Expeditionary Culture Field Guide

IRAQ

U.S. AIR FORCE

About this Guide

This guide is designed to prepare you to achieve mission objectives while deployed to culturally complex environments.

The fundamental information it provides will help you understand the cultural dimension of your assigned location and gain skills necessary for success.

The guide consists of 2 parts:

Part 1 introduces "Culture General," the foundational knowledge you need to operate effectively in any global environment with a focus on the Arab Gulf States.

NOTE: While the term Persian Gulf is common in the US, this guide uses the name preferred in the region, the Arabian Gulf.

Part 2 presents "Culture Specific" Iraq, focusing on unique cultural features of Iraqi society. It applies culture-general concepts to help increase your knowledge of your assigned deployment location and is designed to complement other pre-deployment training.

For further information, visit the Air Force Culture and Language Center (AFCLC) website at www.airuniversity.af.edu/AFCLC/ or contact the AFCLC Region Team at AFCLC.Region@us.af.mil.

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PART 1 – CULTURE GENERAL

What is Culture?

Fundamental to all aspects of human existence, culture shapes the way humans view life and functions as a tool we use to adapt to our social and physical environments. A culture is the sum of all of the beliefs, values, behaviors, and symbols that have meaning for a society. All human beings have culture, and individuals within a culture share a general set of beliefs and values.

Members of a culture also usually assign the same meanings to the symbols in that culture. A symbol is when one thing – an image, word, object, idea, or story – represents another thing. For example, the American flag is a physical and visual symbol of a core American value—freedom. At the same time, the story of George Washington admitting to having chopped down a cherry tree is also symbolic because it represents the premium Americans place on personal honesty and leadership integrity (Photo: US and Royal Oman Air Force personnel following a training flight).

Force Multiplier

The military services have learned through experience the importance of understanding other cultures. Unlike the 20th-century bipolar world order that dominated US strategy for nearly half a century, today the US military is operating in what we classify as asymmetric or irregular conflict zones, where the notion of cross-cultural interactions is on the leading edge of our engagement strategies.

We have come to view the people themselves, rather than the political system or physical environment, as the decisive feature in conflict areas. Our primary objective hinges on influencing constructive change through peaceful means where possible.

We achieve this endeavor by encouraging local nationals to focus on developing stable political, social, and economic institutions that reflect their cultural beliefs and traditions.

Therefore, understanding the basic concepts of culture serves as a force multiplier. Achieving an awareness and respect of a society's values and beliefs enables deploying forces to build relationships with people from other cultures, positively influence their actions, and ultimately achieve mission success.

Cultural Domains

Culture is not just represented by the beliefs we carry internally, but also by our behaviors and by the systems members of a culture create to organize their lives. These systems, such as political or educational institutions, help us to live in a manner that is appropriate to our culture and encourages us to perpetuate that culture into the future.

We can organize behaviors and systems into categories—what the Air Force refers to as "cultural domains"—in order to better understand the primary values and characteristics of a society. A cross-culturally competent military member can use these domains–which include kinship, language and communication, and social and political systems and others (see chart on next page)—as tools for understanding and adapting to any culture. For example, by understanding the way a culture defines family and kinship, a US military member operating overseas can more effectively interact with members of that culture (Photo: Muslim pilgrims visit Ka'aba, Islam's holiest site, in Mecca, Saudi Arabia).

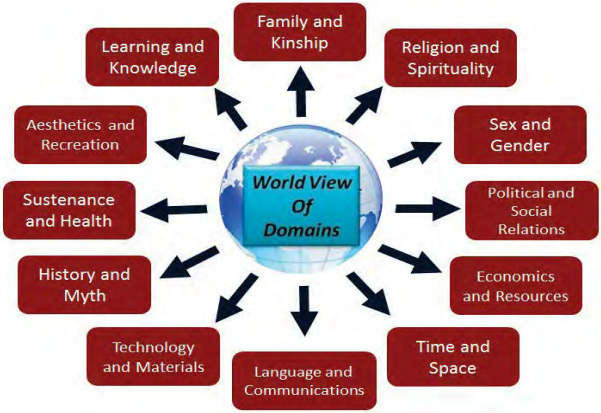
Social Behaviors across Cultures

While humankind shares basic behaviors, various groups enact or even group those behaviors differently across cultural boundaries. For example, all societies obtain food for survival, although agrarian societies generally produce their own food for limited consumption using very basic techniques.

Conversely, industrialized nations have more complex market economies, producing foodstuffs for universal consumption. Likewise, all cultures value history and tradition, although they represent these concepts through a variety of unique forms of symbolism. While the dominant world religions share the belief in one God, their worship practices vary with their traditional historical development. Similarly, in many kin-based cultures where familial bonds are foundational to social identity, it is customary for family or friends to serve as godparents, while for other societies this practice is nearly non-existent.

Worldview

One of our most basic human behaviors is the tendency to classify others as similar or different based on our cultural standards. As depicted in the chart below, we can apply the 12 cultural domains to help us compare similarities and differences across cultures. We evaluate others' behavior to determine if they are "people like me" or "people not like me." Usually, we assume that those in the "like me" category share our perspectives and values.



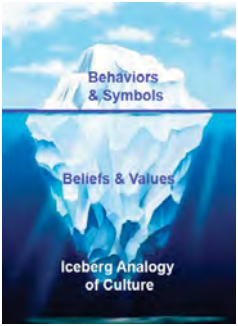
This collective perspective forms our worldview—how we see the world and understand our place in it. Your worldview functions as a lens through which you see and understand the world. It

helps you to interpret your experiences and the values and behaviors of other people that you encounter. Consider your worldview as a way of framing behavior, providing an accountability standard for actions and a logical explanation of why we individually or collectively act in a certain manner.

Cultural Belief System

An important component of a worldview is our belief system. A community's belief system assigns meaning, sets its universal standards of what is good and bad, defines right and wrong behavior, and assigns a value of meaningful or meaningless. Our beliefs form the fundamental values we hold to be true—regardless of whether there is evidence to support these ideas. Beliefs are a central aspect of human culture. They are shared views about world order and how the universe was physically and socially constructed.

While all people have beliefs, their specific components tend to vary depending upon respective world views. What people classify as good or bad, right or wrong depends on our deeply-held beliefs we started developing early in life that have helped shape our characters. Likewise, these values are ingrained in our personalities and shape our behavior patterns and our self-identities. Because cultural beliefs are intensely held, they are difficult, though not impossible, to change.



Core Beliefs

Core beliefs shape and influence certain behaviors and also serve to rationalize those behaviors. Therefore, knowledge of individual or group beliefs can be useful in comprehending or making sense of their activities. We will use the iceberg model for classifying culture to illustrate two levels of meaning, as depicted. Beliefs and values, portrayed by the deeper and greater level of the submerged iceberg, are seldom visible, but are indicated / hinted at / referenced by our behaviors and symbols (top level). It is important to recognize, though, that the parts of culture that are

not visible (under the waterline) are informing and shaping what is being made visible (above the waterline).

In many cases, different worldviews may present behaviors that are contrary to our own beliefs, particularly in many regions where US forces deploy. Your ability to suspend judgment in order to understand another perspective is essential to establishing relationships with your host-nation counterparts. The ability to withhold your opinion and strive to understand a culture from a member of that culture's perspective is known as cultural relativism. It often involves taking an alternate perspective when interpreting others' behaviors and is critical to your ability to achieve mission success (Photo: US and Kuwait Navy personnel).

As you travel through the Arab Gulf States, you will encounter cultural patterns of meaning that are common across the region. What follows is a general description of 12 cultural domains which are used to frame those commonalities.

CULTURAL DOMAINS

1. History and Myth

History and myth are related concepts. History is a record of the past that is based on verifiable facts and events. Myth can act as a type of historical record, although it is usually a story which members of a culture use to explain community origins or important events that are not verifiable or which occurred prior to written language.

The Arab Gulf States comprise 7 countries that border the Arabian Gulf: Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Oman. Scientists believe that the southern Gulf region was once home to early humans who established permanent settlements as many as 125,000 years

ago. In the region's north, the favorable soil and climate conditions of Mesopotamia (present day Syria and Iraq) allowed people to settle, farm the land, create irrigation systems, build structures, and establish towns beginning around 6200 BC (Photo: Mask from an ancient Mesopotamian civilization).

A unique culture emerged between 3000 and 2500 BC at Dilmun in present-day Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. As a regional hub, Dilmun played an important role in trade between the Arabian Peninsula and the Indus River valley (located in present-day Pakistan and India) as well as along longer routes to East Africa, Southeast Asia, and China. While the Arab Gulf was an important trading hub for centuries, the region never saw the birth of its own empire nor were its inhabitants ever united under a single local power. Instead, each of the region's port cities was autonomous, with its own local economy and social organization. The cities' dispersed power prevented their unification and also made the region a target for incursions from beyond the Gulf.

The first external force to exert power and influence over the region was the Achaemenid Empire (pictured) which controlled parts of the Gulf starting in 550 BC from its center in Pasargadae (Iran). It was followed by the Parthian (140 BC) and Sassanian (226 AD) Empires centered in Iran and the Umayyad Caliphate (661 AD) centered in Syria and Turkey. The period marked by the birth of the Prophet Muhammad (570 AD) in present-day Saudi Arabia and the subsequent emergence and establishment of Islam as the region's predominant religion was a defining era in the Gulf's history.

In the 16th century, Portugal established control over Bahrain and parts of the southern Gulf, a move that ushered in an era of European struggle for supremacy in the region. In the late 16th century, the Safavid Dynasty of Iran allied with England to expel Portugal. At the same time, Iraq came under control of the Ottoman Empire (centered in present-day Istanbul) whose rule lasted until World War I, when the British assumed control.

England became active in the southern Gulf in the late 18th century then solidified its dominance in the 19th century through agreements with local rulers in present-day Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, and the UAE. Unlike in Africa and Asia, the British never established formal colonies in the region and left local ruling families largely in place.

The discovery of oil in the 1930s had a profound impact on the Gulf States' economies and politics. While English and US companies initially owned and managed the Gulf oil industry, local rulers confirmed their control of the industry following their countries' full independence (Saudi Arabia, 1932; Oman, 1951, Kuwait, 1961; then Bahrain, Qatar, and UAE in 1971). Of note, Iraq like Saudi Arabia achieved independence in 1932, but was occupied by Britain during World War II. Following the monarchy's overthrow in 1958, Iraq became a republic (Photo: Kuwaiti troops commemorate the First Gulf War in 2011).

Under the leadership of royal dynasties since independence, 6 of the Gulf States have remained stable. By contrast, Iraq has been enmeshed in several conflicts that have contributed to regional instability. Under the autocratic rule of Saddam Hussein, Iraq engaged in the bloody Iran-Iraq War from 1980-1986, then invaded and annexed neighboring Kuwait 4 years later, inciting the First Gulf War. Since its 2003 invasion of Iraq and subsequent collapse of the Hussein regime, the US has engaged in security cooperation activities in Iraq. In reaction to the 2011 Arab Spring, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Kuwait have suppressed protests and calls for reform.

2. Political and Social Relations

Political relations are the ways in which members of a community organize leadership, power, and authority. Social relations are all of the ways in which individuals are linked to others in their community.

The Arab Gulf's position at a crossroads for international trade has greatly influenced its ethnic makeup, politics, and social structures. The diversity of people passing through and residing in the region as part of its trade-based economy persists today—foreign non-citizen workers make up sizable portions of the populations in each of the Gulf States with the exception of Iraq (Photo: An Iraqi voter in 2005).

Today, the Gulf States minus Iraq are governed by monarchy, though several have introduced political and institutional reforms since independence. While Kuwait, Bahrain, and Qatar have each adopted a constitution, the Saudi Arabian government considers the Qur'an, the primary religious text of Islam, its constitution. In 1996, Oman established the Basic Law of the State, which introduced a new system of government that includes a 2-chamber legislature that meets at the request of the sultan (ruler). The 2005 Iraqi constitution established an Islamic, democratic, federal parliamentary republic led by an elected Prime Minister, President, and legislature. Unlike the region's other monarchies, the UAE's government is comprised of the hereditary leaders of each of its 7 emirates.

While the legal systems of the Gulf States have incorporated many aspects of English, French, and Egyptian law, ***Sharia*** (Islamic) law continues to play a central role, particularly in criminal and family matters. In recent years, the Gulf States have undertaken efforts to create formalized legal systems that combine *Sharia* and civil systems.

Despite some political tensions, relations among most of the Gulf States are largely amicable. Their good relations are primarily a result of their participation in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)—a political, economic, and military alliance uniting Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman. Since the organization's inception in 1981, member states have undertaken efforts to integrate their economies, militaries, and other social and political structures (Photo: US Secretary of State Kerry and GCC leaders in Saudi Arabia in 2014).

