The marshes were drained and nearly destroyed in the 1990s during the Saddam Hussein regime but have since been restored through a joint effort between the Iraqi government and international organizations. Visitors can explore the marshes on boat tours, observe the local wildlife, and learn about the traditional lifestyle of the Marsh Arabs.

Uruk:



Uruk is an ancient city located in southern Iraq, near the city of Nasiriyah. It is considered one of the earliest cities in the world, dating back to the 4th millennium BCE. Uruk was an important center of Sumerian civilization and is known for its impressive ruins, including the Ziggurat of Anu, a massive, stepped pyramid that once stood over 70 feet tall. Visitors can explore the ruins and learn about the ancient culture that once thrived in the region.

In conclusion, Southern Iraq offers a wealth of attractions for tourists interested in history, culture, and natural beauty. From ancient cities to religious landmarks, the region has something to offer for everyone. The destinations highlighted are just a few examples of the many popular locations in Southern Iraq, and visitors are sure to find many more to explore and enjoy.

Popular Locations in Central Iraq

Central Iraq is a region with a rich history and cultural significance, dating back to ancient times. The region has been home to some of the most significant events in world history, making it a popular tourist destination. We will explore some of the most popular locations in Central Iraq, highlighting their historical and cultural significance.

Baghdad:



Baghdad is the capital city of Iraq, located in the central part of the country on the banks of the Tigris River. It is one of the oldest cities in the world, dating back to the 8th century CE, and has been an important center of Islamic culture and learning for centuries. The city is home to several historic sites, including the Al-Mustansiriya School, an ancient institution of higher learning, and the Abbasid Palace, which was once

the home of the ruling Abbasid dynasty.

Ctesiphon:



Ctesiphon is an ancient city located on the eastern bank of the Tigris River, approximately 35 kilometers southeast of Baghdad. It was once the capital of the Parthian and Sassanid empires and is home to several historic sites, including the Taq Kasra, which is the world's largest brick vault. Visitors can explore the ruins of the city, including the remains of the palace and the Great Arch, which was once a symbol of the power and grandeur of the Sassanid Empire.

Samarra:



Samarra is a city located in central Iraq, approximately 125 kilometers north of Baghdad. It was once an important center of Islamic culture and learning, and is home to several historic sites, including the Al-Askari Shrine, which is one of the most important Shia shrines in the country. Visitors can also explore the historic Al-Mutawakkil Mosque, which was built in the 9th century CE and is known for its distinctive spiral minaret.

Hillah:



Hillah is a city located in central Iraq, approximately 100 kilometers south of Baghdad. It is known for its rich history and cultural significance, as it was an important center of Islamic learning during the Abbasid era. Hillah is home to several historic sites, including

the Imam Ali Mosque, which is one of the most important Shia mosques in the country. Visitors can also explore the local bazaars, where they can find traditional crafts and souvenirs.

Nimrud:



Nimrud is an ancient city located in northern Iraq, approximately 30 kilometers south of Mosul. It was once the capital of the Assyrian Empire and is home to several historic sites, including the Nimrud Palace, which was once the home of the Assyrian kings. Visitors can explore the ruins of the city, including the remains of the palace, temples, and other buildings that once stood in this important ancient city.

In conclusion, Central Iraq offers a wealth of attractions for tourists interested in history and culture. From ancient cities to religious landmarks, the region has something to offer for everyone. The destinations highlighted in this essay are just a few examples of the many popular locations in Central Iraq, and visitors are sure to find many more to explore and enjoy.

Cultural Norms

The following are general tips that anyone going to Iraq can make use of:

Basic Etiquette:

- Respecting age is highly valued in Iraqi culture. When an older person enters the room, it is customary to stand up and offer them your seat if there are no available seats.
- In Iraq, men are expected to stand up and greet women, particularly those with

