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Tribes and Religious Institutions in Iraq

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I. Introduction

The collapse of the unitary state in post-2003 Iraq facilitated the emergence of different political and social actors seeking to represent parts of the population. Although the U.S.-led coalition was responsible for destroying the old state, which the British built in 1921, the new Iraqi leadership was tasked with constructing the new state.

A key feature of the post-2003 state-building process was a reliance on identity-based politics. Both Shia and Kurd leaders, who built the new state, had arrived from outside the country after decades in exile – either in Iran, the UK, the US, and elsewhere. They became known as ‘foreigner Iraqis’.¹ As such, they did not have strong linkages to the population, including local political, tribal, religious, and middle class actors. Although these parties were not sectarian in discourse, their politburos and leaderships were almost entirely based on single sects (Shia) or ethnicities (Kurd). To them, constructing imagined communities based on sects was the most effective way to gaining legitimacy.

The emergence of identity politics lifted religion to the top of politics, reducing the influence of the tribes. Sunni tribes in particular had benefited from strong patronage networks in the 1990s from the Saddam Hussein Ba’ath regime. The new state-building project divided resources among political parties based on identities, leaving the tribes out of their traditional role as local interlocutors.² Yet, the repeated failure of state-building since 2003 has maintained some role for tribes at the local level, where the central government often finds it difficult to reach. In this sense, the tribe has often acted as a substitute for the state, where it cannot provide security or services to the local population.

As such, both tribal and religious actors in Iraq maintain some role in the political process and the state re-building process. As the conflict in Iraq transforms from a military assault on the so-called Islamic State (ISIS) to state re-building, this paper analyses the potential role of the marginalized yet influential tribal and clerical actors in the new phase. The goal is to assess the feasibility and relevance of launching a “dialogue through practice” process. This paper begins with a brief historical outlook of the role of tribes and clerics in Iraq. Second, the paper will map the main tribal and clerical groups throughout Arab Iraq.³ Third, the paper will briefly discuss the readiness or willingness of these actors to engage in conflict transformation processes. Finally, the paper will assess suitable approaches for process design and the expected outcomes for the initiatives.

¹ Kanan Makiya, *The Rope* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2016).

² Faleh A. Jabar, “The Dilemma of Political Uncertainties,” in *What Can Europe Do in Iraq? Recommendations for a New US-European Collaboration*, Democracy 11 (Berlin: Heinrich Böll Stiftung, 2009), 10-29.

³ This paper will not address Kurdish tribes and clerics in northern Iraq.

II. Methodology

This paper relies on a multifaceted methodological approach. First, it includes desk research of open source literature on the tribal structure in the Middle East and on Iraq specifically. Another aspect of this process included archival research on Iraqi tribes conducted by the Iraq Institute for Strategic Studies in Beirut. The second methodological approach was field research, which included individual interviews with experts, field assessments and focus group assessments. A vast amount of the research was conducted by the author along with junior researchers based in Baghdad (linked to Iraqi facilitators Network) and in Basra (linked to the Board of tribes and Components of Basra). The researchers remain anonymous. A focus group was held with civil society activists in Beirut. It included protest movement leaders, NGO workers, women’s rights campaigners and human rights activists, who all provided their opinion on a number of issues, including the role of tribe and clerics in their society.

III. A Background of Tribes and Clerics

The Tribe in Iraq

In Iraq, the tribes are mainly found in rural areas rather than the main cities. Moreover, tribes are spread all over and represent Shia and Sunni Arabs, and Kurdish citizens. In the case of Arab tribes, which are the focus of this paper, the tribes are defined by genealogy.⁴ According to a scholar of tribes, around 70 percent of Iraqis identify themselves as part of the tribal system.⁵ The tribes are social, economic, cultural, and at times political organizations.

The tribe is structured along the following lines⁶:

House (<i>bayt</i>)	The social unit at the bottom; essentially the extended family. Cohesion is usually high at this level. Houses do not have a political or military role, but have an economic, camping, and housing role.
Sub-Clan (<i>Fakhdh</i> and <i>Afkhad</i>)	A sort of “sub-tribe” that includes several extended families. These members often live together or are very close together, making cohesion and solidarity stronger. Sub-clans do not have a political or military role, but have an economic, camping, and housing role.
Clan (<i>Ashira</i>)	Several <i>afkhaads</i> make up the <i>ashira</i> or clan, which is headed by a sheikh, who brings a sense of unity to the structure. The bloodline can be a constructed perception. Its members are united by territorial proximity. Clans have both a political and a military role.
Confederation (<i>Qabila</i>)	A number of clans make up the <i>qabila</i> , or tribal confederation, which is headed by the paramount sheikh (sheikh al-masheikh). This group of tribes is a political arrangement to better structure inter-tribal relations. Its members have a sense of common lineage or descent. Its primary purpose is to address external hazards. Its structure is the least cohesive, as various tribal leaders compete for influence. <i>Qabilas</i> have both a political and a military role, and were particularly prominent prior to the 19 th century and in the heyday of the tribes.

⁴ Kurdish tribes, on the other hand, are defined by territory.

⁵ Meeting with Iraqi sociologist Faleh A Jabar, Beirut, December 2016.

⁶ Note that in this paper, tribes can refer to clans (*ashira*) or confederations (*qabila*) – the terms are used interchangeably.

The tribe is headed by a sheikh, who maintains his power through land ownership and thus access to resources and capital, armed militias (*Zilimi*), tribal customary law, and later state patronage. Historically, the tribe was an agricultural and nomadic unit. The tribe has had various roles, including providing agricultural products or facilitating trade (war economy) routes or ensuring security. Yet, despite rapid urbanization and state re-enforcement efforts since the 19th century, the tribe has proven to be an elastic unit, able to adapt and restructure to maintain relevance. Part of this includes filling in the vacuum to provide security and services *vis-à-vis* a disintegrating unitary state and central government unable to reach certain populations.⁷

With the advent of urbanization and the flow of people and capital to the cities, the tribe has changed from a powerful socioeconomic cultural and military entity to extended families in rural agrarian townships.

The influence of the tribes on politics and state-building and conflict management or resolution varies over periods of time. The influence of the tribe in this process is increased during periods of:

- i. The breakdown of the state and the emergence of war and conflict,
- ii. the collapse of alternative ideological identities (nationalism, communism, political Islam, etc.).⁸

Understanding these key characteristics is important to implementing policies to incorporate tribal elements in conflict transformation. It can be used as a “reservoir of loyalty” during state-building and legitimacy-seeking phases.⁹ During state-building periods, the central government often attempts to reach an accommodation with the tribes in order for the later to retain its autonomy.

Understanding the tribe requires a brief analysis on tribal code. The thirteenth century sociologist Ibn Khaldoun defined the tribe as a “self-contained social organization based on lineage and imbued with autonomy, having social, economic, political, military and cultural functions.”¹⁰

As Edouard Conte argues, loyalties to the tribal codes go beyond simple family bloodlines. To him, “Arab kinship can hardly be reduced to its most noted feature, namely marriage between the children of paternal brothers, nor be accounted for by the rhetoric of endogamy and pedigree that envelops it.”¹¹ Moreover, Pierre Bonte similarly notes that becoming a tribal leader, or sheikh, is part of the logic of *riyasa* (chieftainship), which includes fierce competition within a structured

⁷ Hosham Dawod, “The Sunni tribes in Iraq: between local power, the international coalition and the Islamic State,” Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre, September 2015, <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Sunni%20tribes%20in%20Iraq.pdf> (accessed 10 July 2017).

⁸ Philip S. Khoury and Joseph Kostiner, “Tribes and the Complexities of State Formation in the Middle East,” in Khoury, Philip S. and Joseph Kostiner (eds.), *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1991).

⁹ *ibid*

¹⁰ Faleh Jabar, “Sheikhs and Ideologues: Deconstruction and Reconstruction of Tribes under Patrimonial Totalitarianism in Iraq, 1968-1998,” in *Tribes and Power: Nationalism and Ethnicity in the Middle East*, eds. Faleh Jabar and Hosham Dawod (London: Saqi, 2003), 16.

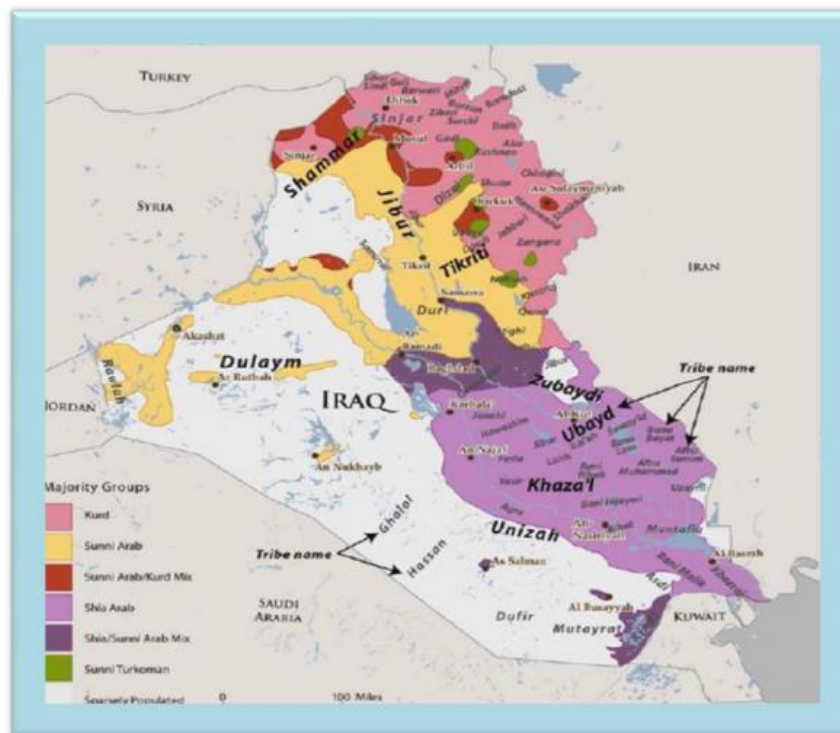
¹¹ Edouard Conte, “Agnatic Illusions: The Element of Choice in Arab Kinship,” in *Tribes and Power: Nationalism and Ethnicity in the Middle East*, eds. Faleh Jabar and Hosham Dawod (London: Saqi, 2003), 72.

hierarchy.¹² In previous eras, prior to World War One, a council of tribal elders would appoint the sheikh. Following British intervention and the building of the Iraqi state, however, tribal sheikhs turned into the sole source of law and authority (rather than the council of elders).

Tribal code, or patterns of power, is therefore hierarchical. Both within the tribe and across tribes, clan, sub-tribal, and tribal leaders compete and amalgamate into larger confederations. As Bedoucha notes, “the effective *qabila* is that of a voluntary alliance of brotherhood proclaimed, solely and in writing, sometimes temporary, sometimes lasting, it takes precedence over the ties of blood, which slowly fade from memory, as if to open the way to elective kinship.”¹³

At the local level, tribal leaders are power-holders. Its leaders are responsible for protecting and ensuring the economic well-being of their communities. They also serve as judges and mediators to resolve disputes, including property claims, and are also responsible for suggesting marriages.

The map below shows the major confederations in Iraq, including the Shammar, Jabour, Dulaim, Unizah, Khaza’I, Ubayd, and others. All of these groups are outlined in this paper.



Source: CIA Iraq country profile

Map 3 – Iraq tribal map

¹² Pierre Bonte, “Ibn Khaldun and Contemporary Anthropology: Cycles and Factional Alliances of Tribe and State in the Maghreb,” in *Tribes and Power: Nationalism and Ethnicity in the Middle East*, eds. Faleh Jabar and Hosham Dawod (London: Saqi, 2003), 53.