Iraq's role in fomenting regional instability has affected its relations with the other Gulf States. While the UAE, Qatar, and Oman have strong trade and diplomatic relations with Iraq, Saudi Arabia and its close ally Bahrain frequently clash with Iraq. Disagreements center on Iran's role in the region fueled by ideological differences between Saudi Arabia and Bahrain's Sunni Islam leadership and Iran's Shiite Islam leadership. While Iraq and Kuwait have taken steps to repair their relationship, tensions continue to linger from Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Due to their significant sizes, populations, and resources, Iraq and Iran compete for influence in the Gulf. Saudi Arabia with its large oil reserves is also a powerful regional player even though its military forces are significantly smaller than those of either Iraq or Iran.

Most of the Gulf States rely on the US to augment their military capabilities. With some 45,000-65,000 US troops stationed at several military installations throughout the region, the US has entered into agreements to sell or transfer arms and defense services to most of the States. The US remains in Iraq to train, support, and advise Iraqi security forces. Bahrain is the site of the longest- serving permanent US military presence in the Gulf, while Kuwait, the UAE, and Qatar also host large numbers of US military personnel.

While Gulf States citizens are predominantly Arabs, the region is also home to several ethnic minorities – Persians in the UAE and Kuwait; Palestinians in Qatar; and Baloch and Persians in Oman. In Iraq, strong tensions exist between the country's 2 primary ethnic groups, the Arabs and the Kurds. In each of the States, except Iraq, significant portions of the population are foreign non-citizens – about 37% in Saudi Arabia, 50% in Bahrain and Oman, 79% in Kuwait, 88% in the UAE, and 88% in Qatar.

Of note, the Gulf's tribal networks were historically a fundamental element of social relations. While the region's governments have attempted to supplant tribal allegiances with national identity in recent decades, the tribe continues to play an important role in social life in most States.

3. Religion and Spirituality

Religion is a cultural belief system that provides meaning to members of a community. Religious and spiritual beliefs help preserve the social order by defining proper behavior. They also create social unity by defining shared identity, offer individuals peace of mind, and explain the causes of events in a society. Early regional inhabitants worshipped various gods and objects, such as the sun, moon, animals, and tribal heroes. Between 500 BC and the 5th century, Zoroastrianism, one of the world's first monotheistic religions, gained followers in the region. Although Christianity arrived in the Arab Gulf in the 1st century, most of the region's Christians fled or converted following the arrival of Islam.

In 610 AD, a merchant from Mecca (in present-day Saudi Arabia), Muhammad ibn Abdullah, began preaching the worship of 1 God, Allah, marking the founding of Islam. Through conquest and proselytization Muhammad and his followers had united the entire Arabian Peninsula under Islam by the time of his death in 632 AD (Painting: A 1307 depiction of Muhammad receiving his first revelation from the angel Gabriel).

Without a chosen successor to Muhammad, his death ushered in an era of infighting that eventually split Islam into 2 sects, Shias and Sunnis. This divide persists and occasionally causes conflict in the region today. Sunni Muslims began moving beyond Arabia shortly after Muhammad's death, making their way to Iraq in 638.

Since its introduction, Islam has been a defining factor in shaping the region's cultures, societies, and political systems. Today, Islam is the official religion of each of the Gulf States. Further, the majority of the region's non-citizen residents are also Muslim. While the Arab Gulf is also home to some religious minorities—primarily Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, Baha'is—these non-Muslims are largely non-citizen foreign residents.

The Gulf States governments exhibit varying levels of religious freedom. For example, Saudi Arabian law does not recognize or protect religious freedom. While conversion from Islam is punishable by death, Saudi courts rarely inflict this sentence and instead issue lengthy prison sentences and lashings as punishment. Although the Iraqi constitution guarantees religious freedom, the government has been unable to stop recent acts of violence against Shia Muslims, Christians, and others (Photo: The Prophet Muhammad's burial site at Al-Masjid an-Nabawi in Saudi Arabia).

4. Family and Kinship

The domain of family and kinship refers to groups of people related through blood ties, marriage, or through strong emotional bonds that influence them to treat each other like family members (often called "fictive kin").

A fundamental element of Gulf society, family may refer to a person's household and extended family, clan (a group of families), or tribe. Family, clan, and tribal connections typically play an important role in an individual's life—they may determine a person's social status, potential marriage partners, business

opportunities, and inheritance rights. While residence patterns differ slightly among the States, multiple generations typically reside together in 1 household (Photo: Iraqi mother with her children).

Historically, marriage was an arranged union intended to bring both families social and economic advantages. Although arranged marriages are still common across the region, many regional residents now choose their own spouse, particularly in urban areas. Married couples typically live with the man's family. While divorce was traditionally uncommon in the Gulf States, divorce rates have increased in some of the Gulf States yet remained steady in others. Of note, polygyny, the practice of a man having multiple wives, is legal in the Gulf States.

The urbanization of Gulf society has changed family life in recent years. As both men and women take advantage of the enhanced educational and employment opportunities available primarily in urban areas, family structures have become much more diverse.

5. Sex and Gender

Sex refers to the biological/reproductive differences between males and females, while gender is a more flexible concept that refers to a culture's categorizing of masculine and feminine behaviors, symbols, and social roles.

The Arab Gulf States' cultures and religions (primarily Islam) traditionally privilege the male's role as leader and provider. For example, Sharia law grants men privileges in inheritance and other family matters. While most of the region's inhabitants continue to adhere to traditional gender roles—men as breadwinners and guardians and women as mothers and companions—recent influences from external and internal sources have introduced some changes.

Women, like most men, were largely uneducated for much of the Gulf's history. In recent decades, literacy rates for women have increased significantly across the Gulf. Further, women now make up more than 50% of the university student population in all States, although they often face challenges to getting their education. For example, women are often encouraged to pursue traditional "female" disciplines such as education and healthcare. In Kuwait, they are required to score higher than men on entrance exams for traditionally male-dominated fields such as engineering.

Because the Gulf States' legal systems permit gender-based discrimination, women are far less likely to participate in politics than men. Some progress has occurred: Saudi Arabia became the last Arab Gulf State to extend the right to vote to women in 2015. Although women may serve in prominent diplomatic and judicial posts, the number of women serving in elected political office across the region remains very low (Photo: US Department of Commerce officials with students from Sultan Qaboos University in Oman and the University of Bahrain).

Historically, Gulf women rarely worked outside the home, a tradition that has changed over the past decades. For example, female participation in the workforce has increased 3-fold in Qatar and nearly 4 times in the UAE since 2003. Despite steps towards gender equality, women still face barriers to their full participation in society. For example, it remains traditional for male guardians to accompany women to events outside of the home, while many workplaces and schools continue to practice gender segregation.

Homosexuality is illegal in all of the Gulf States except Iraq, where it was decriminalized in 2003. Most Gulf residents consider homosexuality, bisexuality, and transgender issues inappropriate topics of conversation.

6. Language and Communication

Language is a system for sharing information symbolically, whereby words are used to represent ideas. Communication is defined as the cultural practice of sharing meaning in interaction, both verbally and non-verbally.

Arabic is the official language of each of the Arab Gulf States. Most residents regularly use 2 Arabic varieties—Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), derived from the classical Arabic of the Qur'an and used in school, the media, and in official government proceedings, and Gulf Arabic or Khaleeji Arabic, a widely spoken dialect. The residents of some States speak additional languages and dialects. For example, Iraq names Kurdish as its 2nd official language, and most Iraqis speak a unique dialect of Arabic called Mesopotamian Arabic. Some residents of Oman speak other Arabic dialects.

The Arab Gulf nations are also home to millions of non-citizens who speak their own native languages. These include Farsi (spoken in Iran); Malayalam, Tamil, Hindi, Balochi, Bengali, Pashto, and Urdu (spoken in South Asia); African languages such as Somali and Swahili; and Asian languages such as Thai, Tagalog, and Korean. English is also widely spoken in business and by the expatriate communities of the Gulf (Photo: Computer keyboard with Arabic script).

Generally, Gulf residents demonstrate respect, generosity, and hospitality in their communication practices. Residents tend to share information about themselves and expect Westerners to do the same: they may ask personal questions about salary, marital status (particularly of unmarried people of a certain age), and family. Regional residents commonly use gestures when they speak, particularly if they are passionate about the topic of conversation.

7. Learning and Knowledge

All cultures require that the older generation transmit important information to the younger generation. This information can be strictly factual (for example, how to fulfill subsistence and health requirements) and culturally traditional (the beliefs, behaviors, and symbols that have meaning to the community). This knowledge transfer may occur through structured, formalized systems such as schools or through informal learning by watching adults or peers.

Prior to the 20th century, formal education in most Arab Gulf States was limited to ***madrasas***, religious schools that taught memorization of Qur'anic verses and the fundamentals of Islamic beliefs and practice, primarily to males. Following the 20th-century discovery of oil, educational opportunities expanded greatly. Bahrain became the first Gulf State to establish a public educational system in 1932. In the mid-1950s, governments began to establish departments of education and allocate funds for schools and other resources. An exception was Oman, where educational offerings until 1970 consisted solely of 3 primary schools reserved for 900 boys hand-selected by the Omani sultan (Photo: Al-Hidaya Al-Khalifia Boys school, the first public school in Bahrain).

Today, most of the Gulf States invest heavily in education, often at rates higher than many other developed nations. Consequently, adult literacy is over 93% in all States except Iraq where it is a low 86%. Further, the past several decades have witnessed a significant growth in the number of higher education institutions across the region.

Due to years of conflict, Iraq continues to have inadequate education facilities and a shortage of teachers and resources. Because many students are displaced, their education is often incomplete.

8. Time and Space

In every society, people occupy space and time in ways that are not directly linked to physical survival. In most western cultures, people tend to be preoccupied with strict time management, devoting less effort to relationship-building. By contrast, in the Arab Gulf States, establishing and maintaining relationships with others often takes precedence over meeting deadlines, punctuality, or accomplishing a task in the most efficient manner.

As in other Islamic societies, men and women in the Arab Gulf region often interact differently than Americans are used to. For example, in many parts of the Gulf unrelated women and men seldom interact, and when they do, it is only in group settings.

Concepts of personal space also differ from those in the US. For example, Gulf State residents of the same sex commonly sit and stand closer to each other than Westerners do. They may also touch more often during conversations than Westerners (Photo: Former US President George W. Bush and King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia holding hands, a sign of close friendship among men).

Residents of the Arab Gulf States also tend to manage time differently. While residents typically agree in advance on scheduled start times, meetings frequently begin late. Further, Gulf residents may prefer to deliberate for an extended period before making final decisions.

The Arab Gulf States use both the Islamic and Western calendars. Because Friday is considered a holy day in Islam, most Arab Gulf States observe a Sunday-Thursday workweek, except for Oman, which observes a Saturday-Wednesday workweek.

9. Aesthetics and Recreation

Every culture has its own forms of creative expression that are guided by aesthetic principles of imagination, beauty, skill and style. Most of the Arab Gulf's forms of artistic expression, including its art, architecture, dance, music, and theater, reflect the region's Arabic and Islamic influences. Gulf artists historically favored geometric designs and patterns to depict plants, flowers, and animals on buildings, jewelry, and household items.

Due to historic trade relationships and intermingling of cultures, music and dance in the Arab Gulf States reflect Persian, Indian, and east African influences. Popular throughout the region, Khaleeji music combines local Bedouin (Arab seminomadic group) music with styles from Africa, India, and Iran.

For some regional residents, dance forms are an integral part of Islamic worship. Others perform dances only in same-sex settings. Many of the region's dances are done in line, circle, square, or semicircle formations with participants moving in tandem. Dances in the Arab Gulf are generally grouped by type, including warfare, work-related, "foreign," women's, weddings, healing, and Sufi religious dances (Photo: Iraqi National Folk Dance Troupe performs a traditional dance).

Regional residents practice a variety of arts and crafts including weaving (typically using camel or goat hair) and calligraphy—the art of handwriting in which artists transform letters and words into intricate designs. While soccer is the most widely followed sport in the region, wealthier residents also enjoy falconry, horse racing, and camel racing.

10. Sustenance and Health

Societies have different methods of transforming natural resources into food. These methods can shape residence patterns, family structures and economics. Theories of disease

and healing practices exist in all cultures and serve as adaptive responses to disease and illness.

While cuisine varies across the region, residents throughout the Arab Gulf use many common staple ingredients and spices such as mutton, lamb, and fish prepared with cardamom, turmeric, saffron, and dried limes. Fruits, yogurt, various salads, and rice are common accompaniments to meals. The most popular drink, tea is served sweetened and prepared either with or without milk. Observant Muslims in the Arab Gulf consume neither pork nor alcohol.