- children. This gesture is a sign of respect and courtesy.
- To show respect, it is important to avoid sitting in a way that allows your shoe to face another person. This act is considered insulting. Similarly, crossing your legs when facing someone is seen as inappropriate.
 - When someone offers you something or makes a kind gesture, it is polite to initially protest lightly, such as saying: "You shouldn't have" or "That's lovely, but I couldn't." However, if the person insists, it is acceptable to accept the offer gracefully.
 - Some Iraqis follow a custom that separates the functions of their hands. Islamic principles suggest that the left hand should be used for unclean tasks, such as cleaning and removing dirt. It is considered more appropriate to use both hands together when gesturing, touching people, or offering items. If using one hand, it is best to use the right hand. Using only the left hand may come across as too informal.
 - It is advisable to be mindful when expressing admiration for an item or complimenting someone's possession in Iraq. If an Iraqi feels obliged, they may offer the item to you as a gift. To avoid potential discomfort, it is recommended to limit excessive comments on portable and expensive objects in people's homes.
 - In Iraq, it is common for people to say "Na'imān" (meaning 'be blessed') after someone has had a shower or a haircut. This complement is comparable to saying "You clean up well" when someone has shaved or gotten a haircut. Neglecting to say it may be seen as a slight or an indication of ignoring the person.
 - Punctuality is not highly emphasized in Iraq, and it is common for Iraqis to be late. Unforeseen events can disrupt daily schedules, and events or appointments often run overtime as people aim to give each other ample attention and respect. Therefore, it is advisable to allocate more time than usual for arrangements involving Iraqis.
 - In Iraqi culture, it is expected that men pay for women, reflecting notions of generosity and the ability to provide for others. Iraqi men may insist on paying the bill, even for other men, especially in small groups or business settings. Among friends, people may lightly protest before allowing the person who offered to pay. However, completely refusing and paying for oneself is considered awkward and rude, potentially seen as an insult to their honor.

Visiting:

- Hosting guests is considered an honor in Iraq, and invitations are often extended early in friendships.
- Some Iraqis may invite others to their homes to proudly showcase their friends or family.
- It's important to be sensitive during your visit and avoid making comments that could be seen as an insult to their generosity.
- Dressing casually for social events or house gatherings can be seen as disrespectful to the host.
- When invited to an Iraqi home, it is customary to bring a gift.
- Removing shoes upon entering a household is expected.

- Visitors may not receive a tour of the home unless directed by the host.
- Gender separation is common during social visits, with men and women socializing in separate rooms.
- Tea or coffee is often offered as a refreshment and accepting them shows appreciation for the host's hospitality.
- Avoid displaying an eagerness to leave, as it is considered rude.
- Farewells at the end of the visit can be prolonged, with each person bidding goodbye individually.
- Politely insisting on leaving may be necessary by providing a reason.

Eating:

- Wash your hands before eating.
- Use your right hand to pass and touch food; avoid touching it with your left hand unless using utensils.
- When fruit is offered, cut slices for yourself instead of biting into it.
- It's polite to accept everything offered. Refusing may be seen as a token protest, leading to insistence on accepting.
- Expect to be served second or even third servings. To show appreciation, serve yourself less initially to leave room for more.
- If you genuinely don't want more food, place your hand over your heart, express thanks, and politely state you are full.
- Leave a little food on your plate when finished, as eating everything signals a desire for another serving.

Giving Gifts:

- Gifts symbolize friendship to Iraqis, and the monetary value is not as important as the gesture itself.
- Choose the appropriate time for giving a gift, such as when visiting or when your friend is ill, to enhance the gesture of friendship.
- Present gifts using either the right hand or both hands and receive them in the same manner.
- Suitable gifts for hosts include flowers, sweets, or small gifts for their children.
- Avoid giving alcohol as a gift, especially to devout Muslims or individuals with whom you do not have a close personal relationship.
- It is customary not to open a gift immediately after receiving it.
- Keep in mind that offering very expensive items can be seen as a form of bribery and may be misinterpreted.

General Do's and Don'ts:

Do's:

- Show respect to Iraqis by dressing modestly and being sensitive and polite, while also being relaxed and informal to make them feel comfortable around you.

- Iraqis often take words literally, so it's important to be genuine and sincere when you speak.
- If the conversation arises, offer sympathy towards their situation or the state of Iraq, as they will likely deeply appreciate the acknowledgment of the difficulties they have endured.
- Be open and willing to talk about yourself, as Iraqis generally appreciate transparency and personable conversations.
- When possible, praise their strengths and virtues, as Iraqis tend to give compliments generously.
- Be aware that some individuals from minority groups may prefer to identify by their specific heritage rather than their country of birth. In the 2011 census, only 36.8percent of the Iraq-born population chose 'Iraqi' as their ancestry, opting instead to specify their heritage (e.g., Assyrian).