¹³ Quoted in: Conte, “Agnatic Illusions”, 72.

The Tribe-State Relationship

Since the mid-19th century, states and central governments have sought to incorporate the social units. As Faleh Jabar notes, stemming back to the writings of Ibn Khaldun, a thirteenth century sociologist, the tribal cycle includes resisting, conquering or opposing city-states.¹⁴

Yet, sheikhs have enjoyed a long history of semi-independence as central or regional governments have been unable to co-opt the tribes. During the Ottoman Empire, for instance, tribal law (*urf*) was paramount in rural areas. As Sheikh Ibrahim Nayef Mshhan al-Hardan, who is not only the tribal leader of the Albu Dhiyab and Albu Aitha clans but also an academic specializing in the tribes of Iraq, told the author, “Everyone knows that the sheikhs have independence...the government knows this.”¹⁵

In the past, then, these various states (and empires) have tended to find greater success by working around the tribes rather than by attempting to control them. In exchange for allegiance, the state has had to govern tribes with different considerations, which usually include provisions for weapons, money, and land. During the 19th century, however, the Ottoman Empire gained considerable power over the tribal confederations in Iraq.

The 1921-British built Iraqi state offered certain privileges to tribes. For instance, in both the mandate period (1921-1932) and the monarchy period (1932-1958), tribal sheikhs enjoyed greater (and disproportionate) representation in the central government (parliament), allowing them to avoid tax burdens and increase revenues. The British political officers also encouraged tribal sheikhs to claim more land, allowing them to amass great estates.¹⁶

Yet, the modern state was built on the old imperial framework of institutions rather than tribal structures.¹⁷ As such, many scholars argue that the tribe has long been adversarial to the state or other empires.¹⁸ The relationship between tribal sheikh and political leader is typically tense. During the 20th century, particularly after the British withdrawal and the end of the monarchy, the state gained more power *vis-à-vis* the tribes. For instance, during the heyday of the Ba’athist regime in Baghdad (1970s-1980s) Saddam Hussein was able to subordinate the tribes and contain the leaders by demanding loyalty.

However, the collapse of the Iraqi state typically had led to a greater role of tribes. Some scholars have referred to the role of re-tribalization during various periods when the state has been weak or conflict prone since 1958.¹⁹ Following the Gulf War in 1991, for instance, the breakdown of the Iraqi state let the weakened Saddam Hussein regime grow more dependent on tribes and

¹⁴ Faleh Jabar, “Sheikhs and Ideologues”, 72.

¹⁵ Interview in Erbil, November 2016

¹⁶ Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq* (Princeton University Press, 1979).

¹⁷ Khoury and Kostiner, 13

¹⁸ See Richard Tapper, *The Conflict of Tribe and State in Iran and Afghanistan* (London: Croom Helm, 1983).

¹⁹ Amatzia Baram, “Neo-Tribalism in Iraq: Saddam Hussein’s Tribal Policies 1991–1996,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 29 (1997), pp. 1–31. Further elaboration is in Amatzia Baram, *Building Toward Crisis: Saddam Husayn’s Strategy for Survival* (Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1998). Faleh Abdul-Jabar and Hosham Dawood (eds.), *Tribes and Power: Nationalism and Ethnicity in the Middle East* (London: Saqi, 2003).

religious clerics. It increased its provisions of weapons, land, money, and power in order to sustain regime legitimacy.

Arab Tribes and Post-2003 State-Building

Tribes have been shown to be useful actors in state-building projects. For instance, tribal forces were crucial in the establishments of various Islamic Caliphates, such as the Umayyad, Abbasid, Fatimid, Ottoman, Safavid, and Qajar states. The political leaders creating these empires required both material and military support from tribal elements to establish their states.

Following the U.S.-led invasion in 2003, the tribes again sought to include themselves in the new state-building process. During the weak Iraqi state of the 1990s, the tribes had gained considerable power as “sub-contractors”. In 2003, then, tribal sheikhs went to the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) to ask for a greater role in building the new state, including gaining responsibilities such as issuing new identification cards and licences at the local level. However, they did not seek to replace the state, but just to take on certain state responsibilities, such as providing justice, security, protection, financial aid – demands that tribal leaders continue to push for today. In January 2005, both Sunni and Shia tribes competed in the elections. However, both sides lost in the elections, signalling a diminished role for the tribes. According to civil society activists, the tribes perform poorly in elections because the population does not agree with the sheikhs’ demands, which include restoring land and tribal law, as well as increasing tribal influence.²⁰

It is important to note that confederations, and to a lesser extent tribes, are often cross-sectarian. Most of the largest Arab confederations in Iraq today include both Sunni and Shia families within them. For instance, an Arab tribe will include both Shia and Sunni leaders. Smaller tribes in the south, such as Dhu Fayr, have Shia leaders with very minimal Sunni members. Minorities also have tribes, but in certain cases the tribe have become less prominent. The Assyrians and Chaldeans of northern Iraq, today, only recognize tribal heritage from last names. In the Arab and Kurdish case, however, tribal issues remain prevalent in several areas.

Tribes themselves do not have explicitly stated confessional orientations. It is important to note that the sectarian element within the tribe is situation. Members are not inherently opposed to their confederation leader based on sectarian considerations. In short, it is not the tribe *per se*, but the actions of the tribal leader. The sheikh’s connections and willingness to agitate on behalf of the tribe rather than just his immediate family, to spend on the tribe, and to invest in politics, are all considerations that guide whether the member will support his or her leader. It is important, therefore, not to over-emphasize the cross-sectarian nature of most major tribes and confederations in Iraq. For instance, the Janabi tribe has a Shia as its paramount sheikh, who lives in Diyala and comes from the Suheil family.

Tribal conflict can be inter- or intra-sect. As discussed, a paramount sheikh is appointed from the same family, and so power contestations are not wider than immediate families. There are, of

²⁰ Interviews with various protesters and civil society activists from Iraq, in Beirut, Lebanon, May 2017

course, instances in post-2003 Iraq whereby sectarianism has affected tribal members' perception of tribal leaders, but it has not been as prominent as sectarianism at the political level. The same dispute mechanisms available when there are grievances against tribal leaders are possible if there is perceived sectarian favouring – however it is again important to note that the intra- and inter-tribe dynamics are both areas of potential conflict. Therefore, there are no regulation mechanisms if a Sunni tribe opposes a Shia tribe as such, but if conflict breaks out, there are the same regulation mechanisms, which require the paramount sheikhs to convene to mediate the conflict.

The most important tribes are the confederations that will be discussed below.

Sunni Arab Tribes in Post-2003 Iraq

For many tribal leaders, the political environment in post-2003 Iraq was not friendly. First, the shift to identity-politics hampered tribal aspirations. In Arab Iraq, this process meant the sectarianization of governance and representation. The trouble for the tribes, however, was that they did not traditionally play a religious role. As such, they found it increasingly difficult to compete for influence in the new Iraq governed by identity/sectarian considerations.

Second, due to links with the former Ba'athist regime, the Sunni tribes were seen negatively by the new leadership in Iraq. According to several Sunni Arab tribal leaders, the U.S. did seek to provide a role for the tribes in the early days of 2003, but fundamentally did not understand the tribal structure. This misunderstanding eventually led to conflict.²¹ For instance, certain tribes were loyal to the Ba'athist regime due to the 1990s era of state compromise, but this allegiance was a marriage of convenience for many. However, the CPA Law on De-Baathification harmed U.S. relations with several Sunni tribes, for instance. As it will be discussed, many sheikhs believe that the U.S. misunderstood the tribal pride of defending Iraq as loyalty to the previous regime.

Third, the tribal structure itself was questioned. Many sheikhs who naturally held senior positions in the former regime's security or political apparatus were now considered enemies of the new state and as such lost influence. They were forced into exile and fled to Amman, Erbil, Istanbul, and elsewhere. Separated from their tribe, the sheikhs lost influence to new leaders on the ground who emerged in the power vacuum. This created a contestation over legitimacy, with the title "sheikh" now being questioned in Iraq. For instance, several tribal leaders from Anbar claimed that Ali Hatem al-Suleiman, who is an anti-Maliki tribal leader, is not a principle sheikh according to tribal code.²²

Sunni Arab tribes perceived themselves as having an "unfair" role in the new Iraq. Their areas lacked functioning city councils and they faced an Iraqi army manned by Shia soldiers. As such, tribal relations soured in post-2003 Iraq, leading some Sunni Arab sheikhs to embark on a strategy of resistance, based largely on Salafi-Jihadi discourse.

According to certain tribal leaders, however, the jihadi resistance, which helped raise the profile of al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) and then the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) was a tribal network that was

²¹ Interview with Sunni tribal leader, in Duhok, Iraq, November 2015

²² Meetings in Beirut, January 2016.

organized even before the 2003 invasion. For instance, on 23 February 2003, a small number of Salafi members from the confederations and tribes of al-Iheeb, al-Jabour, al-Hamdoon, al-Jheesh, al-Abeed, and Albu Hamdan all met in Mosul to plan an Islamic resistance. Many of these tribes eventually extended their support to ISIS.²³ Following the removal of Saddam Hussein, they decided the time had come to mobilize their tribes to resist the occupation. They eventually became part of AQI. The movement included units of al-Qaeda and members of the Saddam Hussein regime. Some of these members would become part of ISIS²⁴

Other tribes that did not partake in the Islamist resistance became more willing to engage with the central government. The Iraqi civil war (2006-2008) led to the state becoming more dependent on tribes for conflict resolution. U.S. General David Petraeus and Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki decided to re-engage with certain tribes and established the “Sunni Awakening” (*Sabwa*) policy to provide resources (arms and cash) to tribal leaders, particularly in Ramadi, Hit, Qaim, and Haditha in Anbar province. The *Sabwa* was integrated into Iraq’s state security apparatus. Later on, the *Sabwa*, or Sunni Awakening, including the Sons of Iraq program, worked with tribes outside of Anbar. More than 100,000 Iraqi Sunnis associated to the tribes took part in the program.²⁵ The *Sabwa*’s demands included the central government recruiting tribesmen into the state’s local security forces to allow them to secure their own neighbourhoods and to allow for greater representation of the tribes, again at the local level. It then took part in the re-building of the state, as in the 2009 provincial elections, when the *Sabwa* established a political party that won in Anbar.

However, Nouri al-Maliki’s second term (2010-2014) as prime minister largely erased the deals that had been made between the central government and the tribes. The central government ceased to provide weapons, money, and land, and many tribal sheikhs lost their trust in the government and felt increasingly isolated. In response, and to some extent in the spirit of the Arab Uprisings in 2011, tribal leaders, some of whom were part of the *Sabwa*, supported a protest movement (*barak al-shaabi*) in the Sunni-dominated areas, first in Fallujah then elsewhere in Anbar and other northern provinces.

Maliki’s over centralization policies were perceived by many Arab Iraqi Sunnis as a betrayal of the spirit of the *Sabwa*. The policies gave greater legitimacy to the tribal leaders who continued to advocate resistance against Baghdad and pushed others to turn towards an alternative in the so-called Islamic State (ISIS). As an Anbari tribal leader told the Washington Post, “The Sunni community has two options. Fight against IS and allow Iran and its militias to rule us, or do the opposite. We chose IS for only one reason. IS only kills you. The Iraqi government kills you and rapes your women.”²⁶ ISIS infiltrated the tribes by providing lower ranking members with money, land, and weapons. The tribal leaders were unable to keep command of their tribes, as the Islamic

²³ Interview with tribal researcher in Beirut, May 2017

²⁴ They helped to form the new Al-Qaeda, Jaish Al-Islami, Ansar Al-Sunna, Jaish Al-mujahdeen and Thawrat Al-ashreen bridges in Iraq. Interviews with tribal members in Ninewah, April 2017. Also, see Amatzia Baram, *Saddam Husayn and Islam, 1968-2003: Ba’thi Iraq from secularism to faith* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2014).