Health in most of the Arab Gulf countries has improved significantly in recent decades as evidenced by decreased infant and maternal mortality rates and longer life expectancies. Most residents in all States except Iraq have access to quality healthcare that is largely subsidized by governments (Photo:

Machbūs, a spiced meat dish enjoyed throughout the Gulf).

Years of conflict and the Saddam regime's defunding of public healthcare by 90% created significant problems in the Iraqi healthcare system. In 2009, with funding from the World Health Organization, the Iraqi Ministry of Health introduced a plan to reform and decentralize the country's healthcare system. Additionally, international humanitarian organizations have expanded their efforts in Iraq to provide healthcare to both the local population as well as those fleeing conflict areas.

The region's healthcare systems face several challenges, particularly rapidly growing healthcare expenditures associated with a large, aging population and lifestyle changes that have negative health implications. For example, fewer residents adhere to the region's traditional diet and instead have increased their consumption of pre-packaged and fast foods. Simultaneously, rapid urbanization, the increased use of

mechanized transportation, and a lack of dedicated green spaces for physical activities have led to an increasingly sedentary lifestyle for many residents. As a result, obesity rates have increased and noncommunicable diseases (such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancer, and chronic respiratory disease) now cause more than 69% of all deaths in all of the Arab Gulf States, except Iraq (Photo: King Saud Medical Complex, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia).

Communicable diseases remain a concern in Iraq, where contaminated water supplies, inadequate sanitation, and poor hygienic practices contribute to the spread of typhoid, cholera, and tuberculosis.

11. Economics and Resources

This domain refers to beliefs regarding appropriate ways for a society to produce, distribute, and consume goods and services. Besides fishing and agriculture, the Gulf States' economies have been enmeshed with local and international trade since ancient times. During the 17th and 18th centuries, the Arab Gulf's port cities were integral elements of the trade routes connecting India, Europe, and East Africa.

In the late 19th century, the region began exporting dates and pearls to new markets in Europe and North America. After global demand for pearls grew significantly around the turn of the 20th century, pearl diving became a major contributor to the economies of the UAE, Qatar, Kuwait, and Bahrain before the industry collapsed in the 1930s. The region then entered a period of socioeconomic hardship until the discovery of oil.

The growth of the oil industry in in the 1950s-60s significantly changed the region. Within a few decades the States had transformed from some of the world's poorest countries to some of the wealthiest. This wealth has facilitated investment in infrastructure, enhanced the quality of life, and encouraged rapid urbanization throughout the region with the exception of Iraq.

Prior to 1980, Iraq had one of the most advanced economies of all Arab Gulf States. Years of conflict, however, have had a profound effect on Iraq's economy. In late 2015, Iraq implemented an economic reform proposal intended to cut excess government spending and crackdown on corruption (Photo: The Abraj Al Bait Towers complex in Mecca, Saudi Arabia).

Oil remains an important part of the region's economies today—in Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait, oil exports make up over 90% of government revenues. Over the past several decades, the Gulf States collectively have taken steps to reduce their economic dependence on oil through diversification efforts. For example, Bahrain has worked to develop its banking sector; Kuwait produces cement and ships and specializes in food-processing; Qatar is expanding its agricultural sector; and the UAE is investing in tourism, airport and aviation services, and facilities management services.

Despite these efforts, the region remains dependent on oil: all of the region's economies were adversely affected by the decline in oil prices and a reduced demand for oil during the 2008 global financial crisis. The States are currently exploring ways to adapt to the decline in oil prices that began in 2015.

12. Technology and Material

Societies use technology to transform their physical world, and culture heavily influences the development and use of technology.

Most of the Arab Gulf States have invested heavily into extensive road networks. The governments of Oman and Saudi Arabia, for example, have put significant sums of funding towards building large freeways and roads that extend to remote areas. Despite years of conflict, Iraq's 37,000 miles of roads remain in relatively good condition. Six of the region's governments allocated $250 billion for the construction of a

regional rail network which will link Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Oman, Bahrain, and Qatar when completed in 2021.

Information technology is spreading rapidly throughout the Arab Gulf. Between 2000 and 2017, Internet usage grew from between 2 and 23 users per 100 people to between 80 and 100 users. The exception is Iraq where just 49 out of every 100 people are Internet users. Cell phones are extremely popular—the States report between 95 and 326 mobile phone subscriptions per 100 people (Photo: Freeway in Dubai, UAE).

As the destination of 11% of all GCC exports, the European Union (EU) is the region's largest trading partner. Of note, the EU and the GCC States (with the exception of Iraq) are pursuing a free trade agreement. The Gulf States also maintain important trade relationships with several Asian nations. For example, China depends on the Arab Gulf for 43% of its oil imports, India for 38%, and South Korea and Japan for 83%.

The Arab Gulf faces challenges in meeting its growing energy needs. As a result of the region's rapid urbanization and population growth, the Gulf States are shifting from being energy suppliers to major energy consumers. Energy consumption grew by about 8% annually since 1972 (compared to 2% globally). While the UAE, Kuwait, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia have less than 1% of the world's population, these countries now use more than 8% of the world's oil. Iraq has had difficulty meeting its own power needs, relying on imported electricity and petroleum products.

Now that we have introduced general concepts that characterize Arab Gulf society at large, we will focus on specific features of society in Iraq.

PART 2 – CULTURE SPECIFIC

1. FAMILY AND KINSHIP

Family

The protection and honor of one's family is priority #1. An Iraqi will always view his behavior as directly affecting his family's honor. He will protect and defend the honor of his relatives and tribe, and will take any measure necessary to safeguard his immediate family. The Iraqi family structure is patriarchal, meaning males are considered as head of the family. Most Iraqi families have several children, and it is not uncommon to find a family with 5 to 10 children. In-laws, cousins, aunts, and uncles typically live together in the same neighborhood. In Iraq, this family structure means they are not "extended family," they are just family.

Group Identity versus Individualism

Instead of asserting their separateness and privacy as independent individuals, Iraqis tend to interact as members of a group—family, clan, village, neighborhood, tribe, etc. Within this culture, the group takes precedence over the individual. This collectivism originated in the desert where Arabs lived in small communal settings, and individuals could not survive on their own. Socially, the group one belonged to was much more important than individual identity. Even today, group interests guide individual behavior, and Iraqis display a high need for

social approval. The group often determines a person's identity, status, and prospects for success in life. As a result, Iraqis generally are subjected to many more family and community pressures than are Americans. Loyalty to the group is highly valued, and responsibility is generally considered to fall upon the entire group rather than on any particular individual. Because of the primacy of the group, obligations of group members to one another are wide, varied, and powerful.

"His Other House" – The Second Wife

If a man takes a second wife, he will prefer to lodge her in a different house. So, when told he is at "his other house," that usually means that he is at his second wife's house. A Muslim man now needs a court order for permission to have more than one wife, and he must treat each wife equally in all ways (for example, material support and physical affection). Four wives is the maximum permitted by Islamic law, but it is rare today for a man to have more than two due to the wealth and support required. An increasing number of Iraqis live in urban areas, which are more conducive to the concept of smaller families combined with less family and clan support.

Role of Children

The hierarchical structure of the family requires children to obey their elders and meet their expectations. Children remain respectful of elders throughout their lives. Families take care of elders regardless of difficulties arising with age, disease, or other challenges. To an Iraqi, nursing homes are unthinkable.

Sons are especially desirable because they perpetuate paternal family tradition and are the predominant economic providers.

What do you do if an Iraqi says he can't work (or do what you want) due to a family obligation, such as visiting a relative in the hospital?

- Understand that responsibilities to extended family take precedence above all else. This is contrary to the US "Mission First" attitude. Accept what you cannot change and build rapport by demonstrating thoughtfulness and consideration.

Also, sons are taught to be protectors of their sisters and to help the father with his duties inside and outside the house. Daughters are taught to defer to their brothers and help their mother with household chores. Families also teach their children to highly value blood ties and bonds of loyalty. During adolescence, the sexes are traditionally separated.

Tribal Sheiks

The title "Sheik" refers to a tribal leader or to a man who performs a religious function. A large segment of Iraqi society identifies itself with one tribe or another. Traditionally, a sheik was a landlord who provided livelihood and protection to the people of his tribe in return for their labor and loyalty. The importance of the tribal sheik varies in response to the relative strength of the central government. The weakening of central government following the fall of Saddam Hussein strengthened the influence of sheiks. Today, the influence, power, and popularity of tribal sheiks are varied.

> **Tribal Values**: Revered tribal values throughout Iraq include courage, gallantry, mastery of arms, and manliness. The tribe continues to provide its members with an important sense of identity and security.

Talking about Family

[See *Language and Communication* Section**]**

Marriage

As a general rule, Muslim women do not marry non-Muslim men and Iraqi women, both Muslim and Christian, seldom marry foreign men. Foreign male visitors to Iraq should pursue their romantic interests elsewhere. A marriage or engagement is an event that signals the joining of two families or the cementing of relationships within one. Marriage among cousins is common, even encouraged to reinforce family and tribal ties. The marriage process is more a social contract than a religious ceremony. The groom will ask the prospective bride's father for her hand in marriage, in the presence of all males from both families, while the women wait in another room. This event serves as the formal contract, although the prospective union will have already been discussed privately. The father will most likely have asked his daughter if she wants to marry the prospective husband. Seldom will a young woman be forced into marriage, although it does still happen occasionally. The religious ceremony typically lasts only minutes, and registration of the marriage with the court is mandatory. The wedding party following the ceremony is often large, with many guests, and the family hosts provide the best food and entertainment they can afford. [Also see firing rifles in celebration, *Political and Social Relations* Section]

Divorce

Divorce is emotionally difficult in Iraq, as it is in any society. Under Islamic rules, a man may initiate a divorce by verbally executing a statement to divorce his wife. Today in Iraq, a woman may file for a divorce through her family and the local court system. The family of a divorced woman retains a strong connection to her throughout her entire life. Custody of young children is usually granted to the father, as is typical in Islamic societies.

2. RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY

Iraq's population is primarily Muslim (64.5% Shi'a, 16.5% Sunni Arab, and 14.5% Sunni Kurd). While a minority of Iraqis profess other beliefs, Islam has the greatest influence on Iraqi culture.

The Basics of Islam

Islam means "submission to the will of God" and the acceptance of His wisdom. Muslim is the term for a follower of Islam.

Islam is a Monotheistic Religion, which means its adherents worship one God. "God" and its Arabic translation "Allah" are often used interchangeably by both Muslim and Christian Arabs. God is all powerful and nothing shares divinity with Him. He controls all events - past, present, and future. The Arabic saying, "Inshallah" means everything occurs according to God's Will, particularly future events.

Muslims believe in angels, the devil and the afterlife. They believe two angels accompany every human and record their deeds for Judgment Day. They believe the devil (*Iblis*) is a spirit known as a Genie (or *Jinn*), not a fallen angel. In the afterlife, the righteous are rewarded in Paradise and those who do not accept God's Will and guidance will be punished in Hell.

Abraham: Muslims trace their lineage back to Abraham, known as *Ibrahim* in Islam. However, unlike Christians and Jews (who trace their line back to Abraham and his wife Sarah, through their son Isaac), Muslims descend from Abraham and the Egyptian bondswoman, Hagar through their son Ismail. According to Muslim tradition, Abraham's wife Sarah feared Ismail would overshadow her son Isaac, so Abraham took Hagar and Ismail to Mecca, where he left them to fend for themselves. Abraham later returned and built the Ka'aba with Ismail as the first shrine to the one true God. It was here that Abraham was to sacrifice his son, Ismail, as a test of faith,

before God permitted him to sacrifice a ram instead (in contrast to Biblical tradition, where Isaac was to be sacrificed).

Muhammad: In Islam, Muhammad is God's final prophet, and is known as the "Seal of the Prophets" because his message completes the "revelations" attributed to earlier prophets. Muhammad has no divinity and is not worshipped.

The *Qur'an* (Holy Book): Muslims uphold the Qur'an as the eternal, direct word of God, as revealed to Muhammad through the Archangel Gabriel (*Jibril*) over a 23-year period, between the years 610 and 632 AD. These revelations and teachings were recorded in Arabic as the basis of Islam, thus "true" Qur'ans, as well as all prayers, are in Arabic.

Arabic Qur'ans should not be handled by non-Muslims.

Shari'a: Shari'a is Islamic law. Its core is the Qur'an, supplemented with reports about the sayings and practices of the Prophet Muhammad (*Hadith*). It sets rules and guidance for all aspects of life (prayer, economics, behavior, etc.).

Diet: Muslims are socially prohibited from consuming pork and alcohol. This prohibition is known as "*Haram*" or forbidden. [For more on Diet, see *Sustenance & Health* Section]

Prayer: Muslims pray five times daily. The practice of multiple daily prayers was adapted from earlier Arab tribal religions. Shi'a practice permits combining prayers into three daily prayer times.