Don'ts:

- Avoid making insulting or derogatory remarks. When providing corrective feedback, emphasize their positive qualities to preserve their honor.
- Refrain from patronizing or talking down to an Iraqi due to their proficiency in English.
- Unless they initiate the conversation, steer clear of discussing politics in Iraq. Many Iraqis may have firsthand experience with the hardships caused by Saddam Hussein's regime, the Iraq War, or terrorism, which can evoke painful memories.
- Avoid sharing crass or vulgar jokes, as this type of humor is not appreciated in Iraq.
- Always seek permission before taking photos or videos of an Iraqi, particularly if they are a woman.
- Do not criticize Islam or Islamic taboos (such as alcohol, pork, use of the left hand, or gender separation). Speaking negatively about these topics may be perceived as intolerance toward the faith.

Verbal Communication:

Indirect Statements: Iraqis typically engage in indirect communication, often taking a roundabout approach to convey their point. This style of communication is employed to prevent embarrassment or offense and to show respect for the other person involved in the conversation. To foster understanding, it is advisable to ask open-ended questions that allow individuals to arrive at their answer gradually, giving agreeable and accepting responses that do not abruptly interrupt the speaker's train of thought. By embracing this approach, effective communication and mutual understanding can be achieved in Iraqi interactions.

Implicit Meanings: In Iraqi culture, the polite way to decline a request is often expressed through phrases like "I'll see what I can do," regardless of the task's feasibility. When an

individual is repeatedly asked about their progress, responses such as "I'm still checking" or similar phrases indicate a negative answer. It's important to note that these indirect responses also convey the message of maintaining a friendly and supportive relationship, emphasizing that efforts were made. Therefore, it is essential to be aware that when interacting with Iraqis, hearing a "yes" may not always indicate a genuine affirmation.

Raised Voices: In the cultural context of Iraq, the interpretation of a raised voice differs from what might be commonly understood. While in many cultures a raised voice is associated with anger or aggression, in Iraq, it often signifies sincerity and the genuine expression of emotions. The intensity of one's voice is viewed as a reflection of the depth of their feelings, rather than indicating hostility. This cultural perspective highlights the importance of vocal expression in conveying authenticity and the depth of one's sentiments. It is essential to recognize this cultural nuance when engaging with Iraqis, as a raised voice can be a means of demonstrating sincerity and genuine emotional investment in a conversation or interaction. By understanding and respecting this aspect of Iraqi culture, individuals can foster better communication and appreciate the significance placed on vocal expression as an indicator of authenticity and heartfelt emotion.

Honorifics: Arab-speaking Iraqis have a tendency to incorporate a significant number of honorifics into their speech, particularly when addressing individuals of higher social standing, such as managers or religious leaders. When these honorifics are translated into English, they often sound formal and carry a sense of respect, such as "Al-Hadra Al-Sharifah" (The Honorable) or "Al-Hadra Al-Mu'azzamah" (The Supreme). However, it is important to note that these titles are not solely reserved for formal occasions. In daily interactions, Iraqis commonly use such honorifics to convey friendly affection and familiarity, even when engaging with individuals of the same social status. For instance, a man might affectionately refer to a young woman as "Ukhti" (my sister), or they may use the prefixes "Abu" (for males) or "Um" (for females) followed by the name of their first-born child, if known. This practice serves to establish a sense of warmth and closeness in relationships, reflecting the cultural emphasis on familial ties and strong social bonds.

Non-Verbal Communication:

Physical Contact: In the privacy of their homes, close friends and family in Iraq may engage in friendly physical contact, such as backslapping, as a gesture of warmth and familiarity. However, it is important to note that in line with the Islamic practice of separating men and women in public settings, it is considered inappropriate to display physical affection with individuals of the opposite gender outside of the home or in the presence of unfamiliar individuals. While an initial handshake may occur, there is typically no further physical contact between genders. It is more socially acceptable for male friends to engage in physical touch, such as walking while holding hands, whereas women are generally expected to refrain from displaying physical affection in public unless they are in private settings. While Christian Iraqis may adopt a slightly less strict approach to this cultural norm, the general expectation of maintaining modesty in public

remains applicable.

Personal Space: In Iraq, there is a cultural norm of maintaining a respectful amount of personal space when interacting with individuals of the opposite gender, typically about an arm's length apart. This practice demonstrates a sense of respect and propriety in social interactions. However, it's important to note that when engaging with individuals of the same gender, personal space boundaries may vary among Iraqis. Some individuals may stand or sit at closer proximity that could feel uncomfortable to those who are not accustomed to it or value a larger personal space. It's essential to be aware of these cultural differences and to approach such situations with understanding and respect for diverse cultural norms. Open communication and adapting to local customs can help foster positive and harmonious interactions with Iraqi individuals.