²⁵ However, after the U.S. combat troop withdrawal from Iraq, and amid Maliki’s emergence as an authoritarian leader, many of these funding streams dried up. This disruption of the resource distribution network impaired the semi-independence that sheikhs had enjoyed

²⁶ David Ignatius, “David Ignatius: Iraq and the U.S. are losing ground to the Islamic State,” 23 October 2014, Washington Post, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/david-ignatius-iraq-and-the-us-are-losing-ground-to-the-islamic-state/2014/10/23/201a56e0-5adf-11e4-bd61-346aec66ba29_story.html?utm_term=.b7b8715cf2f5 (accessed 6 July 2017).

State attracted tribesmen with better compensation. As a tribal adviser in Ramadi lamented, ISIS “presented better funding opportunities.”²⁷

However, not all tribes joined ISIS, and some fell at the behest of the Salafi-Jihadi organization. Most tribes were in fact divided, with family members either for-or-against ISIS, which sought to use intra-tribal rivalries to divide and conquer the social units. For instance, in October 2014, ISIS fighters paraded over 40 captured Albu Nimr tribal fighters in Hit and then performed a public execution. ISIS particularly targeted the families of the *Sabwa*, including Abu Mahal (Qaim), Albu Nimr (Hit), Abu Jugayfa (Hadithda), and Abu Risha (Ramadi).

Shia Arab Tribes in Iraq

The Shia tribes in Iraq do not hold the same level of influence as the Sunni tribes at the national or local levels.²⁸ Unlike the Sunni tribes, various Iraqi governments in the 20th century have sought to decrease the level of both Shia tribes and clerics. For instance, the agrarian reform of 1958 took land away from the tribes. Saddam Hussein’s policy of divide-and-conquer was an attempt to separate the Shia tribes from the *hawza* (seminary) in Najaf, where the senior Shia clerical leadership (*marja’iya*) sit.

Saddam Hussein’s policy of demographic change led many poor Shias to move to Baghdad for better opportunities. However, they were settled in Saddam city, a slum, where Saddam Hussein could better control the population. Moreover, he could eliminate the influence of tribal sheikhs, who remained in the rural areas.

A consequence of anti-Shia policies was the strengthening of religious groups at the expense of the tribe. The ideological decentralization of Shiism allowed for religious clerics and political leaders to take over tribal customs. For instance, the political and clerical leaders took over *‘ashura* practices and incorporated tribal law in religious law.

Moreover, Shia religious clerics amassed wealth whereas tribal sheikhs found it increasingly difficult to provide for their families. The clerics were paid through *khums*, a tax that redirects funds to the needy. Shias are meant to pay one-fifth of the value of their land, silver, gold, jewellery, and profits to this tax. For instance, the Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani is estimated to receive some 500-700 million USD per year in direct religious tax payments. Since Shias from all over the world send money to the clerics in Najaf, financial administrators (*wakils*) are tasked with administering and overseeing the global operation.

Moreover, the tribes in Najaf were already interlinked with the *hawza* and benefitted from religion because they made money from market trading in important Najaf markets and in the

²⁷ Meeting with tribal leader in Erbil, November 2015

²⁸ See Peter Harling and Hamid Yassin Nasser, “La Mouvance Sadriste: Lutte de Classes, Millénarisme, et Fitna,” in *Les mondes chiïtes et l’Iran*, ed. Sabine Mervin (Die Welt des Islams, 2009), 267-286; Faleh Jabar, “Sheikhs and Ideologues: Deconstruction and Reconstitution of Tribes under Patrimonial Totalitarianism in Iraq, 1968-1998,” in *Tribes and Power: Nationalism and Ethnicity in the Middle East*, eds. Faleh Jabar and Hosham Dawod (London: Saqi, 2003).

pilgrimages.²⁹ However, the Najaf *hawza* believed that the tribes in other parts of the south of Iraq, such as Amara, were backward and even ignorant of Islam. Those tribes, therefore, became lower than the high tribes of Najaf – which gained legitimacy through links with the *hawza*.

Mohammad Sadeq al-Sadr, who led the Sadrist movement in the 1990s, wrote a fatwa entitled Tribal Jurisprudence (*faqih al-asha'ir*) in which he tried to bring the tribe and religious clerics back together. Sadr attempted to espouse a more popular Shiism that was respectful of tribal customs and traditions – against the Najaf *hawza*'s view on many of the tribes. This movement turned into a populist movement to respect local tribal customs and provide real answers to the everyday needs of citizens, rather than high theology.

Shia political parties in Iraq, the Dawa Party and then the Supreme Islamic Council of Iraq, were also created and financed in Iran to serve as political opposition to the Ba'athist regime in Iraq. Better financed, these political parties also created institutions and organizations to support the population in the south of Iraq – again taking the space away from the tribes.

As a result, the population began turning to the clerics or political parties, which set up endowments and charitable funds to support the population – in a sense performing the job typically reserved for the sheikh at the local level.

Tribes and the Post-2003 State-Building Process

In conclusion, the tribal structure (both Shia and Sunni) were unable to compete with the institutionalization of religion in post-2003 Iraq. The U.S. and its allies destroyed the state, and as such the state's patronage program, weakening the role of the tribes.³⁰ In its place, communal Islamist political movements emerged as the new state became defined along identity-based lines.

The Role of Clerics and Religion in Iraq

The religious groups were better prepared to mobilize and enjoyed large membership bases and resources. Unlike the tribes and families, religion had nation-wide appeal, massive infrastructure and resources, large militias (*Jaysh al-Mehdi*, Badr Organization) associated to political parties, and ideological supremacy over tribalism, which many Iraqis, despite respecting the convention, perceive to be outdated. Moreover, religious organizations and political parties were easily able to fit into the sectarianization of the new state-building efforts in Iraq. These groups enjoyed religious influence and networks for mass rituals and pilgrimages and formal or informal social movements.

The decision to disconnect Shia and Sunni Islam from the ministry of Religious Endowments (July 2003) meant the liberalization of funds to religious institutions. As such, the informal religious institutions gained power and influence. Those religious leaders with popular bases, such as the Sadrist, could now fundraise and yet continue to oppose the state. In any case, both informal and

²⁹ Interview with Iraqi sociologist and scholar of tribes, Faleh A Jabar, April 2017

³⁰ Jabar, "The Dilemma of Political Uncertainties," 12.

formal (*hawza*) religious organizations increased their influence by convening *busseiniyas* and administering services through institutes throughout southern and central Iraq. They enjoy a level of influence unparalleled by waning tribal influence.

The political power of Shia religious authorities became clear when Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani emerged as a principle political actor. In 2004, he promoted the United Iraqi Alliance (UIA, *al-Itilaf al-Iraqi al-Muwahhid*), which housed all major Shia political parties. Moreover, the Islamist Shia political parties that governed the new Iraq cooperated with religious endowments and associations rather than with tribes.

Unlike the Shia unity under Sistani, however, the Sunnis found themselves divided between Salafis associated to al-Qaeda, native Salafis who supported Abdullah Janabi, and nationalist Islamists under Harith al-Dhari and the Muslim Scholars (*hayat al-Ulema*). As such, for the Sunnis, the tribal structure remained stronger vis-à-vis religious clerics, whereas the opposite became true for the Arab Shia in the new Iraq.

The Perception of Tribes in Iraq

In Iraq, tribes are increasingly perceived to be an out-of-date institution. For instance, the Iraqi judiciary has ruled that tribal customs contradict the spirit of the constitution and the state.³¹ Moreover, in several meetings and workshops, civil society activists spoke out against the tribes and their influence over revenue-sharing schemes from the government.³²

The following is a National Democratic Institute (NDI) survey completed between December 2015 and January 2016. In it, it becomes clear that the citizens do not associate as much with their tribe or religious sect. This is a major change from post-2003 Iraq, where identity politics were more prevalent.³³

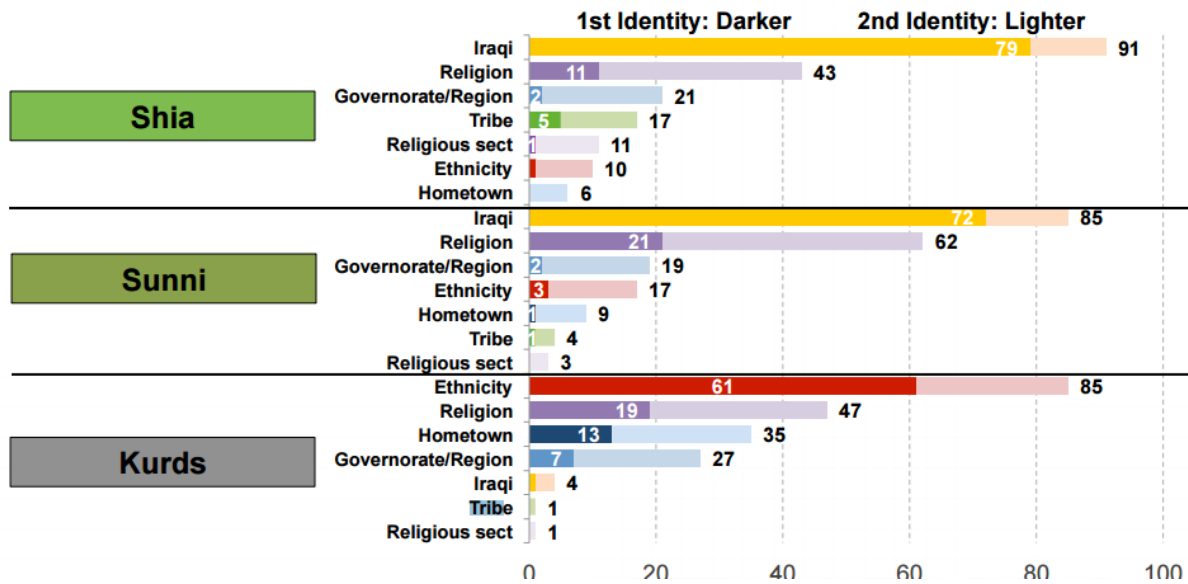
³¹ Higher Judicial Council of Iraq, “The Legal Position of Negative Tribal Customs [al-mawqif al-qanuni min al-'aeraf al-ashayiria al-salbia],” 23 June 2013, <http://www.iraqja.iq/view.2877/> (accessed 06 July 2017).

³² Meetings with civil society activists in Baghdad, November 2016 and April 2017 and in Beirut May 2017.

³³ National Democratic Institute (NDI), “A Challenging Path toward Reconciliation,” June 2017, https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/Reconciliation%20Dec%202015%20Survey_Public_ENG_corrected.pdf (6 July 2017).

Religion significant to identity; Kurds don't identify as Iraqi

Imagine someone you trusted asks you about your background. From the following list, what would be the first way you would identify yourself? And then what would be the second way you would identify yourself?