Prayer times: Prayers are spaced fairly evenly throughout the day, so one is constantly reminded of God. The call to prayer is heard at pre-dawn, noon, late afternoon, sunset, and evening.

Your Behavior When Others Are Praying

- **Remember to be courteous**
  - Never walk in front of people while they are praying
  - Never speak to or interrupt people while they pray

Muslims wash their hands, elbows, face, ears, feet, and wet their hair to cleanse their bodies prior to prayer (ablution).

Friday Prayer (*Jummah*): Muslims gather at mosques for Friday's communal prayer. These prayers are led by an imam.

Holy cities: The Grand Mosque in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, is the site of the Hajj. Medina, Saudi Arabia is revered as the burial site of Muhammad. Jerusalem is also holy, as Muslims believe Muhammad made his nighttime ride to heaven from Jerusalem. Jerusalem is also the site of the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

Other Islamic Concepts

Birth Rite of Passage: Many important rites of passage in Iraqi society are derived from Islam. When a baby is born, the father whispers the call to prayer and command to worship in the baby's ear. Sugar, or a piece of date, is then placed in the baby's mouth so that the first thing the baby tastes is sweet. The baby's head is shaved on the seventh day to symbolize service to Allah. The family weighs the hair and donates an equal amount of gold or silver to charity. Boys are also circumcised within a week of birth. On the seventh day, a name is given to the child. A feast is held to give thanks and food is given to the poor.

Death Rite of Passage: Before a Muslim dies, the call to prayer is whispered in the person's ear, just as it was at birth. Immediately after death, the body is washed and rubbed with perfumes and spices. It is then wrapped in white cloth and buried without a casket, facing the Ka'aba in Mecca. The family of the deceased will receive condolences for three days, again on the fortieth day and on the one-year anniversary of a death.

View of Death: Muslims believe that the time of death, like birth, is determined by Allah. Thus old age, illness, or accident are not considered the real causes of death. While people grieve the loss of family members or friends, they do not view death itself as a negative event, as Muslims believe that a person who lived a good life goes on to live in Heaven.

Jihad: Jihad is a fundamental element within Islam. It is not a Pillar of Islam. Traditionally, it applies to an inner striving (Greater Jihad) to elevate the principled, more civilized and moral elements of one's self and the pursuit of God's Will, to lead a virtuous life. The concept of external struggle (Lesser Jihad) is a struggle in defense of Islam. During the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (1979-1989), many Islamic leaders called for a Jihad against the atheist Soviets, prompting an influx of Mujaheddin (warriors) from other countries. Do not confuse the concept of Jihad with the radicalized violence mislabeled as Jihad by religious extremists.

Don't Ask About Religious Affiliation Unless Necessary

Religious affiliation is often a sensitive issue in Iraq

Try not to ask an Iraqi about his religious preference unless absolutely necessary. For example, it may be necessary information to complete an official document

Five Pillars of Islam

There are five basic principles of the Islamic faith that all Muslims accept and follow; these are commonly known as "The Five Pillars of Islam."

Shahada	(Faith)
Salat	(Prayer)
Zakat	(Charity)
Sawm	(Fasting)
Hajj	(Pilgrimage)

Profession of Faith (*Shahada*): "There is no god but God and Muhammad is His Messenger" (*La ilaha illa illah wa-Muhammad rasul Allah)*. This statement expresses the total commitment to the message of God.

Prayer (*Salat*): Pray five times a day. During each of the five daily prayers, the worshipper faces toward the Ka'aba in Mecca as he/she prays. The direction of prayer is called the *Qibla*.

Alms (*Zakat*): This is an obligatory tithe used to provide relief for the poor and other charitable donations.

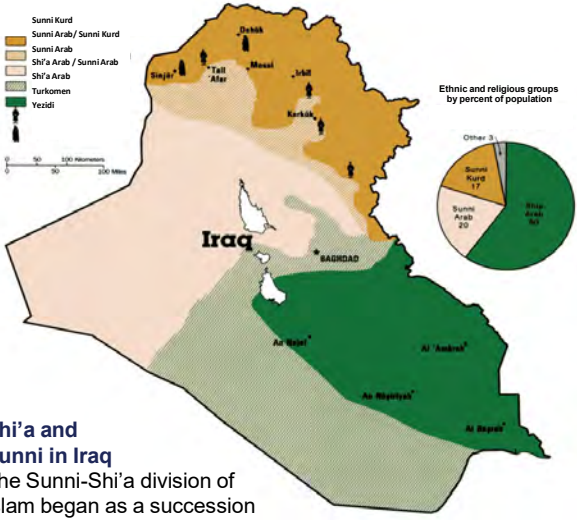
Fasting (*Sawm*): Abstaining from food, drink, and intercourse from sunrise to sunset during holy month of **Ramadan** (30 days). It is a time for inner reflection, self-control, and reading the Qur'an. The object of Ramadan is to subdue life's passions and draw one's self nearer to God by purifying one's body through denial of life's pleasures. Because the Islamic calendar is based on the appearance of the moon, Ramadan occurs at a different date each year on the Western calendar. When Ramadan falls during the summer, keeping Ramadan requires great focus and endurance because people will not drink anything for up to 18 hours, despite the heat. It is common for Muslims to break their fast at sunset with a light meal followed by sunset prayer and then dinner.

Pilgrimage to Mecca (The *Hajj*): The Hajj is the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, which every adult Muslim, who is physically and financially able, is expected to perform at least once in his or her lifetime. The Hajj involves a series of religious rites that take place annually over several days at the Grand Mosque in Mecca, and surrounding areas. The focus of the pilgrimage is the Ka'aba ("the cube" in Arabic), the Sacred House located inside the Grand Mosque in Mecca, in which the sacred black stone is embedded. The Ka'aba is covered with a *kiswah*, a black silk cloth which is embroidered in gold with verses from the Qur'an. Muslim tradition teaches that the black stone was given to Abraham by the Archangel Gabriel and thus is a symbol of God's covenant with Ismail and, by extension, the Muslim community. The Hajj is a highly spiritual experience during which one nurtures the kinship with fellow Muslims.

How should you behave during Ramadan?

- During Ramadan, it is respectful to avoid eating, drinking, smoking, and chewing gum in public or in the presence of Muslims during fasting hours.
- Care should be taken to avoid offering food, beverages, or tobacco products to Muslims or to anyone in public during fasting hours.
- Be aware that work may slow down during Ramadan, and you can expect shorter work hours. Westerners who work in Islamic countries often plan to get less done during this period.

Ethnoreligious Groups



Shi'a and Sunni in Iraq

The Sunni-Shi'a division of Islam began as a succession dispute shortly after the death of the prophet Muhammad in 632 AD. Muhammad died without a male heir and without naming a successor. After Muhammad's death, prominent Muslims assembled and chose Abu Bakr as Muhammad's successor, and gave him the title of *khalif* (caliph), which means "successor" to the Prophet Muhammad, and thus leader of the Islamic community or *Ummah*. Some Muslims believed the successor should have been Ali, the Prophet's cousin, who had married the Prophet's daughter, Fatima. This belief became the starting point for the doctrine of the Shi'a, or "supporters of Ali." In 656 AD Ali became the fourth Caliph, but Muslims were still divided over how the Caliph should be chosen. The Shi'a reject the first three caliphs and believe in following a bloodline succession, descending from Ali and Fatima, and the Sunni believe the community of believers should elect the successor.

The Sunni-Shi'a division has largely been a political and socioeconomic struggle over the allocation and distribution of wealth and political power. Shi'a and Sunni Muslims in Iraq have learned throughout their history to co-exist, and many tribes contain both Shi'a and Sunni members.

Shi'a Muslims: There are more than 25 million Shi'a in Iraq (64.5% of the population). Shi'a believe the proper successor of the Prophet Muhammad was Ali, Muhammad's son-in-law, and that the first three Caliphs (Abu Baker, Omar, and Uthman) were not legitimate. The word "Shi'a" means partisan or faction of Ali, and is short for "Shi'at Ali". Ali was elected the fourth caliph, but was later overthrown and assassinated. Following a nearly 30 year dispute, in 661 AD the governor of Syria, named himself Caliph and made the caliphate hereditary in his own family, the Umayyads. The Shi'a rejected this as unjustly taking the caliphate from Ali and his sons. Shi'a attempts to challenge the Umayyad leaders resulted in the death of Ali's son, Husayn, at the Battle of Karbala in Iraq in 680. Shi'a now refer to the Caliph as the Imam, or spiritual leader, and he is the head of the global Shi'a community. No person alive today is recognized as the Imam. You may distinguish a Shi'a area from a Sunni area due to the Shi'a depiction of human images in their art, particularly Ali, Husayn, and the 12th Imam. Sunni generally avoid depicting human images out of concern this may lead to idolatry.

Two important Shi'a communities are the *Imami* (Twelvers) and the Ismailis (Seveners).

Imami or "Twelvers": In the 8th century, succession became confused when the Imam, Jafar, first named his eldest son, Ismail, his successor, then changed his mind and named a younger son, Musa. Ismail died before his father and thus never had an opportunity to assert his claim. When Jafar died in 765, the imamate transferred to Musa. Those Shi'a who followed Musa are known to Western scholars as the Imami or "Twelver" Shi'as. The name "Twelver" derives

Shi'a History with Persia (Iran)

- Strong historical relationship between Iraq and Iran
- Safavid Empire in Persia, known today as Iran, emerged in the 16th century as the first Shi'a empire, strengthening Shi'a power and regional presence
- Safavid Empire included most of present-day Iraq

How to visit a Mosque

- To enter a mosque, you should be invited.
- Always remove your shoes before entering.
- If you are a female, cover your head with a scarf and wear a long sleeve shirt or blouse. Some mosques may provide scarves for women.
  - Women worship separately, and often worship at home so that they may care for their children. They are also excused from prayers during menstruation.

from the disappearance of the 12th Imam, Muhammad al Muntazar (the Hidden Imam), in about 874 AD. He was a child, and after his disappearance he became known as a messianic figure, the Mahdi or the "Guided One," who never died but remains to this day hidden from view. The "Twelver" Shi'a believe his return will usher in a golden era. The "Twelvers" are the dominant Shi'a group in Iran.

***Ismailis or "Seveners"*:** The division Shi'a community that refused to acknowledge Musa's legitimacy and insisted on Ismail's son's right to rule as Imam.

Ashura Ceremony: The death of Ali's son, Husayn, is commemorated annually in the Ashura ceremony, and is seen as a symbol of the persecution and oppression experienced by the Shi'a community. Male participants beat their chests and chant. Some use swords to lacerate their heads to symbolize the beheading of Husayn, or use chains to beat their backs to evoke the suffering of Husayn.

Sunni Muslims: The Arabic word Sunnah means "path" or "example," and refers to the example of the Prophet Muhammad as found in the Hadith, a collection of reports about the Prophet's life, and to the Qur'an, the written word of God as revealed through His final Prophet, Muhammad. Sunnis are literally those "who follow the example of the prophet." Sunnis believe the caliph is fully human and should be an elected ruler. Sunni Islam is often wrongly referred to as Orthodox, or mainstream, Islam. Sunni are a minority in Iraq, but make up the majority of the world's 2 billion Muslims

Islamic Holy Days

The Islamic Calendar: A year in the Islamic Calendar is 11 days shorter than in the Western Calendar. As a result, Islamic holidays fall eleven days earlier on the Western calendar than the previous year. [See *Time and Space* section]

Lailat ul-Qadr: The Night of Power commemorates Muhammad receiving the first verses of the Qur'an. This is observed during Ramadan.

Eid-al-Adha: The Festival of Sacrifice commemorates Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son, Ishmael, as proof of his loyalty to God. It is celebrated the same day the Hajj ends.

Eid-al-Fitr: The 3-day Festival of Fast-Breaking celebrates the end of Ramadan.

Distinguishing Sunni & Shi'a by How They Pray

Shi'ites begin by standing up straight with their arms and hands straight down against their sides.

Sunnis begin by standing up straight while placing their hands on their abdomen.

How can Non-Muslim Americans relate to Muslim Iraqis?

- Muslims believe that they, Christians, and Jews all worship the same God.
- Muslims view Islam as a completion of God's previous revelations to Jewish and Christian prophets.

Comparisons

Jesus: One of the main differences between Islam and Christianity is the view of Jesus (*Isa*). In Islam, Jesus is held as a prophet, but one who was merely a man; not the son of God and not divine. Muslims do not accept the concept of the Trinity because only God is divine and has no family or equal.

Sin: Muslims do not believe in Original Sin. Adam and Eve's disobedience was forgiven and the resultant guilt was not passed down to mankind. God's prophets were free of sin: Noah did not drink, Lot did not commit incest, and David did not commit adultery. There is no Baptism in Islam.

Judaism: Muslims do not believe God has a "chosen people." Allah has no favorites and anyone can become one of His people through living a virtuous life and believing in God. Islam also does not accept YHWH (or *Jehovah*) as a name for God.