Eye Contact: In Iraq, adherence to Islamic principles guides the cultural etiquette surrounding eye contact and gaze between males and females. It is customary and expected for both genders to lower their gaze and avoid sustained eye contact as a sign of respect and observance of the traditional separation between genders. This practice acknowledges the importance of modesty and helps maintain appropriate boundaries in social interactions. Furthermore, it is also common for younger individuals to lower their gaze when speaking to elders, as a gesture of deference and respect for their wisdom and experience.

It's worth noting that while this practice is prevalent among the majority of Iraqis, there may be variations in behavior among Christian Iraqis and Iraqi expatriates who may adopt a more relaxed approach to this rule of respect. Cultural diversity and individual beliefs can influence the degree to which people adhere to this custom. Understanding and respecting these differences can foster better cross-cultural understanding and facilitate meaningful interactions with individuals from different backgrounds in Iraq.

Obscene Gestures: Cultural norms and gestures in Iraq can vary across different generations, leading to varying interpretations and meanings. Among some older Iraqis, the gesture of a 'thumbs-up' is regarded as inappropriate or even obscene. However, with the increasing influence of Western culture and the younger generation's exposure to it, the 'thumbs-up' gesture has gained a more positive connotation and is now commonly understood in line with its Western meaning of approval or agreement.

It is important to note that cultural sensitivities play a significant role in interpreting gestures in Iraq. Another gesture to be cautious of is hitting one's right fist into the open palm of the left hand, which can be seen as an indication of obscenity or contempt. This gesture, when used in specific contexts or directed towards someone, may convey negative emotions or disrespect. Awareness and understanding of these cultural nuances can prevent misunderstandings and help foster respectful and harmonious interactions between individuals from different generations and cultural backgrounds in Iraq.

Indications: In Iraqi culture, the gesture of placing the right hand on the chest holds significant meaning and is commonly used to convey sincerity and respect. When

someone places their right hand on their chest during a conversation or interaction, it signifies a genuine expression of sincerity in their words or actions.

Additionally, the gesture of placing the right hand on the chest can also be employed to politely decline something. It serves as a polite way of saying 'thank you, but no thank you' or expressing gratitude for the offer while respectfully declining it. This gesture is a reflection of Iraqi hospitality and the importance placed on maintaining harmonious social interactions.

By understanding and recognizing the cultural significance of the right hand on the chest gesture, individuals can demonstrate their appreciation for Iraqi customs and effectively navigate social interactions in a respectful manner.

Beckoning: In Iraq, the cultural practice of beckoning is distinct from pointing or using the index finger. Instead, when beckoning someone, individuals extend their hand with the palm facing downward and proceed to curl their fingers back toward themselves. This specific gesture is widely recognized and accepted as a respectful way to attract someone's attention or invite them closer.

Contrastingly, it is important to note that pointing or beckoning with the index finger is considered impolite in Iraqi culture. This cultural belief stems from the perception that using the index finger in such a manner can be seen as offensive or aggressive.

By adhering to these cultural norms and using the appropriate beckoning gesture in Iraq, individuals can demonstrate respect and cultural sensitivity in their interactions, fostering positive and harmonious communication.

Other Consideration:

- In Arab culture, particularly in Iraq, it is customary for individuals to provide extensive information about their occupation and family during initial meetings. This tendency to delve into details is not simply a justification or diversion, but rather a means of validating and upholding the honor of their family, which holds significant importance in Arab society.

When Iraqis emphasize the accomplishments and achievements of their family, it reflects their deep-rooted respect for familial bonds and the honor associated with it. By highlighting their family's achievements, they aim to showcase the values, virtues, and successes that contribute to their family's reputation and standing within the community.

Understanding this cultural context allows for a greater appreciation of the significance placed on family honor in Iraq. By acknowledging and showing interest in an individual's job and family, one can establish a foundation of respect and connection, fostering meaningful relationships and demonstrating cultural

sensitivity.

- Iraqis often perceive any assurance or commitment to undertake a task as a binding promise. Consequently, when approached with a favor or request, it is crucial to exercise caution and ensure that you either fulfill your commitment or respond in a noncommittal manner.

The cultural tendency to interpret a statement of intention as a promise reflects the value placed on trust and reliability in Iraqi society. Making a promise creates expectations, and failing to follow through can lead to disappointment and potential strain on the relationship.