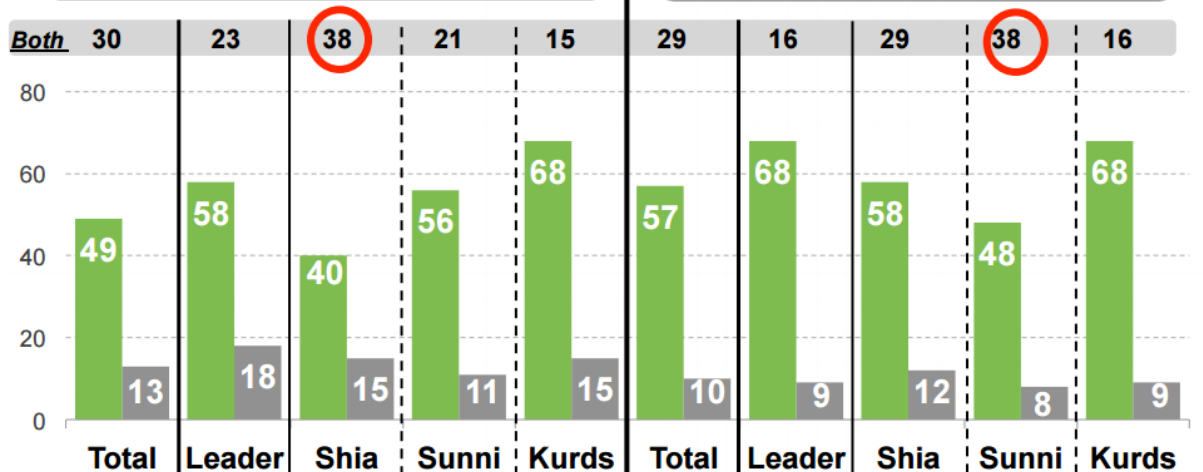
In the next chart, the NDI survey showed that the citizens preferred for their central government to lead on national reconciliation, rather than tribal leaders. Despite the lower role of the tribe at the national level, however, the tribes and religious institutes will continue to play a role at the local levels.

Central government most responsible for reconciliation

The **central government** has the primary responsibility to bring reconciliation in Iraq.

The **religious leaders** have the primary responsibility to bring about reconciliation in Iraq.

The **tribal leaders** have the primary responsibility to bring about reconciliation in Iraq.



Internally, tribal sheikhs do not even trust Sunni political leaders, who show little respect for tribal accommodation. The sheikhs contend that the political leadership is corrupt and ineffective. To them, the so-called Sunni leaders in Baghdad fight each other for a post and a slice of the pie. Moreover, the political leaders do not use the tribal networks to redistribute the resources. For their part, many Sunni leaders would prefer not to provide tribute to the tribes for fear of empowering alternative actors. They recognize that tribes are everywhere in Iraq. But they also complain that the tribes do not tell them what they are doing.

IV. Arab Tribes in Northern Iraq

The Arab tribes in northern Iraq have gone through cycles of growing and weakening influence. In the 1990s, they grew strong as part of Saddam Hussein's tribalization strategy. After 2003, the tribes were weakened, but then again strengthened in the *Sabwa* movements. This section will look at the influence of the tribes in north in the coming years by highlighting the major tribes and major tribal leaders in the provinces of Ninewah, Diyala, Anbar, Kirkuk, and Salahadeen. This is based on recent fieldwork throughout Iraq.

Today, the tribes of Iraq are looking for a greater role in the next stage of state-building, which will emerge following the end of the ISIS caliphate-building project and vis-à-vis the elections in 2018. As the next phase of state-building will rethink the centre-periphery relationship, the tribes will play an important role in local governance at the provincial (*muhafadha*) level. Particularly in the predominantly Sunni-majority provinces, they will serve as social, economic, and political forces. The Sunnis population of Iraq lacks strong political parties or unified religious leadership, allowing for tribes to have a greater role in representation and conflict mediation. The tribal system is used at the local level for dispute resolution, particularly in light of fledgling legal systems. For instance, the Abeer tribes in Mosul established a Council of Elders to work on dispute resolution.

The Iraqi parliament is looking to draft a law to set up a council of tribes. The draft law reads that a council of tribes and clans would be formed as a legal entity, with financial and administrative independence, and represented by a president or a delegate. The tribal council would be linked to the presidency, with its headquarters in Baghdad and a local council made up of five representatives in all provincial centres.

In this section, the paper will analyse the major tribes in the governorates of Ninewah, Diyala, Anbar, Kirkuk, and Salahadeen. It will also include a brief examination of the Shia Arab tribes in southern Iraq, although their socioeconomic and political role is not as strong. The analysis will include a description of the major tribes and tribal leaders, and a discussion about implications on post-conflict transformation for each specific governorate.

Ninewah

The tribes of Ninewah can be divided by locality. The border tribes and confederations (between Iraq and Syria) in the west of the province extend from Rabia to Baaj and include the Shammar (Rabia), Abu Badran, Abu Hamd and Abu Mtoot (see below). Then the areas stretching from Tel Afar to Mosul and adjacent to Makhmour and the Ninewah plains include the powerful tribes of al-Jheish Zubaidiyah and the Jabour tribes. Finally, the central tribes are based in Qayara and al-Sharqat.

The tribal system in resolving disputes prevailed with these families in urban society, and the urban residents themselves were forced to keep up with this system in light of the weakness of legal authorities. Many of the cases, including tribal disputes, were settled by tribal custom and urban

sheikhs. For instance, Mosul's Abeed tribe, one of the largest families, established a Council of Elders for dispute settlement.³⁴

❖ **Al-Shammar**

The largest tribe in Iraq, the Shammar is a tribal union consisting of over 1.5 million people. It is united by several major tribes and is spread across the Ninewah province towards central Iraq (including Baghdad) and crossing the border into Syria and also covering parts of Yemen and UAE. The Shammar includes both Sunni and Shia groups. Today, the paramount sheikh is Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamidi al-Ajil al-Yawar. Historically, the Shammar controlled the trade in northern Iraq and have good relations with the Yezidis in Sinjar and the Kurds, particularly the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Barzanis. For instance, the Shammar fought against ISIS with the KDP in Rabia in 2015.

❖ **Al-Jabour**

The Jabour is one of the largest confederations (Sunni and Shia) in Iraq and is spread along the Tigris River towards Mosul and Makhmour. Their area is known as the Khabur region. The tribes in Ninewah are Sunni. Despite mixed relations with the former Saddam Hussein Regime, the Jabour clan decided to stage a resistance to U.S. troops following 2003. However, after a U.S. base was established in Qayara, the clan changed its outlook and improved relations with the U.S. and sought to promote new Iraqi state-building. The Jabour now have a clear feud with ISIS, which has executed members of the tribe.

In Ninewah, the confederation includes:

1. Al-Omairi; in Qayara, Nimrud, Al-Alil, Zammar and Mosul.
2. Al-Bounjad; in Sharqat and Qayara.
3. Al-Kadha; in Mosul and Nimrod.
4. Albu Tamah; in Qayara.

❖ **Al-Jahesh al-Zubaidiya**

The tribal confederation comes from the leader Mu'ad ibn Karab al-Zubaidi. It is one of the three tribes of Zabid al-Akbar (along with Abu Sultan and al-Sa'id). The tribe is spread across Ninewah (particularly Tal Afar) and shares strong relations with other tribes in the area. The tribe is also in Syria and Yemen. Its reputation is one of "generosity and courage". The most famous tribes in this confederation in Mosul are affiliation to the Bayt Taha, including:

1. Al-Hamad; in villages spread north-west of Tal Afar and Ayadiyah
2. Albu Salem; in between Rabia and Sinjar
3. Al-Aujan; in the Zammar district of Tal Afar.
4. Albu Assaf; in the village of Abu Maria, Talaf.
5. Al-Thiab Al-Husseini in the village of Kerkab, Sinuni, and the Sinjar district
6. Al-Na'im: in the village of Al-Mathlatha and the town of Ayadiyah in the Tal Afar area
7. Albu Jhaish; in Ayen Zalah village and Zumar town, al-Qasabah, Dumaiz, al-Kubah, al-Rashidiyah, and Kirkuk
8. Al-Subeeb; in Mosul

³⁴ Interview with tribal researcher in Baghdad, April 2017.

9. Al-Azam; in the Kulat villages and Um al-Naninah (part of Sinjar)
10. Al-Malali (a branch of the Mula Jasim tribe); in the villages of Salhiya, Qabak and Ayada town in Tel Afar
11. Albu Alyan; in most of the Ninewah province
12. Albu Rijab; in the town of Tel Kief and other nearby villages (Khawajit Khaleel, Kurah Khrab, Janih, Al-Malook, Rashidiyah_
13. Albu Sheikh; in the border of Tal Kief and the villages of Jmaliya.
14. Abu Mohammed; in Mosul, Badush and Rashidiyah
15. Al-Zairaween; in Mosul, Suroj and Zahlafa
16. Al-Sarhan; in Mosul and Rashidiyah
17. Al-Sayir; in Ardan and Shimal

❖ Al-Obeid

The al-Obeid Qabila has deep roots in the Zubaidi tribe. They were historically the landowning merchants from Iraq and Syria. Its rise in the middle Euphrates is associated with the decline of the Mu'ali tribe. From the mid-17th century, however, the al-Obeid began to decline in influence as the Shammars became the most powerful in the region. The Obeid tribe has also historically been mediators between governments and the tribes. Sheikh Abdullah al-Shawi, for instance, is a famous intermediary between the local government and the local population. Historically, this mediatory role gave the Obeids certain advantages, including not having to pay taxes. Its influence extends from the Khabur River to Baghdad, Tikrit and Shamiya. In 2012, the tribe held a conference in Mosul to demand that tribal sheikhs in Ninewah, Salahadeen, and Kirkuk take an important step in building the new Iraq.³⁵ It also played a major role in the 2013 provincial and 2014 national elections. The Obeid tribe, therefore, continues the legacy of acting as an intermediary between governments and the local population.

The confederation is located in Moualh, al-Muthaltha, Ayada, Tel Afar, Mosul and Qayara, Sinjar, Baaj and the villages of Aeen Fathi, Baski, etc.

The Obeid have three main groups:

1. Awlad Mashad
(al-Mishahda)
2. Awlad Daymou'a
(Albu Hyaz)
3. Awlad Ali (Albu Ali)

³⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0A8RhkUGqu8>

❖ **Albu Matut**

The Albu Matut is influential in Sinjar, 120 km west of Mosul and the center of Ninewah province. They have been in this area since 1888, and have spread to other provinces. In the Battle of Khnisi in August 1946, they fought against the Shammar. The tribe won the battle and received compensation from the tribes in the area. The tribe has four branches, each with a tribal leader who is recognized by the men of the tribe:

1. Albu Khalifa; under the leadership of Sheikh Jar Allah Mohammad Jar Allah
2. Albu Al-Waie; under the leadership of Sheikh Salim al-Haj Ali
3. Al-Marrie; under the leadership of Sheikh Salim al-Haj Ali
4. Al-Dikhi; under the leadership of Sheikh Khahtan al-Hilal Hmad al-Hajeel.

The head of the tribe is led by the Jar Allah Mohammed Jar Allah al-Essa.

⇒ *Note on post-conflict transformation:*

The biggest challenge in Ninewah is the intra-Sunni struggle. Recent polling by NDI, as mentioned above, suggests that the population believes that corruption, above sectarianism, led to ISIS. As such, local leaders such as Athil al-Nujaifi and others are accused of corruption. However, the population also views their tribal sheikhs to have also benefitted from resource distribution, with very little trickling down to the general citizenry.

Diyala

Diyala is made up of six administrative counties and 15 townships. The six counties are Baquba, al-Muqdadiya, Khanaqin, Deli Abbas, Baldrouz, and al-Khalis. The province is predominantly Arab and Kurdish along with a small Turkoman population. However, Diyala is a Sunni majority province. The Kurds reside primarily in Khanaqin and Turkmen in Qara Tabbah and Mandali. The Arab Shia reside mainly in the villages of Khirnabat and Huider. More than three-quarters reside Baquba, Muqdadiya and Khanaqin.

The most influential tribes in Diyala are al-Azza, followed by the al-Jabour, al-Obeid, Dulaim, and Bani Tamim. These tribes are mixed.

❖ **Al-Azza**

The al-Azza tribe is best known in Diyala. It is a tribe stemming from Zubayd al-Qahataniyya (or Zubayd al-Asghar). Following the founding of the Iraqi state by the British, its tribal leaders became members in the new Iraqi parliament from 1924.