Scriptures: Muslims regard Christians and Jews as "People of the Book." In fact, the Qur'an contains teachings and stories similar to those found in the Torah (Old Testament) and Muslims recognize many characters from the Torah and Gospels as prophets (Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus).

Muslims believe that Christians and Jews ultimately worship the same one God they do, but that Christians and Jews altered God's word over time; thus God revealed His final revelations to Muhammad, through Archangel Gabriel in order to affirm earlier scriptures and to correct these alterations, particularly the divinity of Jesus Christ.

3. SEX AND GENDER

Women in Iraq

Historically, Iraqi women have enjoyed relatively more rights than most of their counterparts in the Arab world. The Iraqi constitution and laws guarantee equal rights to vote, attend school, run for office and own property. Women have played an active role in the economic, political and social development of Iraq. There are women lawyers, judges, educators, writers, artists, poets, politicians, business leaders, soldiers, drivers, and farmers in Iraq. There are various opinions toward veiling. Some women are completely covered, some wear scarves, and others leave their heads uncovered. Different economic, social, religious and educational factors go into a woman's decision to veil or not.

A Woman's Honor = Family Honor

The concept of family honor is inherently connected to women and their chastity. Women in Iraqi culture are highly sheltered and viewed as the bearers of culture and family values. Although customary strictness for women varies according to religious beliefs, many Iraqi women have a great deal of social power through their family role. This aspect of Iraqi culture cannot be evaluated or judged by Western standards. One useful interpretation of the role of women is summarized as follows: Women are strictly protected not only to maintain the family honor, but also because of the belief that men and women left to their own devices are unable or unwilling to control their physical urges. (This is not a uniquely Iraqi belief: The notion of the chaperone is based on the same belief.) For this reason, protection of women is a central tenet of Islamic society, and both men and women believe it to be necessary. Americans may view this attitude as restrictive for Iraqi women; however, Iraqi women are likely to view this as evidence that they are loved and valued. Iraqi women may view Western feminine freedom as evidence of neglect or immorality.

Proper Interaction with Iraqi Women

Interaction between sexes is usually acceptable only in universities and in the workplace.

- Dating, for the most part, is considered taboo in Iraq. Normally a couple should not be seen alone in public unless legally engaged or married.
- Making a pass or staring at a female in Iraq could bring serious consequences for all parties involved since a female in Iraq is considered the honor of all male family members.
- Sex between unmarried people is forbidden in Islam and punishable by law. Females involved also have to contend with the family wrath, which in some instances could result in death.

Segregating Women and Children

In a situation requiring segregation of people, do not place males and females into the same group if they are not related. Nor should you speak directly to women or physically touch them or children. Only another female should physically search Iraqi women. When searching Iraqi families, it is considered respectful to address the man of the house. Politely ask that he have the women and children removed to a separate room. If a woman opens the door, ask to speak to the man of the house. Respecting these important customs will ease the situation.

Women in Mosques

[See *Religion and Spirituality* Section]

Talking about Females

[See *Language and Communication* Section**]**

Map of Iraqi Provinces

Population
Over 38.8 million
(2020 est.)

Flag of Iraq
Red, green, white, black with Arabic script: "God is great"

Government
Parliamentary democracy

Executive Branch:
Chief of State: President: Barham Salih
Head of government: Prime Minister: Muhammad Tawfiq Allawi

Cabinet: 36 Council of Ministers appointed by the Prime Minister and approved by Council of Representatives

Legislative Branch:
Council of Representatives: Consists of 329 members

Judicial Branch:
The judicial branch is comprised of the Higher Judicial Council, Federal Supreme Court, Federal Court of Cassation, Public Prosecution Department, Judiciary Oversight Commission and other federal courts.

ETHNIC GROUPS

Iraqi Arabs

Arabs constitute approximately 75-80% of the population in Iraq. “Arab,” a name originally given to the inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula, is now largely a cultural/linguistic term that includes various national, regional, and religious groups. Iraqi Arabs speak Arabic, and the majority follow either Shi’a or Sunni Islam. No single set of racial or physical characteristics defines Iraqi Arabs. Iraqi Arabs share most of the values and practices of other Arabs. While their lives are heavily influenced by religion, they are also influenced by the same secular pressures and benefits that affect the other oil-producing Arab countries. Most Iraqi Arabs were traditionally farmers, but today they are just as likely to be city-dwellers. Bedouin nomads, with their extensive knowledge of the desert, have been lured away from their traditional nomadic life by government policy and by the opportunity of more lucrative employment. There are very few Bedouins left in the country.

Kurds

Kurds make up approximately 15-20% of Iraq’s population. A non-Arabic, non-Turkic people, the Kurds are ethnically related to Persians, but do not view themselves as such and have their own distinct culture and language. Kurdish belongs to the western Iranian branch of the Indo-European languages. The majority of Kurds are Sunni Muslims. “Kurd” historically was a generic term used to denote nomads, non-Arabs in particular. In Kurdish, the name “Kurd” means “warrior” or “ferocious fighter.” Historically nomadic herders, Kurds are now mostly settled. Ranging across northern Iraq, the Kurds are

part of the larger Kurdish population, numbering between 15 and 20 million, and inhabit a sizable region from eastern Turkey to the Zagros Mountains in Iran.

Turkomen

The Turkomen (numbering approximately 500,000 to 3 million) inhabit northeast Iraq, along the border between the Kurdish and Arab regions. Many Turkomen live in the city of Irbil. Most Turkomen are Sunni Muslims and speak a Turkish dialect. They are linguistically members of the Turkic-Altaic language group. They are ethnically and culturally connected to the larger Turkic population living in Turkey and throughout Central Asia. For the most part, they have integrated into the general Iraqi population.

Assyrians and Chaldeans

The Assyrians and Chaldeans (numbering approximately 230,100) are descendants of ancient Mesopotamian peoples. They live mainly in northeastern Iraq where they tend to be professionals and businessmen or independent farmers. They speak variations of the Aramaic language as well as Arabic. Religiously, Assyrians follow the Nestorian Church, a Christian denomination. The Chaldeans are associated with Roman Catholicism. However, the two groups are often categorized as one community due to similar ethnic backgrounds and origin.

African Iraqis

The Arab world had a robust slave trade, beginning sometime around the 9th century, that included slaves from Africa, Turkey, and even Europe. There are an estimated 1.5 - 2 million Iraqis of African descent, many of whose ancestors were brought to Iraq as slaves and are sometimes referred to by the derogatory term “Abd”, or *slave* by other Iraqis. African Iraqis maintain some historical traditions within their microculture, such as a healing ceremony that includes elaborate costumes, dancing, and songs that

use a mixture of Swahili and Arabic words. African Iraqis tend to be poorer than average and there are currently no black Iraqis in the Parliament.

SOCIAL RELATIONS

Role of Tribes in Social and Political Relations

Tribes are bound together by shared ancestry, geography, and a strict social code that demands allegiance between members. 75% of Iraq's population are a member of a tribe. The role of tribes and tribal leaders is stronger in rural areas than in major cities, and the Shi'ite dominated south is particularly influenced by tribal factors. Tribal sheiks have emerged as intermediaries between Coalition forces and the Iraqi people.

Civil Law and Religious Law

Iraq's constitution established a court system to provide the foundation for an independent judiciary. It established a supreme court, a court of appeals, and a central criminal court. The provisions of Iraqi law are sometimes at odds with religious law (Sharia). For example, according to Islamic law, it is a criminal offense punishable by death if one converts from Islam to a different religion. According to civil law, however, no penalty exists for conversion to a different religion. Further,

Article 1 of Penal Code No. 111, established in 1969, allows only civil law to impose criminal penalties. While the main tenets of religious law are inviolable as stated in the Constitution, criminal or civil law now occupies a position of independence from religious law.

Status

Status and reputation are a large part of the Iraqi social, business, and military cultures. Respect is expressed by standing when someone of status enters the room. Both men and women generally stand when an elderly person, new guest, or high ranking official enters or leaves the room. In addition, men always stand when a woman enters the room.

Keeping Up Appearances

Iraqis are fiercely protective of their public image and rely heavily on status and reputation. It is so important to most Iraqis to keep up appearances that they resent anyone who threatens their image. While Americans commonly consider criticism to be "constructive," Iraqis consider it to be destructive and humiliating. Being forced to answer "I don't know," particularly in public, is viewed as a threat to one's image. [See *Language and Communication* Section].

Firing Rifles in Celebration

Iraqis often celebrate a wide variety of events and occasions by firing their rifles in the air. Notable examples include a funeral, wedding, birth, or the arrival of a family member after a long absence. This is not an act of aggression or hostility.

How do you give gifts in Iraq?

- Make sure it's wrapped.
- Respectfully present it with your right hand, as the left hand is usually considered unclean due to its use for personal hygiene.
  - Also accept gifts with your right hand.
- Ensure it will not be offensive to Muslims.
  - Items to avoid include wine, other alcohol, or anything morally offensive or offensive to the recipient's religious beliefs.
- Give small gifts more frequently than you would in the US.
  - Suggested gifts: Flowers, candles, fruits, chocolates, nuts.
- Gifts are often not opened in front of the gift giver.

Iraqi Gift Giving

Iraqis fondly give and receive presents. Be prepared to give gifts, as there is a good chance you will receive them. When an Iraqi gives you a gift, he generally expects one in return, although he will never actually say this. The gift need not be expensive. The recipient may or may not open the gift in front of you. If you are invited to an Iraqi's home, it is courteous to bring a small gift.

Friendships/Display of Affection

Iraqis highly value friendship. A close friendship between you and an Iraqi may start and develop quickly. It is customary and expected that good friends visit each other often and

engage in long conversations. Once the friendship forms, it is considered very impolite to directly refuse that person's request. This is seen as a sign that you wish to end the relationship. Iraqi friends of the same sex are considerably more affectionate with one another than are American friends. It is not uncommon for two Iraqi men who are close friends to hold hands, walk arm in arm, kiss cheeks, or put their arm around the other's shoulder. This is not a sign of homosexuality in Iraq.

Smoking in Iraq

- If you wish to smoke in the presence of Iraqis, be prepared to offer a cigarette to everyone in the group.
  - It is considered impolite not todo so.
- Conversely, it is not considered appropriate to ask an Iraqi not to smoke.

More on Smoking: The majority of Arab adults smoke. Both men and women consider smoking a normal part of adult behavior, although women are rarely seen smoking in public.

Dogs

Dogs are considered unclean animals relative to hygiene practices of the Islamic faith. Washing is required for Muslims following contact with dogs

- Dogs are usually not kept as pets, but are sometimes used as guard dogs and kept on a chain in the family courtyard or for herding sheep.
- If you are involved in searching someone's house, do not bring a dog inside. It is also unacceptable and insulting to bring a dog to the place a Muslim prays.

Iraqi Naming

Complete Name: A complete Iraqi name has a minimum of three components and sometimes four, five, or more. First, in both the Western and Iraqi naming systems, parents give the newborn child a "given name" which appears first in the order of names. In the West, that name might be "John" or "Mary" and in Iraq, that might be "Muhammad" or "Alia."

- ***Middle Name*:** In the West, we have the concept of a "middle name." A male may bear the first and middle names "John Paul" and female may be named "Mary Elizabeth." The concept of the "middle name" does not exist in Iraq. Instead, every child takes his father's first name as his own second name.
- ***Examples:*** For example, let us say the child's first name is Muhammad. His father's first name is Husayn. The child's first and second names will be, respectively, Muhammad Husayn. If Muhammad has a sister, Alia, her first two names will be Alia Husayn. This rule applies to males and females alike.
  - *Muhammad* given name
  - *Husayn* given name of father
  - *Ali* given name of paternal grandfather
  - *Abdallah* given name of paternal great- grandfather
  - *Al-Dlaymi* family or tribal name
- Certain surnames (last names) reveal the area or tribe from which a person's family originated: for example, al-Najafi, al-Samawi, and al-Zubaydi are all surnames that are associated with tribal regions.
- ***Prefixes and Suffixes:*** Any component of the name could contain two segments – a prefix plus a stem or a stem plus a suffix. Common prefixes and suffixes include:
  - Abd = Servant Of
  - Ibn/bin = Son Of
  - Bint = Daughter Of
  - Abu = Father Of
  - Umm = Mother Of
- Example 3-part name: Muhammad bin Husayn Al-Dlaymi

Women's Surnames (Last Names): Women do not acquire their husband's surnames upon marriage; they retain their own.

5. ECONOMICS AND RESOURCES

Currency
New Iraqi Dinars

Exchange Rates (2020)
New Iraqi Dinars per US dollar: 1,191

National Economic Overview

Twenty-five years ago, Iraq was widely regarded as the most developed country in the Middle East. Iraq ranked toward the top on virtually every indicator of human well-being. The World Bank classified Iraq as an upper-middle-income country. Since then, Iraq has been the only Middle Eastern country whose living standards have declined. Years of political repression, wars, embargo, and instability seriously undermined well-being.