To navigate this cultural expectation effectively, it is advisable to consider the feasibility of the request before providing any assurances. If you are uncertain about your ability to fulfill the favor, it is better to be honest and express your limitations in a diplomatic and respectful manner. This approach avoids creating false expectations and maintains the trust and integrity of the relationship.

By being mindful of these cultural dynamics and managing expectations appropriately, you can foster positive interactions and maintain harmonious relationships with Iraqis.

Business Considerations:

Meetings:

Time and Punctuality: When attending meetings in Iraq, it is important to strive for punctuality. However, it is widely understood that Iraqis have a more relaxed sense of time, and it is not uncommon for them to arrive late as well. Being a few minutes late may be excused, but it is best to make an effort to arrive on time to show respect for others' schedules.

Greetings and Introductions: Upon entering a meeting, it is customary to first greet the host. Subsequently, it is expected to individually greet every person in the room, even in larger groups. The order of greetings typically follows a hierarchy of age, or you can proceed from the left side of the room to the right side. Taking the time to greet each person individually demonstrates politeness and acknowledges their presence.

Receiving Business Cards: When receiving a business card, it is important to use your right hand as the left hand is considered unclean. After receiving the card, take a moment to examine it carefully before placing it in front of you on the table. Avoid writing on the card unless specifically instructed to do so.

Presenting Business Cards: When presenting your own business card, use your right hand and ensure that the writing on the card is facing the recipient. It is considered impolite to distribute your cards as if playing a game, so present them individually with

respect and courtesy.

Transitioning from Social Conversation to Business: In Iraqi culture, it is customary to engage in social conversation before delving into business matters. Rushing through this initial discussion or prematurely shifting to the agenda may come across as overly assertive. Allow time for informal conversation to flow naturally before addressing the business topics at hand.

Openness in Inquiry: During the early stages of building relationships, Iraqis may employ a direct and inquisitive approach when inquiring about your company and its intentions. Expect probing questions and a desire to gain a thorough understanding. Be prepared to provide clear and comprehensive information to foster trust and transparency.

Hierarchy in Business Meetings: In business meetings, the highest-ranking individual typically assumes the role of the primary speaker. Subordinates are present to offer immediate clarification and advice to their superior. Recognize and respect this hierarchical structure when engaging in discussions and follow the lead of the senior figure.

Dynamic Nature of Meetings: Iraqi business meetings can be lively and animated, often involving multiple conversations happening simultaneously within the group. Interruptions and tangents to unrelated topics are common. To ensure your point is heard, it is acceptable to politely interrupt and express your thoughts directly. Sitting next to the specific businessperson you wish to engage with can help minimize distractions and focus the discussion on your proposal.

Bargaining and Negotiations: Be prepared for negotiations in Iraq to involve bargaining and a departure from the initial terms of the deal. Expect a fluid and dynamic negotiation process where both parties aim to find a mutually beneficial outcome. It is important to remain composed and avoid letting emotions interfere with the negotiation process.

Time and Interruptions: Negotiations in Iraq can be time-consuming, and meetings may be interrupted for prayer sessions. Understand and respect the cultural practice of incorporating prayer breaks during meetings. Patience and flexibility are key attributes when conducting business in Iraq.

Concluding Meetings: When an Iraqi is hosting a meeting, they may be hesitant to formally conclude the session themselves, as it can be interpreted as dismissing everyone abruptly. Instead, it is customary for the guests to excuse themselves, indicating the end of the meeting in a polite and respectful manner.

Relationship Orientation

Building and nurturing personal relationships is highly valued in Iraqi business culture. Iraqis prefer to work with individuals they know and trust, placing greater emphasis on personal qualities rather than solely focusing on financial capabilities. Establishing trust

is considered fundamental for successful business interactions, and they will expect a genuine commitment to the relationship from you. Expanding their network with reliable partners is a top priority.

To foster trust and loyalty, Iraqis often seek extensive knowledge about their business partners. They may inquire about personal details that may seem unrelated to the immediate business matters at hand. As a foreigner, you may find some of these questions intrusive or tangential. However, it is important to exercise patience and provide answers, recognizing that these inquiries serve the purpose of building a solid foundation for future business relations. Additionally, demonstrating interest in their personal lives by asking similar questions can further strengthen the rapport. It is crucial, however, to avoid asking questions about an Iraqi's female family members, as this would be considered highly inappropriate.