❖ **Bani Tamim**

The Bani Tamim tribe is a mixed Sunni-Shia tribe in Diyala. Its sheikh is a Shia, and as such the tribe has experienced internal tensions with Sunni members. It has had members as part of the governing State of Law Coalition. The tribe has been the victim of assaults in recent years.

❖ Al-Zarkosh

The al-Zarkosh tribe is a Kurdish Shia tribe (around 7000 members) that has raised recruits to fight against the ISIS onslaught. Although many reside in the Hamrin mountains, the tribe has had a role in battles in Diyala (along with Kirkuk).

Other smaller Arab tribes include al-Sayeed, al-Askari, Bani Sa'ad, Bani Khalid, Bani Harb, Bani Zaid, and Shammar.

The most influential tribal sheikhs are:

1. Blasim Tamimi (Bani Tamim)
2. Mutlaq Hammadi al-Attiyah (al-Jabour)
3. Mazen Habib Bamboo (al-Azza)
4. Hadi Saadoun (Bani Zaid)
5. Faisal Saleh Khalaf (al-Koree)
6. Adnan Bandar (al-Sadat al-Samidae)
7. Abd al-Wahab Ahmad Mandil (al-Obeid)
8. Riadh Tami Abbas (al-Majma'i)
9. Ghadhban Mughair (al-Mahdawi)
10. Faisal al-Houm (al-Nada)
11. Mohammed Karim (Dulaim)
12. Dhari Rizouqi Rashid (al-Douri)
13. Hussein al-Shaji (Bani Tamim)
14. Mezher Maraid (al-Masoudi)
15. Aziz Mohammed Faraj (al-Obeid)
16. Zuhair Karam (al-Khashali)
17. Abdul Jabbar al-Darb (al-Janabi)
18. Jassim Mohammed Hadi (al-Obeid)
19. Ahmed Shi'a Faisal (al-Karkhi)
20. Redha Ahmed Hussein (al-Asakra)
21. Mohammed Saleh Ismail (al-Khalidi)
22. Khaled Taha Ahmed (al-Nuaimi)
23. Ahmed Rahim al-Wan (al-Khazraji)

The most influential political blocs/leaders are:

1. Diyala is our Identity (predominantly Sunni), led by parliamentary speaker Salim Jubouri, Raed al-Duhlaki, Nahida Daini, Saleh Muzahm, and Amr al-Humeiri.
2. The Badr Organization (Shia paramilitary force) led by Hadi al-Amiri, Raed Faris, and Mona Saleh Mahdi.
3. The National Coalition led by Abdullah Hussein Rashid and Huda Kembash.
4. Kurdish leaders include Abdul Aziz Hassan and Maydia Gamal.
5. Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq leader is Furat Mohammed.
6. Sadrist leader is Burhan Kadhemi Hassoun.

Political and security actors in Diyala enjoy power not from their tribal affiliation, but from their political or business organization. As such, their influence within their tribe is not as relevant, but they do hold varying degrees of influence.

The most influential local Sunni Arab political actors (who may have tribes but are influential because of their political role in the province) include:

1. Abd al-Nasser al-Mahdawi (former governor)
2. Hafidh Abdul al-Aziz (former governor)
3. Hamdi Hassoun (Chairman of the Shura Council of the Islamic Party)
4. Abdullah Obeid al-Shammari (a university professor)
5. Ibrahim al-Sumaida'I (al-Hal Party, linked to Jamal al-Karbouli)
6. Mohammed Azzam Hassan Salman
7. Omar Maan Saleh Khalaf
8. Ammar Muzahim Droush Amer
9. Ahmed Asen Hamad Hassan
10. Haq Ismael Jassem Ibrahim
11. Omar Salman Akoub Wasif
12. Najat Khalaf Hassan Alawi
13. Asmaa Hamad Kambash Sultan
14. Aman Abdel Wahab Mahmoud Mansour
15. Abd al-Khaliq Medhat Malik Abdul Latif
16. Safa Jar Abdul Khadr

The most influential local Shia political actors include

1. Muthanna Ali Mahdi Ahmed
2. Mohammed Mahdi Karam Hadi Saleh
3. Qassim Oud Jawad Wahd
4. Saadiq Jaafar Abdul-Mohammed
5. Adai Abraham Asael
6. Ahmed Razouk Mazloum Asael
7. Khedr Muslim abd al-Abbas
8. Mohamed Jawad Kadhém Garmat
9. Issam Shaker Mezher Abboud
10. Samara Najem Abd al-Karim
11. Adi al-Khadran
12. Hamid Obeidi
13. Saad Jalub al-Dujaili

The most influential security and military leaders from Diyala include:

1. Colonel Mezher al-Azzawi, commander of the Tigris operations.
2. General Ali Fadhil al-Obeidi, commander of operations of East Tigris.
3. General Jamil al-Shammari, police chief of Diyala.
4. PMF leader in Diyala is Sheikh Sadiq al-Husseini.
5. PMF supervisor in Diyala is Moin al-Kadhimi.

The most influential paramilitary groups include:

1. The PMF groups (including the Badr Organization, *Asaib ahl al-Haq*, *Kataib Hezbollah*)
2. Al-Obeid tribal fighters
3. Al-Zarkosh tribal fighters
4. Bani Tamim tribal fighters
5. Al-Azza tribal fighters

⇒ **Note on post-conflict transformation:**

The largest challenge in Diyala will be reconciliation between the Sunni and Shia residents in a post-ISIS and conflict transformation context. For the Sunnis, tribal leaders are influential, whereas for the Shia, political actors and military groups such as the Badr Organization, *Asaib ahl al-Haq*, *Kataib Hezbollah* are influential. Shia leaders are now demanding that the Sunni residents pay financial compensation to the members of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) for providing security in the province. However, many Sunni residents feel that the PMF is a problematic Iranian-support institution and so refuse to pay. This refusal has led Shia leaders to give an ultimatum of (1) pay the full amount, or (2) leave the region, or (3) face conflict and the erosion of tribal balance of power. The most conflict-prone cities will be Muqdadiya (Bani Tamim and al-Jabour), Saadia (Bani Tamim), Rabia (conflict between Bani Tamim and Abu Sidon), Hadid (al-Dulaim and Bani Zaid), and Dali Abbas (al-Zarjosh and the al-Jabout and Shammar tribes).

Anbar

As mentioned above, the Anbar province became the home of the *Sabwa* movement and the fight against AQI, then ISI. It is divided into seven sub-districts: al-Qaim, Anah, Haditha, Hit, Ramadi, Fallujah, and al-Rutba. Leading the original *Sabwa* was Abdul Sattar Abu Risha from the Albu Risha tribe. Since the Awakening, however, this once prominent clan has lost considerable legitimacy, and several sources claim that it has no more than 2,000 members at the moment. Other more prominent *Sabwa* tribes today are the Albu Fahd, Albu Issa, Albu Mahal, Albu Faraj, and Albu Alwan. They are all tribes of the Dulaim Confederation, one of the most powerful tribal confederations in Iraq.

❖ **The Dulaim Confederation**

The Dulaim confederation is one of the most prominent tribal confederations in the region. Its centre is in Ramadi, but it spans across the Upper and Western Euphrates in Iraq. It is descended from the Zubaid tribe, which migrated during the Islamic conquests of Iraq. It meets with the other major confederations, i.e. the Jabour, Janabi, and al-Obeid tribes.

Members of the Dulaim tribe had a major role in the emergence of the Iraqi state in 1921. They contributed greatly to the state institutions, including the army and police. Saddam Hussein remained wary of the powerful Dulaim tribe, and removed them from all centres of his inner circle.

The tribe increasingly opposed Saddam Hussein in the 1990s, leading to a so-called attempted coup.

In 2003, the Dulaim tribe largely deprived U.S. troops from controlling Anbar, and fought against the invaders. However, since then, relations with the U.S. has changed, as described more specifically below. Many of them joined the *Sabwa*, and at the moment continue to fight against ISIS.

The tribe is made up of the Albu Fahd, Albu Mahal, Albu Issa, Albu Assaf, Albu Nimr, and Albu Jughaiif, among other smaller elements. The following is a description of the Dulaim tribes.

❖ **Albu Fahd (Ramadi)**

The Albu Fahd tribe of the Dulaim confederation has considerable influence in the Ramadi area. It shared good relations with the former Baath regime. Since 2003, it has had bad relations with ISI. In 2006, for instance, its Sheikh Majid Mohammed Al Saad Al-Fahdawi Al-Dulaimi was assassinated by ISI. ISI then assassinated his successor, Hussein al-Dhaher al-Ali al-Saad soon after. The Albu Fahd, along with the Albu Nimr and Albu Mahal tribes (Dulaim confederation) worked to establish the Anbar People's Committee in 2005 to oppose AQI then ISI. The tribe remains pro-government and works with Iran-friendly actors, such as *Kataib Hezbollah*, to fight against ISIS.

❖ **Albu Mahal (Qaim)**

The Albu Mahal tribe is most dominant in al-Qaim. The tribe was once aligned with AQI in opposition to the U.S. occupation, but grew increasingly disenfranchised and eventually worked to fight off AQI and ISI. Today, it is fighting against ISIS.

❖ **Albu Issa (Fallujah)**

The Albu Issa tribe enjoy influence in Fallujah. Sheikh Eifan Saadoun al-Issawi became a strong ally for the U.S. and the central government in Baghdad, before he was assassinated in 2013. He had decided not to join the insurgency, although many actors in Fallujah had approached him with the proposition. The paramount Sheikh Khamis of the Albu Issa was based in Jordan due to security fears. Although the tribe worked staunchly against the Maliki premiership, several of its sheikhs began supporting Abadi's reform package and sought to include 3000 tribal fighters in the battle to retake Fallujah. However, the tribe remains opposed to the PMF and its role in Iraq. *Kataib Hezbollah* have clashed with certain fighters from the tribe in Ameriyat al Fallujah in May 2015, even though other members have fought with the PMF – exemplifying the internal divisions of the tribe. However, its senior sheikhs, including Abdullah al-Issawi and Shaker al-Issawi continue to complain that the government in Baghdad mistreats their members and does not provide enough support.

❖ **Albu Assaf**

The tribe is based in Ramadi and was part of the *Sabwa*. The tribe has good relations with the government and has engaged with Baghdad in the past. For instance, by 2007, several tribesmen were part of the Anbari police force from Ramadi to al-Qaim. This tribe lost standing during the Saddam period, and many of its leaders claim that Saddam Hussein created new sheikhs to obstruct the tribal structure in Anbar and the north of Iraq. A prominent sheikh is Ali Hatem Abd al-Razzaq Ali al-Suleiman al-Assafi al-Dulaimi, who is the former paramount sheikh of the Dulaim

confederation. Ali Hatem became a *Sabwa* leader and became responsible for the management of salaries. During his time, he is rumoured to have diverted salaries to his family, rather than to the tribes of Anbar. This move was opposed by the Islamic Party of Iraq. Ali Hatem also ran with Maliki and the State of Law Coalition in 2010. Since 2011, however, Ali Hatem has increasingly lost influence and power. His brother, Abd al-Razzaq Hatem, is now the paramount sheikh.

By 2013, relations with Maliki soured and Ali Hatem joined protests in Ramadi. In 2014, Ali Hatem publicly endorsed ISIS, claiming it was better than Maliki. Many consider this to have ended his political career. He no longer has influence over the tribe.

30 members of the tribe were massacred along with the Albu Nimr tribe in November 2014. A leading anti-ISIS sheikh is now Fhaik Faris al-Assafi al-Dulaimi. Another sheikh, Majid Ali Sulaiman, supports PM Abadi and his government.