Iraq's economy is dominated by the oil sector, which has traditionally provided about 95% of foreign exchange earnings. Although looting, insurgent attacks, and sabotage have undermined economy rebuilding efforts, economic activity is beginning to pick up in areas secured by the US military and Iraqi forces. Oil exports are around levels seen before Operation Iraqi Freedom, and total government revenues benefited from high oil prices.

Despite political uncertainty, Iraq is making some progress in building the institutions needed to implement economic policy and has negotiated a debt reduction agreement with the Paris Club. Iraq received pledges for $13.5 billion in foreign aid for 2004-07 from outside of the US, and more than $33 billion in total pledges. The International Compact with Iraq was established in May 2007 to integrate Iraq into the regional and global economy.

The Iraqi government is seeking to pass laws to strengthen its economy. This includes a hydrocarbon law to establish a modern legal framework to allow Iraq to develop its resources and a revenue sharing law to equitably divide oil revenues within the nation. Reducing corruption and implementing structural reforms, such as bank restructuring and developing the private sector, will be key to Iraq's long-term economic success.

Agriculture

Agriculture remains a longstanding traditional occupation for the people of Iraq. Historically, strong trading networks existed within and between nomadic tribes who earned a living by trading agricultural products such as rice and vegetables, as well as breeding and trading livestock. They often visited towns to trade, and many settled in agricultural village communities divided into large extended families. Shi'a areas dominated agriculture for decades, and many non-governmental organizations are working closely to try to revive agriculture in the Shi'a southern marsh areas devastated by Saddam Hussein.

Hawala Transfer Network

Hawala is an ancient, informal system of money transfer that existed long before Western banking arrived. Hawala brokers take a client's money and then contact a counterpart in the area where the client wants money delivered. The counterpart then pays out the sum (minus a small commission percentage.) In chaotic economies, Hawala, which is based on trust rather than laws and infrastructure, can actually stand in for a mature financial system. This system is reliable and less expensive than formal bank transfers, but is virtually untraceable by government officials.

Bargaining and Negotiating

Bargaining and negotiating are not only commonplace, but expected in Iraqi culture. This holds true with negotiations at all levels and interests of society, as well as bargaining for goods.

- **Bargaining for Goods:** Generally, there are no fixed prices in the Middle East. Vendors inflate prices, and the purchaser is expected to bargain to get a more reasonable price. The Iraqi word for bargaining literally means "interaction." Think of bargaining as social interaction and a game, rather than as a way of taking advantage of the other party.

How to Negotiate Effectively

- Plan: Know what you want (your position), but identify and prioritize the reasons you want it (your interests).
  - Also estimate their positions and interests.

Building Relationships is Key

During the initial negotiations, build a relationship; don't work the task at hand (unless the situation is dire) Relationship-building can focus on discussions about the overall family, sports, geography, history, etc.

The purpose of relationship building is to develop trust. This trust will be vital in shaping the agreement and resolving issues during execution.

- When you eventually open discussions, get them to speak first. If they present a position (a want), ask them why they think that is the answer. From their answer, you'll discover their interests. If one of your interests overlaps one of theirs, you have common ground to develop a mutually satisfactory solution.
- Unless the situation is dire, don't make demands. Present your ideas and options for their comment. For example, don't say "I think we need to do X"; rather "What do you think of the idea X?" Bottom Line: make your ideas – theirs.
- Follow-on discussion should outline the advantages and disadvantages for each option.
- When it comes time to select an option to implement, make sure it meets both parties' interest – and seriously consider any option that improves the reputation of your counterpart.

Contemplation Time: Don't be alarmed if an Iraqi breaks eye contact during negotiations and becomes silent. This contemplation time is a traditional component of Iraqi negotiations.

Expect less detail in the agreement than you might want. Risk-adverse cultures tend to manage risk by creating general (not highly detailed) documents. However, with an excellent relationship built on mutual trust, the inevitable issues that arise during execution will be easier to resolve. Preservation of a reputation is of primary importance.

6. TIME AND SPACE

Iraqi Concept of Time

In Iraq, time is measured differently than it is in Western countries. Iraqi life has a more leisurely pace, and relationships are considered more important than schedules. For example, people spend time in social chatter before and after discussing business. This is vital, so avoid appearing to be in a rush. Americans may perceive this as a lack of concern for time. For example, Iraqis may not arrive on time for business meetings, or they may engage in discussions without appearing to pay attention to time.

Iraqi Calendars

Iraqis have two calendars:

The Solar Calendar

The solar calendar is used for daily business. It corresponds to the calendar used in the US that begins in January and ends in December.

The Islamic Calendar

The Islamic calendar is used for determining the proper day to celebrate religious holidays and festivals. The first year of the Islamic calendar coincides with AD 622, the year Muhammad settled in Medina (The Hijra) [See *Religion and Spirituality* Section]. The Islamic calendar is a lunar calendar and contains twelve months, each beginning and ending in accordance with the position of the moon. The approximate time between full moons, signaling the length of a month, is 29.53 days. Thus, the Islamic calendar is only 354.36 days; it is 11 days shorter than the Western solar calendar. As a result, from one year to the next, Islamic holidays fall eleven days earlier on the Western calendar than the previous year. For example, the first day of Islamic New Year 1431 was December 18, 2009.

GENERAL BUSINESS HOURS

Government offices: 0800 – 1500

Shopping centers: 0800 or 0900 – sunset

Small shops: 0900 or 1000 – sunset

Grocery shops: 0700 or 0800 – sunset

Business Hours

The Iraqi work week begins on Saturday and ends on Thursday. The "weekend" is Friday, when government offices, semi-official establishments and private companies are closed. Thursdays are usually half-day workdays for government and semi-official agencies. The business hours above are provided as a general reference. You will find business hours often vary significantly, and it is not uncommon to take a lengthy break for the midday meal. Devout Muslims observe prayer times and may close their shops accordingly.

Iraqi Concept of Personal Space

Iraqis of the same sex typically interact together with less personal space between them than do Westerners. Iraqis prefer to close distances and touch often. To stand back from someone indicates a desire not to interact with the person and may be perceived as offensive.

Proximity as a Sign of Sentiment

Iraqis often use proximity (physical nearness) to convey sentiment. For example, they will place individuals close to them who share alliances, friendships, and bonds. Be mindful of who you place close to you at meetings, meals, and events, as this proximity signals alliances much more than in US culture. In tribal culture, the public display tells everyone, particularly members of the same tribe, that you are a friend and confidant.

7. TECHNOLOGY AND MATERIAL

Manufacturing

Prior to Operation Iraqi Freedom, manufacturing expansion in Iraq was impacted by restrictions on privatization and by UN sanctions. Since 2003, however, growth of businesses slowed due to security concerns. Industry and manufacturing have generally been based on industries associated with oil such as refining, chemicals, and fertilizers. Cement is an exception, being the only major non-oil industry.

Iraq's state-owned industrial sector provides a range of technological consulting services that support areas such as hardware and software development, engineering, refinery, power plant operations, and construction of chemical and petrochemical projects.

Environmental Issues

Environmental issues include inadequate supplies of potable water, air and water pollution, soil degradation/erosion, and desertification. Government water control projects have drained most of the inhabited marsh areas east of An Nasiriyah by drying up or diverting the feeder streams and rivers. A once sizable population of Shi'a Marsh Arabs, who inhabited these areas for thousands of years, has been displaced, abandoning their traditional lifestyle in favor of conventional agriculture, urban living, camps in other areas of Iraq, or Iranian refugee camps. However, efforts are underway to attempt to revive the marsh areas and encourage displaced persons to return.

Computer Use

Most middle class families have a computer, and internet cafes have sprung up throughout the country. Approximately 75% of Iraqis used the internet in 2018. Email and chats are widely used. However, lack of electricity has hampered computer usage. A large percentage of software used in Iraq is pirated software.

8. LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

Languages Spoken in Iraq

Official Languages: Arabic and Kurdish (in Kurdish regions)

Other Languages Spoken: Turkoman (a Turkish dialect), Assyrian (Neo-Aramaic), Armenian

Introductions and Handshakes

The highest status person is expected to introduce everyone in his group, regardless of rank or social status. The introductions serve to establish rapport.

How to Shake Hands in Iraq

- Always follow up your greeting with a hand-shake
- After shaking hands put your right hand on your heart to express sincerity.
- Expect a light grip - Iraqis generally don't consider a strong handshake as complimentary.
- Shake hands with everyone in the group, regardless of rank/status.
- If you are concerned with cleanliness or communicable disease, carry hand sanitizer; however, do not sanitize your hands in the Iraqis' view.
- Men should not initiate handshakes with Iraqi women, but may accept her hand in a brief clasp if offered
  - Sometimes women will offer you their hand covered by their shawl. Just shake the covered hand as normal.
- Female Airmen will generally need to offer their hands to Iraqi men.

How to Address People Correctly

- Use titles/rank with first name only
  - To address Dr. Abdullah al Asadi, use “Dr. Abdullah”
  - To address a civilian named Adel al-Zubaydi, use “Mr. Adel”

Address People Correctly

Most Arabs are proud of their status and expect a certain degree of formality when addressed. Use titles, such as military rank or distinguished civilian occupations such as professor or engineer, when addressing Iraqis. It is socially inappropriate to use a title with the last name only. For example, if you were talking to Major Muhammad al Nahar, you should address him as “Major Muhammad”, not “Major al Nahar” or “Major Nahar”. When introducing yourself, use your rank and first name; for example, “Major Mark” rather than “Major Smith.”

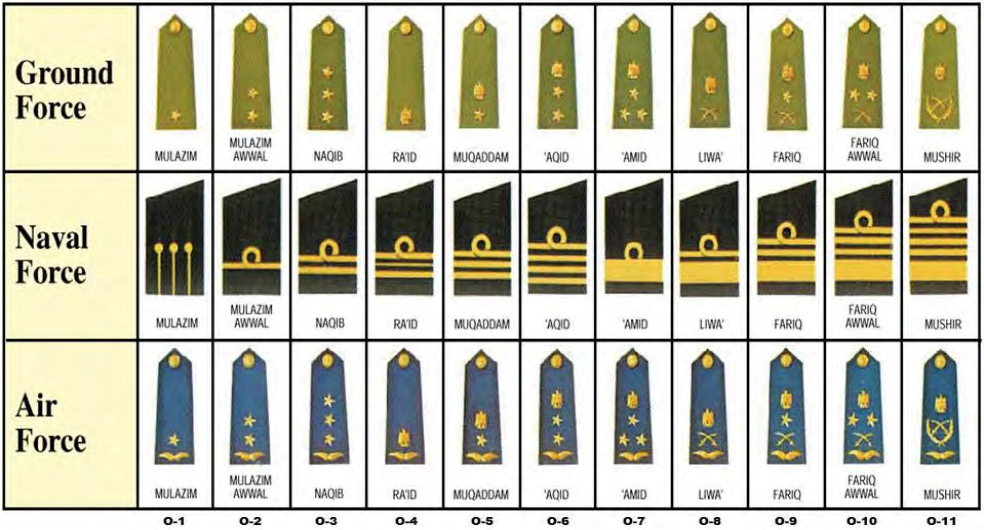
Eye Contact

In Iraq, breaking eye contact is just an acceptable behavior and does *not* imply rudeness, ill will, or concealment of the truth. In fact, in Iraq, a person will often avoid eye contact during conversation to express respect, especially to an elder.

Eloquence, Flattery, and Compliments

In Iraq, how you say something is considered to be as important as what you have to say. What Americans may view as “flowery language” is greatly admired as a sign of education and refinement in Iraq.

IRAQ - MILITARY OFFICER RANK



Never Force an Iraqi to Admit He Doesn't Know Something

- Never force an Iraqi to answer "I don't know" and admit to not knowing something, particularly in public.
  - Iraqis will likely not admit to not knowing; instead they might hedge the question and look for clues from you as to what the answer might be, or simply guess.

Sincerity, Repetition, and Politeness

Iraqis indicate sincerity by the use of repetition, and by exclamations such as, "walla!" If you never repeat yourself, you may be seen as insincere. If an Iraqi asks you, "walla?" he is challenging your sincerity. He is not intending to offend you by asking this; he is expecting you to repeat yourself to demonstrate your sincerity. As respect and reputation are very important in Arabic society, use "thank you" (*Shukran*) and "please" (*Min Fadlak*) more often than you would in America.

How to Show You're Sincere and Serious

- Repeat information often; this emphasizes sincerity and seriousness.
  - Don't be afraid to repeat yourself a third or even fourth time.