In the event of unintentionally causing offense to your business partner, it is crucial not to ignore or overlook the situation, as it can significantly damage the relationship. If you find yourself uncertain about how to address the issue, it is advisable to have a more senior representative apologize on your behalf. Acknowledging and addressing any offense demonstrates respect and a willingness to maintain the integrity of the relationship.

By recognizing and appreciating the significance of personal connections, respecting cultural boundaries, and valuing trust and loyalty, you can navigate the relationship-oriented nature of Iraqi business culture and establish strong, long-lasting partnerships.

Reciprocal Favors and Commitments

In Iraqi business culture, it is common for business partners to expect and offer favors based on their friendship or relationship. These favors often extend to their family members. It is important to be open and flexible in both receiving and extending these favors, as they contribute to the strengthening of the personal bond between you and your business partner. When a request for a favor arises, make every effort to fulfill it.

However, it is crucial to be mindful of the commitments you make. Iraqis tend to view any assurance of trying to fulfill a favor as a promise. Therefore, it is important to carefully consider your ability to fulfill the request before committing to it. If circumstances arise that make it impossible to fulfill the favor, it is essential to be explicit in your explanation. Clearly communicate that the task is difficult or unfeasible, ensuring there is no ambiguity. By being honest and straightforward, you can manage expectations and maintain trust in your relationship.

Even if you find yourself unable to complete the requested favor, it is important to recognize that your initial agreement to consider it holds value in Iraqi culture. Your counterpart should appreciate your willingness to be supportive, even if the circumstances prevent you from carrying it out.

Navigating the exchange of favors in Iraqi business culture requires sensitivity, flexibility, and clear communication. By recognizing the significance of reciprocal commitments and managing expectations effectively, you can foster a stronger bond and enhance trust within your business relationships.

Special Considerations:

Hierarchical Decision-Making and Gender Dynamics: In Iraqi business culture, a hierarchical structure prevails, primarily based on age and position. Decision-making authority rests with the highest-level manager within the organization, who assumes full responsibility and consequences for the company's actions. This hierarchical system emphasizes deference to authority and places significant importance on seniority and position.

Unfortunately, women in Iraq face significant barriers to holding managerial positions, and their input is often disregarded. Gender bias is prevalent, and women's perspectives and contributions may not receive the attention and recognition they deserve. It is important to be aware of these dynamics and work towards creating an inclusive and equitable business environment.

Maintaining Composure and Effective Communication: It is crucial to maintain composure and avoid losing your temper in business interactions. Losing your temper is unlikely to further negotiations and may create hesitancy among Iraqis to engage in business with you. When expressing reluctance or disapproval, it is advisable to do so calmly, with tact, and preferably in a one-on-one setting. This approach can help preserve relationships and foster open communication.

Trust, Word-of-Mouth Promises, and Indirect Responses: Trust is highly valued in Iraqi business culture, and agreements made based on trust are considered binding. Iraqis generally keep their word and honor their verbal commitments. However, it is essential to ensure clarity in communication. When faced with questions or requests that require a yes or no answer, be mindful of an Iraqi's preoccupation with appearances and politeness. Often, an Iraqi's inclination is to respond with a "yes," even if the answer may not necessarily be true. A direct "no" is perceived as a relationship-ending gesture and can cause individuals to lose face.

Instead, Iraqis tend to express their reluctance or inability to fulfill a request indirectly. Phrases such as "I'll see what I can do" or similar responses are often used to convey a negative response, even if the task may seem impossible. These indirect responses are intended to maintain the relationship and signify efforts made on their part. Non-verbal cues like tilting the head back and raising the eyebrows can also indicate a negative response.

Clarification and Open-Ended Questions: To grasp the underlying meaning of responses, it is crucial to seek clarification multiple times and ask open-ended questions. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of the intentions and commitments of

the other party. Additionally, an Arab may respond with "Inshallah," which conveys the sentiment of "If God wills it." This response suggests a willingness to try their best but acknowledges that the outcome ultimately rests with a higher power.

Gift-Giving and Corruption Perception: While giving gifts in business interactions is not mandatory, it is appreciated as a gesture of goodwill. However, it is essential to exercise caution with expensive gifts, as they can be misconstrued as bribery. It is advisable to consider cultural norms and exercise discretion when choosing and presenting gifts to avoid any misinterpretation or compromising ethical standards.

It is important to be aware that Iraq's public sector is perceived to have a high level of corruption, as indicated by its ranking of 169th out of 180 countries on the Corruption Perception Index in 2017. This perception underscores the need for vigilance and adherence to ethical business practices when operating in Iraq.