❖ **Albu Nimr**

During the 1990s, the Albu Nimr posed a challenge to the waning Saddam Hussein regime. The tribe was one of the first to reach out to the U.S. forces following 2003. It remained anti AQI, ISI, and later ISIS. In November 2014, ISIS massacred many members of the tribe. Since then, the tribe has worked with the Sadrist movement and its paramilitary, the Peace Brigades.

❖ **Albu Jughaif**

The Albu Jughaif also have a history of dealing with the central government of Baghdad since 2003. Today, it fights against ISIS and is led by Colonel Farouq al-Jughaifi.

⇒ **Note on post-conflict transformation:**

The biggest challenge in Anbar will be stabilization, since several of the cities in Anbar were the first to be taken by ISIS in late 2013 and early 2014. Moreover, tribal rivalries based on the Fallujah versus Ramadi city competition will remain an issue. The choice of tribes and tribal leaders during the *Sabwa* revealed a clear preference for individuals from Ramadi, angering leaders in Fallujah. Therefore, engagement in Anbar will need to bear in mind such grievances from past stabilization attempts.

Kirkuk

Kirkuk is a mixed province, and there has been no reliable demographic census done since 1957, when it housed Kurds (48%), Arabs (28%), and Turkman (21%), and Syriacs (0.4%). However, Saddam Hussein's Arabization policies led to the removal of the Kurdish majority in Kirkuk, and the migration of Sunni Arabs – tilting the demographics of the province. Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution calls for a three-phase process: removing the Sunnis who were placed in the province, returning the Kurds who were kicked out of the province, and then holding a referendum to vote on whether the province joins the Kurdistan Regional Government or remains its own province. The governor of Kirkuk is Najmaldin Karim, a Kurd with the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK).

As discussed below, tensions between the Kurds, Shia Turkmen, and Arab Sunnis continue to jeopardize the security and stability of the province.

Arab Tribes of Kirkuk include:

1. Al-Naim (Sheikh Sufian Omar al-Nuaimi, who lives in al-Sada). The tribe had strong ties with the Saddam Hussein regime, particularly with Izzat al-Douri who married the sister of Sheikh Sufian. Sheikh Sufian was arrested after 2003 but later released. The tribe is not loyal to the current Abadi government.
2. Al-Jabour (Sheikh Ibrahim Nayef al-Muhairi). This tribe supports the Abadi government. It has bad relations with the Kurds and with the Peshmerga.
3. Al-Kadha (Sheikh Hassan Abdullah). This tribe supports the government and has good relations with Shia political and armed parties
4. Al-Jahresh / al-Zubaid (Sheikh Nouri al-Juhishi). This tribe is based in the contested area of Hawijah and has bad relations with the government.
5. Al-Arjan (Sheikh Abd al-Rashid al-Jabouri, who is a member of the tribal council in Kirkuk).
6. Al-Obeid (Sheikh Anwar Assi Hussein Ali al-Obeidi, who lives in Raml).
7. Albu Ali (Sheik Ali Awad al-Mahawah, who lives in al-Safra). The tribe ranges from Ryiadh to Baiji (Salahadeen) and includes some 25,000 members. They are involved in kidnappings and have several fugitives.
8. Albu Mufraj (Sheikh Zakaa, who lives in Hawija). The tribe is not loyal to the Abadi government.
9. Albu Heyzaa (Sheikh Abdullah al-Sultan, who lives in Hawijah (in the conflict area)). The tribe is against the Abadi government.
10. Albu Hamdan (Sheikh Ali Hussein Ibrahim al-Hamdani).
11. Al-Tai (Sheikh Mahmoud Tohma al-Tae, who lives in Dumiz). The tribe has no open / known political orientation but Sheikh Mahmoud has good relations with Iran.
12. Albu Shaher (Sheikh al-Obeid).
13. Albu Riyash (Major General Murad Fendi Hamad Saleh).
14. Al-Hadadeyoon (Sheikh Ismail Ahmad Rajab al-Hadidi). Loyal to the Abadi government and are involved in state agencies.
15. Al-Janabiyeen (Sheikh Mohammed al-Janabi). The tribe supports the government and also has good ties with Iran. Sheikh Mohammed's brother, Jawad, was a member of the Kirkuk provincial council.
16. Al-Jamela (Sheikh Salman al-Wahab). A large number of members are loyal to the central government.
17. Al-Jawal (Sheikh Matar al-Mutashar). The tribe is involved in smuggling people and goods.
18. Al-Bayat (Sheikh Sami Hassan al-Bayati). Loyal to the government and the most involved in the *Sabma*.
19. Albu Jabr (Sheikh Hussein Ali Saleh al-[‘]Ati). The tribe cooperates with the government and has close relations with the Kurds (particularly the PUK).
20. Al-Akidat (Sheikh Mohammed Gertish). The tribe supports the government.
21. Al-Dulaim (Sheikh Hamada Mahmoud al-Abd). Cooperate with the government.

22. Al-Shammar (Sheikh Mohammad Mezhar Shahin al-Shammari). Cooperate with the government.
23. Abu Ammar (Sheikh Salih al-Shangar). Cooperate with the government.
24. Al-Tameem (Sheikh Atiyya Tayeh). The tribe remains neutral.

Armed Arab tribal leaders in Kirkuk:

1. Sheikh Wasfi al-Osei al-Obeidi, commander of the Kirkuk mobilization units.
2. Sheikh Sufian Omar Ali al-Nuaimi.
3. Sabhan Khalaf Jubouri, Chairman of the Arab Commission supervising the south-west of Kirkuk (al-Hawija). The commission supervises the mobilization of south-west of Kirkuk and includes residents from Hawija, al-Zab and Abbasi. It has 1000 fighters.

Major Kurdish Tribes include Taliban (linked to Jalal Talabani and the PUK), Khanaqata, al-Barzinji, al-Kakaiyeh, and Jabara.

⇒ ***Note on post-conflict transformation:***

The demands of Arabs in Kirkuk include:

1. To form a deterrent force to protect Sunni tribes from Shia militias and Kurdish Peshmerga.
2. To support the establishment of Sunni political parties to stand up to Iranian influence in Kirkuk.
3. To devolve power from the Shia Islamist parties currently in government in Iraq to the province.
4. To prevent Shia and Kurdish armed groups from fighting in Hawija.

The demands of the Kurdish leadership in Kirkuk turn to Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution, which stipulates a three-tier process including (1) de-Arabizing lands taken from the Kurds under Saddam Hussein's Arabization policy, (2) returning Kurds to their lands, and (3) conducting a referendum to ask whether the residents want to include the province in the Kurdistan Region (to join the provinces of Erbil, Sulaimania, and Duhok).

The Turkmen in Kirkuk call for Kirkuk to transition from a governorate/province to a region, which will give it greater autonomy.

A major conflict point in Kirkuk will be the status of the county. The Kurds, Arabs, Turkmen, and other minorities are divided on this issue. The other potentially violent conflict point will be over disputed territories between the Peshmerga and the government-backed PMF.

Salahadeen

Salahadeen was an important province during the Saddam era because its capital of Tikrit was the birthplace of Saddam Hussein and his Ba'athist colleagues who took over the Iraqi state. Several tribes which have had influence in the province include:

The Jabour tribe was prominent under the Saddam Hussein regime. For instance, 50,000 of its members were part of the Republican Guard.³⁶ However, since 2003, its leaders have repeatedly called for participation in the new state-building process. Unlike most Sunni tribes, the Jabour leadership decided to participate in the 2005 elections, and as such gained considerable institutional leverage vis-à-vis boycotting tribal leaders. Abdullah Hussein Mohammad Jebara al-Jabouri, who was a high-ranking Ba'ath party member, served as the deputy governor of Salahadeen (2004-2009).

The tribe has also had antagonistic relations with ISI (and later ISIS), due to its participation in the *Sabwa*. However, it also had tense relations with the Maliki second-term administration, which stopped paying the *Sabwa* and began using de-Baathification to bring down influential tribal leaders. However, several leaders in the tribe continue to work with the Abadi government and even the PMFs. For instance, the mayor of Hawija, Sabhan Khalef Ali al-Jabouri joined forces with the PMF.

Baiji is in the north of the province, with a population of about 200,000 people. The largest tribes (ranging from 15,000 – 20,000 members) include:

1. al-Jabour (Sheikh Ahmed al-Khalaf),
2. al-Jaysat (Sheikh Ghaleb Nafos Hamad),
3. al-Janabi (Sheikh Osama Sharif Bara – who rejects the political process and supports armed Sunni groups),
4. al-Hamdani (Sheikh Nadeem al-Fazah, who rejects the political process),
5. al-Jamela (Sheikh Mohammed al-Zaidan),
6. Albu Jawari (Sheikh Saleh al-Naama),
7. al-Hadetheen (Sheikh Khalil al-Shalal, who rejects the political process),
8. Albu Nasser (Sheikh Salah al-Kamel, who rejects the political process), and
9. al-Alkawaien (Sheikh Haji Raad al-Alkawi).

³⁶ Robert Tollast, "The Civil Wars of Iraq's Sunni Tribes: Fault Lines within 8 Sunni tribes and Sub-tribes, 2003-2016," 28 March 2016, 1001 Iraqi Thoughts, <http://1001iraqithoughts.com/2016/03/28/the-civil-wars-of-iraqs-sunni-tribes-fault-lines-within-8-sunni-tribes-and-sub-tribes-2003-2016/> (accessed 06 July 2017).

In Tikrit, the major tribes include:

1. al-Tikareet (Sheikh Fahd Mukhlas Pasha and Sheikh Muzahm Mustafa); the tribe counts roughly 60,000.
2. al-Dulaim (Sheikh Hamid Adham and Aref Jabbar).
3. Al-Doreen (Sheikh Mohammad al-Douri, who has been arrested by the Popular Mobilization Forces for his participation in sit-ins).
4. Abu Ajeel (Sheikh Abdul Dhiab al-Ajili, who was former minister of higher education, and Sheikh Abdul Karim Nada).
5. Al-Hadetheen (Sheikh Maher Thabit al-Hadetheen and Bassim al-Jaysh).
6. Shammar (Sheikh Sabah Matshar al-Shammari).
7. Al-Qaysin (Sheikh Hamad Hamad al-Shakti).
8. Abu Nasser (Sheikh Nada Ali al-Nada): The Tikriti tribal confederation is based in and around the area of Tikrit. It was the tribe of Saddam Hussein and his close confidants.

In Samarra, the major tribes include:

1. Abu Baz (Sheikh Jassem Mumtaz)
2. Abu Darraj (Sheikh Mubdar abd al-Haey Hussein al-Abed)
3. Abu Badri (Sheikh Wathiq Sayid al-Badri)

There are also Hussein Tribes (Shia):

1. Abu Abbas (Abood Ahmad al-Bareas)
2. Abu Nissan (Munthir al-Seyid Hatim)
3. Abu Talib (Ahmad al-Saji)
4. Abu Rahman (Qahtan Yahya al-Salim)

⇒ ***Note on post-conflict transformation:***

In Salahadeen, the issue of inclusion of former members of the Saddam Hussein Ba'ath regime and loyal tribes will continue to pose a problem for the authorities in Baghdad. Reconstruction will also be complicated in Baiji, where intense battles over the oil-rich town have continued for the past three years.

V. Tribes in the Southern Provinces

The tribes in the southern areas of Iraq are diverse in their origins and make-up, and varied in their stances towards state institutions and non-tribal actors. This section will seek to explore these complex dynamics and broadly outline the number of tribes within the region. It will highlight which tribes are the most prominent within each province, who the key individuals are within them and what their principle stances have been in recent years.