Giving Compliments in Iraq

- Compliments, the more elaborate the better, are essential and expected.
- Compliment the person you meet according to his public status and his formal position and rank or title.
  - Most officials and religious leaders are customarily addressed with a string of specific honorific adjectives and titles that reflect position and status.
- It is better to over-compliment someone with an elaborate address than be seen as rude, brusque and insensitive to local nuances of rank and status.

How to Offer Criticism Appropriately

- Address the person about the issue in private, to avoid public humiliation.
  - If this is not possible, address the issue indirectly.
- Shower positive feedback before you begin to suggest any improvements.
- Frame your suggestions as a friendly chat, stressing that you are there to mentor and offer suggestions rather than dictate blame or impose your will.
- Use language such as “as you know” to show confidence in your Iraqi counterpart (even if he may not know).
- Say “We find it useful to …” rather than “you didn’t.”
  - This places no blame on him, but stresses the most important points.
- If someone has an idea that you don’t approve of, you might say, “This is an interesting idea, and in fact we tried to implement it in the past, but it didn’t work.”
- Referring to a “past” example does not imply your personal criticism of the issue, but expresses indirectly the opinion that it would not work out.

Criticism

Constructive criticism is a normal and healthy part of American social and business relations but it does not share this status in Iraqi society. While your American counterparts may respond positively to constructive criticism, Iraqis will probably find it very insulting, especially so in public.

Talking about Family

Iraqis place great value on family background, honor, and protecting female relatives. Talking appropriately about family can build rapport.

Talking about Family

- A male should simply ask "How is your family?"
  - It is inappropriate for a male to ask an Iraqi man about female family members. For example, don't ask: "How is your wife?", "How is your sister?" (or daughter, mother, etc).
- Only a female can freely ask Iraqi men about the females in the Iraqi family.
- Avoid discussing early disadvantages/poverty.
  - Since Iraqis place great value on family background, rather than admiring success they may wonder why anyone would admit to humble origins if it need not be known.
- Avoid family subjects that Iraqis may find offensive, such as:
  - Elderly relatives in a nursing home.
  - Relatives, especially female relatives, who have disgraced the family per Iraqi standards.
- If you're from a prominent family, letting people know can be advantageous.

Guests and Arab Hospitality

An old proverb says, "A guest is God's gift," and hospitality is taken very seriously. A guest is always treated as a very distinguished person, no matter what his actual social position. When a guest is expected, there will be a lavish table setting, a variety of dishes, constant attention, sweets, and fruit. Even in poorer homes, a tremendous effort is made for guests.

How to Politely Decline an Invitation

- First thank the host enthusiastically for the invitation and his gracious hospitality.
- A valid excuse is that an appointment with – or orders from – your superior forces you to decline.
- End the exchange by expressing hope to accept the invitation another time, when you'll be certain to enjoy his hospitality.

Arab Gift Obligation – Be Careful What You Admire

The Arab code of hospitality dictates that if a guest admires a particular item during his visit, the host should offer it to his guest. The same code also requires the guest to decline the offer. It is appropriate to suggest that the host keep the item so you can enjoy it in future visits. To avoid this awkward situation, admire the whole setting of the house, such as its décor or style, instead of a particular item.

Accepting Hospitality

Due to the importance of hospitality in the Arab culture, Airmen should accept invitations whenever possible. Refusing to do so without a valid excuse could be seen as a rejection of that person's hospitality or fitness as a host. Furthermore, such invitations are great opportunities to build rapport. However, some Iraqis you will deal with may be struggling financially, so be mindful of this if you are invited to dine with them and politely decline the invitation.

Doorway Etiquette

The person with the highest status is expected to go first, with others following in order of status. However, it's considered arrogant, even for a very high-status person, to go in without showing proper modesty by encouraging others to go first. If the wrong person accepts the honor, it's interpreted as crude

and offensive. Elders are usually given the highest status, and guests are typically accorded status as well. To avoid being perceived as rude, refuse once or twice before going in. If other Americans are present, depend on your knowledge of rank and enter accordingly.

Etiquette of Sitting

- It's important to sit upright with good posture, as slouching, draping the legs over the arm of a chair, or otherwise sitting carelessly communicates a lack of respect.
- Crossing one's legs is considered rude.
- It is considered very rude to show the bottom of your shoes.
  - For this reason, do not put your feet on a table in the presence of Iraqis or let the soles of your shoes be seen by others present.

How To Signal Friendship and Alliances in Iraq

- Iraqis use physical nearness to signal bonds.
  - Stand or sit closely to the individuals
    - Place individuals closest to you that you wish to emphasize the strongest alliance.
  - Touch frequently.
  - Walk arm-in-arm or hand-in-hand (w/same sex).

Doing Business in Iraq

Importance of Hospitality and Socializing

Hospitality is a central part of Iraqi interactions, and it is typical to socialize before getting down to business. Business is only conducted between those who have established personal social relations and mutual trust. At a first meeting, you may be asked many personal questions. During this time, your host is taking measure of you, just as you will be trying to read what kind of man he is. Taking time to establish this social relationship with counterparts will pay off.

Don't Forget Prayer Time

Muslims take time during the working day for prayers. Take this into consideration when making business appointments and remember that noon and afternoon prayers will often interrupt the American business day.

Avoid Direct Refusals

Remember that a direct refusal is a sign one wishes to end the relationship. It is unlikely your Iraqi counterpart will directly refuse your request, so you must be attune to suggestions he is indirectly saying 'No.' Although Muslims will always say *Insha'allah* as they believe nothing will be accomplished without God's will, you must examine the context of non-verbal signs and the emphasis of the response. If the person is forthright and direct, with perhaps one *Insha'allah*, it is much more likely he intends to comply with your request versus responding with numerous *Insha'allahs* and non-verbal cues to suggest a "No."

Useful Translations

English	Arabic
Hello	Marhaba
Greetings	Salaam Alaykum
Thank you	Shukran
You're Welcome	Affwan
Good morning	Sabah El Khair
Good evening	Masa El Khair
As God Wills	Inshaallah
How are you?	Kaif halek? or Shloneck?
Goodbye	Ma'assalama
Please	Min Fadlak
Yes	Na'am
No	La
What?	Matha? or Shinoo?
Who?	Meen? or Meeno?
Where?	Wayne?
Why?	Leiysh?
How much? (cost)	Beysh? or Cham?
How many?	Kam?
Excuse me	Alma'derah!
I don't know	Ma'adree or Ma'aruf
Do you speak English?	Teh-tchi inglizi?

Common Gestures

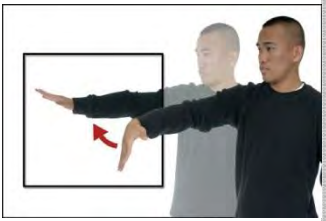
Recognize the hand gestures below that are commonly used by Iraqis but try to avoid using them as much as possible.

Come Here

To gesture “come here,” extend the right hand outward, palm upward, and open and close it.

Go away

To gesture “go away,” extend the right hand outward, palm downward, and move as if brushing something away.



Quiet Down

To gesture to someone to “quiet down,” extend the right hand outward, palm downward, moving it up and down slowly.

Calm Down

To gesture to someone to calm down, extend the right hand outward, touching thumb and fingertips together and moving the hand up and down.

Never

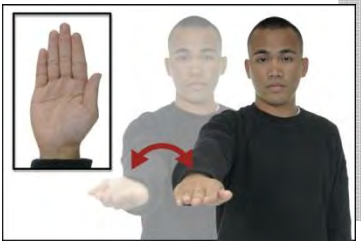
To gesture “never,” hold the right forefinger up and move it from left to right quickly several times.

Just a Moment

To gesture “just a moment, please,” or “let me finish,” place the hand palm up, with all fingertips touching thumb.

What? Why?

To gesture “What?” or “Why?” keep your right hand out, palm downward, then quickly twist the hand to be palm upward.



Gestures to Avoid

The **"A-OK"**

Forming a circle with the index finger and the thumb of one hand (The "A-OK") gesture may be misinterpreted as an obscene gesture by some Iraqis. Today, some Iraqi youngsters use this gesture in the American context, but it is against the will of their parents, who view it in terms of its longstanding, offensive meaning. Avoid this gesture.

The **"Thumbs Up"**

The thumbs-up gesture traditionally is an offensive Iraqi insult, equivalent to using the middle finger in the Western world. Some more media savvy Iraqis may understand the Western meaning of an upturned thumb as "all is OK", and intend the gesture to mean just that. Following the first Gulf War, many Middle Easterners adopted this hand movement as a symbol of cooperation toward freedom. Other Iraqis may use the gesture in its traditional sense.

Don't *Point at Anyone with Your Finger – Use Your Whole Right Hand*

Pointing to anyone with a finger is considered an obscene gesture. Use your whole right hand instead.

Significance of Head on Ground

Muslims only touch their heads to the ground when praying. Serious blunders can arise if USAF members are unaware of the significance of the head in Muslim cultures. Forcing an Iraqi's head to touch the ground is extraordinarily humiliating for him and will likely make that Iraqi your enemy. Keep this in mind if you must search Iraqis and avoid placing their head on the ground.

Use of the Left Hand

Using the left hand may be considered an insult bringing shame to an Iraqi, as the left hand is used primarily for "hygienic" uses in the bathroom. Use your right hand for all public functions such as shaking hands, eating, drinking, and passing something to another person. However, you may see Iraqis using the left hand to wrap around his right hand while you are shaking his hand; this is a very warm hand shake. Your best bet is to watch how Iraqis use their left hand and do what they do, rather than pretending you don't have a left hand.

Photographing Iraqis

- Obtain prior permission before taking photos
  - Photography is considered offensive unless you have permission from parties involved
- Refrain from photographing females
  - [See *Sex and Gender* Section for further info regarding interacting with Iraqi females]

Cursing

Many Iraqis know the meaning of English curse words. In Arab cultures, curses and obscenities are considered extremely offensive – even more so than in the US. Do not swear or use obscenities in the presence of Iraqis.

Language Learning Resources

Please view the Air Force Culture and Language Center website at www.airuniversity.af.edu/AFCLC/ and click on "Resources" for access to language training and other resources.

9. HISTORY AND MYTH

Brief History of Iraq

Modern Iraq lies in the region often referred to as the “cradle of civilization”, since it produced humanity’s first known agriculture and written language. Iraqi occupies much of the same territory as the ancient region of Mesopotamia (Greek for “between the rivers”). Mesopotamia gave rise to a succession of influential civilizations, including the Sumerians (who established the area's first cities around 3000 BC), the Babylonians, and the Assyrians. Iraqis are proud of this rich history.

The Greeks and Persians controlled the area at various times from the sixth century BC until the seventh century AD, when Muslim Arabs established Baghdad as the center of an Islamic empire (the Abbasid Dynasty) that stretched from Europe to India. The empire gradually fell into decline, allowing Mongol invaders to conquer Baghdad in 1258. By the sixteenth century, Baghdad had become part of the Turkish Ottoman Empire, which ruled the region until its defeat in World War I.

Iraq was occupied by Britain during the course of World War I. In 1921, the British created a constitutional monarchy in Iraq and placed Faisal ibn Husein (Faisal I), the former King of Syria and a Sunni, at the head of the new government. In stages over the next dozen years, Iraq attained its independence as a kingdom in 1932. It was proclaimed a "republic" in 1958, but in actuality a series of strongmen ruled the country until 2003. The last was Saddam Husayn.

Territorial disputes with Iran led to an inconclusive and costly 8-year war (1980-88). In August 1990, Iraq seized Kuwait but was expelled by US-led, UN coalition forces during the Gulf War of January-February 1991. Following Kuwait's liberation, the UN Security Council (UNSC) required Iraq to scrap all weapons of mass destruction and long-range missiles and allow UN verification inspections. Continued Iraqi noncompliance with UNSC resolutions over a period of 12 years led to the US-led invasion of Iraq in March 2003 and the ouster of the Saddam Husayn regime.

The Coalition Provisional Authority, which temporarily administered Iraq after the invasion, transferred full governmental authority in June of 2004 to the Iraqi Interim Government, which governed under the Transitional Administrative Law for Iraq (TAL). Under the TAL, elections for a 275-member Transitional National Assembly (TNA) were held in Iraq in January 2005. Following these elections, the Iraqi Transitional Government (ITG) assumed office. The TNA was charged with drafting Iraq's permanent constitution, which was approved in an October 2005 constitutional referendum. An election under the constitution for a 275-member Council of Representatives (CoR) was held in December 2005. The CoR approval of most of the cabinet ministers in May 2006 marked the transition from the ITG to Iraq's first constitutional government in nearly a half-century.