❖ Wasit

1. Al-Zubayd: The main tribe of Al-Zubayd is based in the city of Al-Suwaira in Wasit province. The leader of Al-Zubayd tribe is Sheikh Maad Jassim Al-Samarmad. In general, the tribe and its leader Sheikh Al-Samarmad are supportive of the central government and have periodically voiced their backing of the current Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, particularly in the fight against ISIS. Al-Samarmad has also called on the tribes in southern Iraq and the leaders of Al-Zubayd to play a stabilising role in supporting the government in its efforts.³⁷ The ‘Azza, Dulaym, Jubour, Shawi, and ‘Ubayd tribes are all sub-sections of the Zubayd confederation.
2. Al-Rab’ih: The Rab’ih tribe has branches that are in several provinces of Iraq as well as Wasit. The overall head of the tribe is Sheikh Mohammed al-Habeeb al-Rab’ih. Their activities are fairly low key in Wasit province, with the tribe often offering its support to the social services that are provided by either the state or by clerical-affiliated social organisations.

❖ Babil

1. Al-Janabi: The al-Janabi tribe originates from the Arabian Peninsula, as with many other tribes in the south of Iraq and is predominantly Sunni. The al-Janabi is one of the prominent tribes in the province of Babil, with perhaps its most well-known figure being the politician Adnan al-Janabi. His family is the head of the tribe in Babil province, who were previously favoured by Saddam Hussein’s regime in helping his regime ensure security through the support of Iraqi tribes. The murder of Sheikh Qassem Sweidan al-Janabi in 2015 at the hands of Shia militias in Sadr City, Baghdad, was controversial and ignited sectarian tensions, particularly between the al-Janabi tribe and the perceived threat from Shia militia armed groups.
2. Unizzah: the Unizzah tribe is prominent in the provinces of Babil, Karbala, Najaf, and Al-Muthanna. The General Secretary of the Association of the Unizzah Tribe in Iraq is Sheikh Saad Abbas al-Fad’ani al-Unzi. The activities of Sheikh Saad are limited and are restricted to representing the tribe in public forums. The tribe also hold strong ancestral connection to tribes within Saudi Arabia that are still important and part of the outreach for elders within the Unizzah tribe.
3. Albu Alwan: the Albu Alwan has a Shi’a minority branch, some of whom live in Hillah, Babil province, although the tribe is rooted in Anbar. As with many of the major Sunni tribes (such as the al-Janabi tribe also in Babil), Saddam Hussein was careful to cultivate close ties and bestow money and gifts on loyalists such as Sheikh Mohammad Jawad al-Naifus. Today, the leader of the Albu Alwan tribe in Babil is Sheikh Adnan Khamis al-Muhanna.

³⁷ Al-Arabia Press, “Sheikh Ma’d Samarmad, I call on the Tribes of the Centre and the South to Move Away [al-sheikh Ma’d Samarmad, adeu ashayir al-Wasat wa al-janub ‘iila al-aibtiead], 4 March 2017, <http://www.alarabiyapress.com/?p=4739> (accessed 6 July 2017).

4. Al-Hawashim
5. Albu Sultan

❖ **Karbala**

The tribes of Karbala are an important source of security and stability in the south of Iraq. The tribes are important for their ability to establish and maintain order through their social status, providing protection, resolving disputes, redistributing wealth, and offering various forms of welfare. Most of Karbala's tribes fall under the four main confederations, al-Hassan (Bani Hassan, al-Hindiyah), al-Masoud (al-Husainiyah), al-Yaser (al-Hur), and Bani Asad – all overwhelmingly Shia.

There are 14 Support Councils in Karbala Province, apportioned by population: One in Ayn al-Tamr Qadah, two in al-Hur, three in Karbala City, and four each in al-Husayniyah and al-Hindiyah.

1. Al-Glall
2. Al-Hassan
3. Unizzah

❖ **Al-Qadisiyah**

1. Al-Agra'a
2. Albu Yaser
3. Al-Fatlah
4. Al-Khaza'il
5. Al-Jubour
6. Al-Laith

❖ **Misan**

1. Albu Mohammed: Led by Sheikh Mohammed Abbas Mohammed al-Arabi, the tribe is located on both side of the Tigris River in Misan province.
2. Al-Ozairij
3. Bani Bayat
4. Bani Lam - Sheikh Sadoon Ali al-Ghulam: The Bani Lam tribe originates from the Hijaz region of the Arabian Peninsula and is a predominantly Shia tribe. They are led by Sheikh Sadoon Ali al-Ghulam who is generally supportive of the government, particularly in its efforts to re-establish stability since ISIS entered Iraq in 2014.³⁸
5. Syed Ismael - Syed Abbas al-Syed Sarout
6. Ka'b - Sheikh Khaled Jabr al-Ali
7. Saraya - Sheikh Kadhim Mashtat al-Sabeeh
8. Albu Timin
9. Al-Montifig
10. Al-Sawae'id

³⁸ Iraqi Public Opinion Agency, "Special Meeting with Sheikh Saadoon Ghulam Ali, [liqa' khas ma' al-Sheikh Saadoon Ghulam Ali]" 16 July 2015, YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nYkUW_k9k1s (accessed 6 July 2017).

❖ **Dhi Qar**

1. Al-Ghazi - Sheikh Ali Mohammed al-Munshid
2. Al-Badoor - Sheikh Aabir Fahd al-Shirshat
3. Khafaja - Sheikh Amir Ghani al-Sakban
4. Albu Salih - Sheikh Sabah Faris Badr al-Rumaidh
5. Abooda - Sheikh Hassan Ali al-Hayoon
6. Bani Asad - Sheikh Libnan Salem al-Hayoon
7. Al-Montifig
8. Al-Ribad
9. Bani Hjaim
10. Bani Rikab

❖ **Najaf**

1. Al-Hassan (Bani Hassan): The al-Hassan tribe (Bani Hassan) is one of the largest tribes in Najaf, making up around 100-150 000 in number. It is led by the influential Sheikh Muthanna al-Hatim al-Hassan, who has long been a support of the federal government in Baghdad. The al-Hassan tribe is known to be quite accommodating towards local and federal authorities, as well as the religious clergy and are a source of security and stability.
2. Al-Glall
3. Al-Khaza'il: The al-Khaza'il are an important family from Najd. A considerable number of them are known to have been nomadic. The Khaza'il proper, apart from tribes of different origin who may still be reckoned in the confederation, are all of one family and named after their respective ancestors in the sheikhly house. The Khaza'il tribe can be found in Baghdad area. The Khaza'il are divided into al-Shallal and the al-Salaman.

❖ **Al-Muthana**

1. Unizzah
2. Al-Dufeer
3. Al-Motairat

❖ **Basra**

1. Rabee'a - Sheikh Ahmed Salman al-Soucif
2. Tamim - Sheikh Muzahim Mustafa al-Kanaan
3. Al-Sadoon - Sheikh Jamal Sabri al-Sadoon
4. Bani Amir - Sheikh Amir Hussein al-Faniz
5. Al-Amarah - Sheikh Qahtan Jari al-Amarah
6. Al-Fodhoul - Sheikh Abbas Nasir al-Fadhli
7. Al-Montifig
8. Al-Asdi
9. Al-Kindi
10. Bani Malik
11. Al-Khazraj
12. Al-Jubeir

❖ Tribal Councils in the South

The Southern Council of Tribes (*Majlis 'ashair al-junoob*) is headed by Sheikh Ahmed al-Ghanim (General Secretary) and Sheikh Kadhim al-'Unayzan (President). The council is nationalist in its political stances, rejecting any influence of external actors in the south and wider Iraq, be they American or Iranian. The council deems that all actions must be taken to ensure that all external influence is rejected in southern Iraq, be it through democratic means or through armed struggle.³⁹ It is also extremely critical of the American invasion of Iraq and is critical of the government of Iraq which it views as sectarian and a product of the American invasion. The council is based in Basra.

Diwan al-Waqf al-Shi'i – the Shia Endowment organisation – headed by Syed 'Allaa al-Mousawi – this organisation was created in the aftermath of 2003 and is affiliated with the government, falling under the Ministry of *Anqaf*. The *Waqf* works with the federal government, local authorities and mosques and *Husseiniyas* to distribute resources and provide welfare and develop institutions.

The Council of the Mid-Euphrates⁴⁰ is a civil society organisation that is currently led by Sheikh Iyad al-Khuyoon, who hails from the Bani Asad tribe.

⇒ **Note on post-conflict transformation:**

As discussed, in the southern provinces, the tribes do not have the same sway as in the Northern provinces. However, and particularly for local issues and dispute settlement, the tribes and tribal councils remain relevant and continue to consult with prime minister Haider al-Abadi and the central government.⁴¹

³⁹ The Southern Council of Tribes [Majlis 'ashair al-junoob], "Political Program, [al-barnamaj al-siyasi]," 8 December 2017, http://www.ashairjanob.com/?page_id=8 (accessed 06 July 2017).

⁴⁰ Organization of Southern Tribal Affairs in the Euphrates, "Facebook Profile Page," <https://www.facebook.com/%D9%85%D9%86%D8%B8%D9%85%D8%A9-%D9%85%D8%AC%D9%84%D8%B3-%D8%B4%D9%8A%D9%88%D8%AE-%D8%B9%D8%B4%D8%A7%D8%A6%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC%D9%86%D9%88%D8%A8-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%88%D8%B3%D8%B7-137625016346446/> (accessed 06 July 2017).

⁴¹ Interview with tribal council leader Shaikh Abbas al-Fadhli, May 2017

VI. Clerics and Religious Institutions in Iraq

Religious Institutions and Leaders for predominantly-Sunni Provinces

Unlike the Shia Arabs, Sunni Arabs do not have a single or unified religious leadership (akin to the role that Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani plays in Najaf). As such, the Sunnis remained divided on affiliations to Islamist scholars, who could be Sufi, Salafi, Muslim Brotherhood, etc. Yet, prominent clerics since 2003 have attempted to gain political leverage by establishing religious associations. At times this has helped them gain status within the tribe. As such, tribal and religious affiliations do interconnect, not as much at the confederation level but more at the family and clan level. As discussed below, many religious leaders are either already sheikhs or gain the “sheikh” title when they become prominent religious leaders. An individual can be under the influence of a tribal leader but, as discussed above, can also disagree with the tribal leader if they do not share the same sect (i.e. the cases in Diyala) or religious beliefs.

The most influential religious institutes claiming to represent the Sunni voice are:

1. The Association of Muslim Scholars (*Hayat Al-Ulama Al-Muslimin*): The organization was formed by Sheikh Harith al-Dhari shortly after the 2003 U.S.-led invasion.⁴¹ It rejected the new state. On 30 November 2004, it announced it would be boycotting the 2005 elections. For instance, on federalism, it wrote “Seeking federalism under the current circumstances is nothing but an act of treason and a disgrace for those who seek it. Federalism, at this stage, is a wicked scheme and is promoted by US, Israeli, and Iranian circles.” Recently, under the leadership of Muthana al-Dhari (son of Harith), the association has changed its discourse slightly, appearing to warm up to ideas of federalism and power-sharing. Today, the association would represent less than 10 percent of the Sunni voice, according to rough estimates from various sources.
2. The Sunni Endowment (*Waqf al-Sunni*): The endowment is a government recognized body tasked with managing the holy sites (include thousands of mosques) and distributing resources to the population.⁴² It is led by Abdul Latif al-Humayim, who was appointed by Abadi. Humayim (from Ramadi) is a cleric, businessman, banker, and construction contractor. Humayim’s reputation is questioned by various sources, but nonetheless, he has been active in providing for IDPs. The endowment has poor relations with the Anbar Governor Suhaib al-Raqi, who challenges Humayim’s authority. In 2012 Humayim created *Nabdhbat al-Iraq* (the Renaissance of Iraq) and tried to enter the political process for the 2014 elections. The coalition was opposed to federalism and the idea of a Sunni region. However, after not gaining any ground, he decided to not run in the elections.

⁴¹ <http://www.iraq-amsi.net/ar/> The Dhari are members of the Zoba tribe under the Shammar confederation.

⁴² <http://sunniaffairs.gov.iq/ar/>

3. The Fiqh Council of Iraq (*Majma al-Faqih al-Iraqi*)⁴³: The goal of the organization, which enjoys considerable influence (sources claim some 50 percent of Sunnis support it) is to provide legitimate reference to Sunnis Iraqis by spreading the Islamic call of faith, order, and ethics. It is led by 5 Salafis, 5 Sufis, and 5 Muslim Brotherhood members and is strong in Basra, Baghdad, and Erbil. It was against Humayim's appointment as the leader of the Sunni Endowment.
4. *Dar al-Iftah al-Iraqi*⁴⁴: The organization is now based in Erbil but claims to represent Sunni Arabs. It is Sufi-based and led by Sheikh Rafi al-Rifa. It enjoys some 10 percent of popularity from the Sunni population.
5. Hayat al-Iftah al-Salafi: The organization is small and has representation in Baghdad and Salahadeen. Its leader is Mahdi al-Subaie. It is a Salafi organization and opposed the government in Baghdad.

Religious Institutions and Leaders for Southern Provinces

❖ **Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani**⁴⁵

As mentioned above, unlike Sunni Arabs, the Shia population are united religiously under the leadership of Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani. Although his representatives repeated to the author that Sistani prefers not to get involved in politics, at different times Sistani has mobilized his followers. For instance, in 2004, he told all Shia to vote, resulting in a landslide victory for the Shia United Islamic Alliance (UIA). Then, in 2014, he called on citizens to volunteer and take up arms against ISIS, again resulting in mass mobilization. As such, Sistani remains a powerful force able to mobilize or support initiatives. As discussed, he brings in between 500 and 700 million USD annually through religious tax.

❖ **Shia Organizations**

1. The al-Khoei Islamic Foundation⁴⁶ – led by Syed Jawad al-Khoei, the foundation is seen as the legacy of Grand Ayatollah Seyyid Abulqasim Musawi al-Khoei, who died in 1992 and was the predecessor of Grand Ayatollah Sistani. The foundation's work is worldwide and its Iraq focus looks at developing educational institutions and providing humanitarian assistance and development.
2. The al-Hakeem Foundation⁴⁷ – led by Syed Ammar al-Hakeem. Similar to the al-Khoei foundation, the al-Hakeem foundation focuses its work in Iraq on providing education, welfare and humanitarian assistance in Iraq. Its work spans across public relations, women's rights, humanitarian assistance and cultural activities.

⁴³ <http://alfiqhi.com/cgi-sys/suspendedpage.cgi>

⁴⁴ <http://www.h-iftaa.com/>

⁴⁵ <https://www.sistani.org/english/>

⁴⁶ <http://www.al-khoei.org/about-2/the-foundation/>

⁴⁷ <http://www.alhakimfd.org/>

3. Hikma Center for Dialogue and Coordination⁴⁸ – led by Syed Salih al-Hakeem and founded by Ayatollah Al-Syed Riyadh al-Hakeem. The Centre’s aim is to encourage dialogue between all of Iraq social and religious groups to ensure inclusion for all. The work of the centre is sponsored by the office of the Grand Ayatollah Mohammed Saeed al-Hakeem, who is one of the four members of the *Hawza* in Najaf.
4. Al-Ayn Social Care Foundation⁴⁹ – an independent humanitarian organisation that is supported heavily by Grand Ayatollah Sistani. It provides welfare to families of those who are fighting for the Popular Mobilisation Units (PMUs). Its projects consist of buildings, lands and houses, endowed as *waqf*, with the custodian of the *waqf* being the supreme religious authority in Najaf, al-Sistani. The projects are taking place in Najaf, Karbala, Baghdad, Al-Muthana, Babil, and Basra.⁵⁰
5. The Iraqi Council for Interfaith Dialogue⁵¹ - co-founded by a number of leading religious figures and organisations in Iraq from the al-Khoei Foundation, the Order of the Dominican fathers in Iraq and the Massarat Foundation. The dialogue works to create a safe space for dialogue between faiths, and promote peace and reconciliation in the country.
6. The Humanitarian Dialogue Foundation⁵² – founded in 2007 by Syed Hussein Ismael al-Sadr, the HDF is a cultural exchange forum in Iraq to help Iraqis from all communities form a common Iraqi identity.⁵³

⁴⁸ <http://hiwar.alhikmah.org/>

⁴⁹ <https://www.alayn.co.uk/>

⁵⁰ Office of Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, “About Us: Social Services: Al-Ayn Social Care Foundation,” <http://www.sistani.org/english/social-service/1419/> (accessed 6 July 2017).

⁵¹ <http://iraqid.org/en/>

⁵² <http://www.hdf-iq.org/ar/>

⁵³ Humanitarian Dialogue Foundation, “Ongoing Events,” <http://www.hdf-iq.org/en/> (accessed 6 July 2017).

VII. Conclusion: Suitable Approaches for Engagement and Reception and Admissibility

This paper concludes with a brief discussion on next steps. As has been discussed, tribes and clerics will continue to have a role in the Iraqi political scene, particularly at the local level, where they often complement the state's activities by providing services, rulings (either religious or tribal), and governance.

Moving forward, engaging with these groups is crucial both to understanding the dynamics of the upcoming post-conflict transformation and to facilitating dialogue across social groups. The most suitable method for this engagement is through workshops and conferences convened by a third party mediator. As discussed, in the predominately Sunni provinces, it is the tribal leaders who provide security, are able to mobilize masses, and represent the citizens, whereas in the predominately Shia provinces, clerics are more powerful.

The role of civil society in this engagement is noteworthy. As discussed earlier, many activists throughout Iraq are increasingly hesitant of the role that tribes can play in post-conflict settlements. They accuse tribes of corruption, along with archaic stances on issues such as women's education and rights.

Moreover, tribes are integral for (a) providing and ensuring security and (b) mobilizing masses. Both these characteristics are key to post-conflict dialogue. The latter includes recruiting *en masse* and creating post-conflict narratives and discourse. As such, and although civil society activists hold reservations, engaging with paramount sheikhs in particular will be an integral aspect of post-conflict dialogue.

According to my personal interviews in the past, and to the researchers who also participated in the mapping, a majority of the tribal leaders discussed in this report are interested in playing a post-conflict role. The only groups that will not be are the clans and sub-clans that may have loyalties to Salafi-jihadi movements or certain former Ba'athist networks. The tribal leaders will seek such mediation activities as opportunities to increase their stature in society and gain leverage with international organizations and officials. Many are looking to remain relevant in the Iraqi socio-political environment following the fall of ISIS and the upcoming state re-building process.

The first step is to engage with the tribes at the provincial/governorate level with workshops and working groups which can promote semi-formal discussions and interactions. This process entails bringing together paramount sheikhs (of a *qabila*) or sheikh masheikh, tribal sheikhs, and leadings sheikhs of clans and sub-clans from each of the affected provinces: Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewah, Anbar, and Salahadeen. The aims of these workshops will be to better understand the local and immediate needs of each of the tribal leaders in the provinces. Another purpose is to better understand who is claiming to represent populations at the micro level, and who has legitimacy on the ground. Many of these questions remain open. This paper has outlined the major local sheikhs from each governorate, and the next step will be to engage with these leaders, many of whom are

interested in playing a role in post-conflict stabilization. The only group uninterested in such processes are the sheikhs described above as anti-government.

Then, if the focus extends to the national level, the next step is to bring together the paramount sheikhs of the major tribes and confederations across provinces. At times, dealing with sub-clan and clan leaders has a tendency to produce very local interest agitation rather than national policies, as each leader would be looking out for the interest of his community. Some of them, acting on micro interests, may even serve as spoilers. On the other hand, paramount sheikhs have a much wider mandate and are better placed to deal with post-conflict issues. Engaging with the paramount sheikhs, a majority of whom are interested in having a role in post-conflict issues, will ensure practical dialogue and diapraxis at the national level.

The major paramount sheikhs who should be included in this process are:

1. Sheikh Abdullah Hamade al-Yawar (Shammar)
2. Sheikh Muhannad al-Balasim (Tamim)
3. Sheikh Wadi al-Assi (al-Obeid)
4. Sheikh Sami Sulaiman Bek (al-Bayat)
5. Sheikh Ali Abbas Arebe (Albu Mohammad)
6. Sheikh Safyan Amr al-Naimi (al-Naim)
7. Sheikh Rafa Abdul Karim al-Fahdawi (Albu Fahd)
8. Sheikh Mishan al-Jameli (Jameli)

Depending on the focus of the diapraxis, tribal and religious leaders from the north and religious clerics from the south will focus on different issues – depending on their constituencies. As such, the key is to first have a meeting of the tribal and clerical leaders to better understand their stances and appetite for engagement. Having them all in the room will move the discussion beyond the simple reassurances they give in a one-on-one interview/meeting. As suggested, they should first discuss these points among themselves to find a common position they can jointly advocate to the central government. Having a common vision flushed out first will allow the tribal councils to better engage with political actors, both at the municipal and provincial levels (governorates) and at the central government level (with the Prime Minister's Office). This will allow for dialogue between the tribes and politicians.

For the tribal paramount sheikhs who focus on the national level, the key points will be: the centre-periphery relationship, amnesty laws, national guards, and local power sharing agreements that include employment for members in their tribes. For the religious clerics and institutions, the message of the diapraxis fits their mandate for dialogue in any case. Clerical leaders will tend to shy away from a political role, particularly those who follow the *hawza* and Sistani in Najaf. However, and despite any discourse, they will seek to tackle societal issues, such as unemployment, reconciliation, basic services, and to some extent corruption. Although they will say they are not political, and are only interested in providing religious advice, they have in the past and will continue to provide such socio-economic agitation for Iraqis.

General discussions of reconciliation and post-conflict settlement could benefit from including both tribal and clerical leaders together. These topics can include the future of the security sector (the role of the PMF and a National Guard), the return of IDPs after the fall of ISIS, the

stabilization processes and the resumption of local governance, and other broad issues where the political leaders could benefit from the advisory role of both tribes and religious institutions.

Even when the discussion is on a specific city/region, and the paramount sheikh of a major tribe is from another region, he should be invited to join the sheikhs from each province. Engaging with the paramount sheikhs was not done comprehensively during the *Sahwa*.

The purpose of this dialogue should be to create a “national platform” in order to synchronize both local tribal leaders with confederation leaders and tribes that span across region and sect. This dialogue can be consistent as the working group can meet once a quarter and also communicate and disseminate news and updates via social media and a WhatsApp group specifically tailored for the network. Having some of the workshops outside of the country, over a weekend at a retreat, would also establish warm and personal networks between these leaders. Possible locations include Beirut, Amman, Istanbul, and Europe.⁵⁴ The workshops should also be convened inside the country, particularly in the major cities of Baghdad, Erbil, and Basra.

Another suitable approach is the formal conference with paramount sheikhs. These events will better entice participants to remain part of the network and will also bring together different segments of society. Beyond the speeches and presentations, these conferences will serve to enhance the participants’ own network and allow them discuss their local initiatives.

Finally, one-to-one communication will remain important to maintaining a relationship of trust between the third-party mediator and the various actors.

In conclusion, both the tribal and clerical actors maintain an interest in participating in a post-conflict transformation network that will allow them to preserve their influence at the local level and also have a better network with the rest of the country.

⁵⁴ Once the participants have built a solid rapport, another possibility is running crisis simulations, which have been done at Chatham House in the past.