Geographic Location

Bordering Countries

Turkey
Syria
Jordan
Iran
Kuwait
Saudi Arabia

Area: 168,754 sq miles (slightly larger than Texas)

Terrain:

- Mountainous north (Kurdish)
- Desert
- Southern marshlands

Four Primary Geographic Regions:

1. Desert Region in West and Southwest

Located west and southwest of the Euphrates River, this area is part of the Syrian Desert, which covers sections of Syria, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia. The region consists of a wide, stony plain interspersed with rare sandy stretches. Riverbeds run from the border to the Euphrates; they are watercourses that are dry most of the year, except for the rainy winter season when they carry torrential floods.

2. Uplands Region between the upper Tigris and Euphrates Rivers

Located between the Tigris north of Samarra and the Euphrates north of Hit, this area is known as Al Jazirah (the island). It is part of a larger area that extends westward into Syria between the two rivers and into Turkey. Water in the area flows in deeply cut valleys, and irrigation is much more difficult than it is in the lower plain. Much of this zone may be classified as desert.

3. Highlands Region in North and Northeast

The great oil fields near Mosul and Kirkuk are located in this region, and the northeast is the homeland of most Iraqi Kurds. The northeastern highlands begin just south of a line drawn from Mosul to Kirkuk and extend to the borders with Turkey and Iran. High ground, separated by broad, rolling plains, gives way to mountains ranging from 1,000 to nearly 4,000 meters near the Iranian and Turkish borders.

4. Alluvial Plains Region through which the Tigris and Euphrates flow

The deposit area of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers (alluvial plains) begins north of Baghdad and extends to the Arabian Gulf. Here the Tigris and Euphrates rivers lie above the level of the plain in many places, and the whole area is a delta interlaced by the channels of the two rivers and by irrigation canals. Intermittent lakes, fed by flooded rivers, also characterize southeastern Iraq. A fairly large area (15,000 square kilometers) just above where the two rivers meet and extending east of the Tigris is marshland, known as Hawr al

Hammar. These marshlands are the result of centuries of flooding and inadequate drainage. Much of it is permanent marsh, but some parts dry out in early winter, while other areas become marshland only in years of great flood.

Major Cities

Baghdad

The capital of Iraq, Baghdad was founded by the Abbasids in 762 B.C.E. The city straddles the banks of the Tigris River, and 11 bridges connect the two sides. With 7.144 million inhabitants, it is the largest city in Iraq today and the center of industry, commerce, and culture.

Basrah

Basrah is Iraq's third-largest city, with a population of 1.352 million. It is also Iraq's main port. The city's rich history dates back to the Abbasids. Basrah's main exports are grains, dates, and petroleum.

Irbil

One of the world's longest continuously-inhabited cities, Irbil's roots date back over 8,000 years. Close to Turkey and Iran, it represents the center of the Kurdish independent movement with a population of roughly 846,000. Commerce, agriculture, and administrative work are of main interest in Irbil.

Karbala

The holy city of Karbala is the site of the tomb of the Martyr Husayn Ibn Ali, who was killed there in 680 AD. After Mecca, Karbala is the place most visited by Shi'a pilgrims and has developed into a major center of Islamic religion in Iraq. [See *Religion and Spirituality* Section for more on the death of Husayn and the division between Shi'a and Sunni]

Kirkuk

Kirkuk's ancient history dates back over 5,000 years. Kurds and Turkmen primarily make up its population. Kirkuk has been the center of the petroleum industry since the 1930s,

producing one million barrels of oil daily. It is a major industrial and agricultural center.

Mosul

With its 1.63 million inhabitants, Mosul is Iraq's second-largest city. The city's history dates back to Mesopotamian times (4000–5000 B.C.E.) and to Assyrian rule in 800 B.C.E. Its primarily Kurdish population lives together with the largest Christian community in Iraq, the Chaldeans.

Najaf

Najaf is approximately 160 km south of Baghdad and is the capital of Najaf Governorate. It is one of the holiest cities of Shi'a Islam and the center of Shi'a political power in Iraq. The city is renowned as the site of the tomb of Imam Ali, the Prophet Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, whom the Shi'a consider to be the righteous caliph and first imam. The city is now a great center of pilgrimage throughout the Shi'a Islamic world.

The Evil Eye

Every culture has its own superstitions. One popular belief in Iraq is that calling attention on a child's fine features is believed to alert the *evil eye* that will then harm the child.

Complimenting Children's Attractiveness

You should not admire or compliment children unless you qualify that admiration with the expression "*ma sha' Allah* " (May God protect him).

10. SUSTENANCE AND HEALTH

Diet

Arab food takes its origins from nomadic food, which is easily transported, herded and stored. For example, lamb, goat, and beef, along with various grains and nuts are popular. Popular dishes include kubba (cracked wheat mixed with minced meat, nuts, spices, parsley and onion); dolma (vine leaves or other vegetables stuffed with rice, meat and spices); *kebab*, skewered chunks of meat grilled over a flame; tikka (shish-kebab); quozi (small lamb stuffed with rice, minced meat and spices and served on rice); and masgou (fish from the Tigris cooked on the river bank). Fruit is typically served after meals. Most meals are served with flat bread called *samoon,* and two varieties of rice are generally eaten: amber rice in northern Iraq, and a variety called *neggaza* in the south.

When preparing meats, Iraqis waste very little. They use almost every part of the animal, including the kidneys, liver, brain, feet, eyes, and ears. For example, *pacha* is made from sheep's head, stomach, feet, and various other parts slowly cooked together in a broth. Mutton, lamb, goat, beef, or poultry are the preferred meats in Iraq. *Turshi*, a side dish, is made with different types of pickled vegetables.

Various types of desserts, pastries, and candies are popular in Iraqi homes for snacks or for guests. Popular desserts include *shirini* (pumpkin pudding), rice pudding, Turkish Delight (*lokum*, a confection of starch and sugar, usually flavored with rosewater or lemon), and *baklava* (a pastry made by layering honey, pistachios or walnuts, and rose water between thin sheets of phyllo dough.) Fresh fruit is also commonly served as dessert.

Lunch as Main Meal

Lunch is the main meal in Iraq, as opposed to the American main meal in the evening.

Restricted Foods/Drinks for Muslims

- ***Haram –*** of Islamic religious restrictions, Muslims do not eat pork and most do not consume alcohol.
- ***Halal –*** According to Islam, the slaughtering of animals must be performed to certain standards, known as *halal*, covering cleanliness, the training of the slaughterman, the avoidance of suffering, and by repeating certain words while the animal is dispatched.
- Sunni Islam typically allows the consumption of all forms of seafood, but Shi'a practice largely prohibits the consumption of bottom feeders without fins or scales, such as lobsters, crabs, oysters, clams, and catfish. (Shrimp is often permitted). Shi'a do not consume rabbit.

Sharing Your Food

If you are on break and eating a snack or a meal and there are Iraqi children or men very nearby, it would be a kind gesture to offer some of your food to them. If you offer food only once, they will probably politely decline. You will likely need to offer a second or third time before they accept.

Eating and Drinking During Holy Month of Ramadan:

[See *Religion and Spirituality* Section]

Understanding Iraqi Hygiene

Personal hygiene is extremely important to Iraqi Arabs for both spiritual and practical reasons. Because meals are frequently eaten by hand, it is typical to wash the hands before and after eating. Formal washing of the face, hands, and forearms, and general cleanliness of the body and clothing is required before daily prayers or fasting. It is also recommended following contact with other substances considered unclean, including dogs.

The Iraqi Dining Experience

Offering dinner invitations is a way for Iraqis to demonstrate their hospitality as well as their interest in you. As it is a social event, you should not be surprised if conversation lasts for several hours before dinner is finally served. Accept all the food that is offered you, even if you cannot finish everything on your plate. In fact, leaving food on your plate shows how well your host has provided for you and serves as a compliment to him.

Wash Your Hands – before and after eating.

Receiving Food – Rather than passing the food container and allowing a guest to serve himself, an Iraqi might offer you a piece of the food using his right hand. Accept it with your right hand.

The Right Hand – remember: the left hand is only used for "hygienic" purposes and is considered unclean. Always use your right hand for social activities.

Coffee, Tea, and Soft Drinks – Many Iraqi hosts do not serve water or other beverages until dinner is over. Some Iraqis believe that eating and drinking at the same time is unhealthy. At home, Iraqis may make their own soft drinks from orange blossoms, rose petals, and fruits such as oranges, apricots, lemons, and pomegranates. Coffee and tea are typically drunk before and after a meal, not during the meal. Iraqi coffee is prepared by heating and cooling it nine times before it is served and drunk. This technique, it is believed, removes any impurities. Tea is poured into small glasses and served sweetened, without milk. To signal that you do not want another cup, put your right hand, palm down, over the top of the cup. You should not plan on departing until shortly after the second or third round of tea. When leaving the table, it is polite to say "sufra dayma." This means, "May your table always be thus."

Bring a Gift – [See *Political and Social Relations* Section].

Health Issues

Life Expectancy
Average: 72.6 years
Male: 70.7 years
Female: 74.6 years (2020 est.)

Infant Mortality Rate – 19.5 deaths/1,000 live births.

Cultural Influences on Health
Iraqi adherence to Islamic dietary laws is an area where Iraqi cultural beliefs contribute to better health. The immediate impact of not consuming pork or alcohol is generally low heart and lung disease. Conversely, the cultural propensity to smoke is obviously detrimental. Another cultural influence on health is that birth control is virtually non-existent, as limiting births or interfering with conception in any way is against the laws of Islam. Life is considered a gift from God.

Health Precautions
Protect yourself with insect repellent. Several insect-borne diseases are common in the region, including the following:

Leishmaniasis (“Baghdad Boil”)
Humans are infected by sandfly bites. There are four main types of the disease:

- With cutaneous forms, skin ulcers usually form on exposed areas, such as the face, arms and legs. These usually heal within a few months, leaving scars.
- Diffuse cutaneous leishmaniasis produces disseminated and chronic skin lesions resembling those of lepromatous leprosy. It is difficult to treat.
- In mucocutaneous forms, the lesions can partially or totally destroy the mucous membranes of the nose, mouth and throat cavities and surrounding tissues.
- Visceral leishmaniasis, also known as kala azar, is characterized by high fever, substantial weight loss, swelling of the spleen and liver, and anemia. If left untreated, the disease can have a fatality rate as high as 100% within two years.

Filariasis

Lymphatic filariasis is infection with filarial worms. These parasites are transmitted to humans through bites from infected mosquitos and develop into adult worms in the lymphatic vessels, causing severe damage and swelling (lymphoedema). Elephantiasis – painful, disfiguring swelling of the legs and genitals – is a classic sign of late-stage disease.

Dengue Fever

Dengue is transmitted through mosquitoes infected with this virus. Symptoms appear 3-14 days after the infective bite and range from a mild fever, to incapacitating high fever, with severe headache, pain behind the eyes, muscle and joint pain, and rash. There are no specific antiviral medicines for dengue. It is important to maintain hydration. Dengue hemorrhagic fever (fever, abdominal pain, vomiting, bleeding) is a potentially lethal complication, affecting mainly children. Early clinical diagnosis and careful clinical management by experienced physicians and nurses increase patients' survival rates.

Onchocerciasis

Onchocerciasis is caused by the filarial worm Onchocerca volvulus and is transmitted through the bites of infected blackflies which carry immature larval forms of the parasite from person to person. In the human body, the larvae form nodules in the subcutaneous tissue, where they mature to adult worms. After mating, the female adult worm can release up to 1000 microfilariae a day. These move through the body, and when they die they cause a variety of conditions, including blindness, skin rashes, lesions, intense itching and skin de-pigmentation. A drug is available that kills the microfilariae, alleviating symptoms and reducing transmission.

Medical Facilities

Apart from US military installations, basic modern medical care and medicines are not widely available in Iraq. The recent conflict has left some medical facilities non-operational and medical stocks and supplies severely depleted. The facilities in operation generally do not meet US standards, and the majority lack medicines, equipment and supplies.

11. LEARNING AND KNOWLEDGE

Oral Tradition and Learning

Oral tradition, or storytelling, has historically been a common method of learning in Iraq, as with most Muslim countries. Oral methods of transmission and learning co-existed with the use of the written word from the beginnings of Islam. The Qur'an (Holy Book) was taught and transmitted orally. The traditions and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad were passed on verbally. Oral communication was also one of the most effective methods of passing on the history and memory of individuals, families and dynasties. As in many Muslim cultures, oral tradition continues to play an important role in the preservation and acquisition of knowledge from generation to generation. Oral traditions typically preserved local history, genealogies, and the social history of their groups and rulers.

Formal Education

Iraq's educational system was once the pride of the Middle East. Schools were primarily secular and one of the country's major assets was its well-educated populace and high literacy rate for women. However, over the past 20 years, economic sanctions, wars, and misdirected funds have deeply affected the system. In the 10 years that followed the first Gulf War (1991), spending on schools dropped 90%. Following the change of regime in Iraq in April 2003, a comprehensive reform of the country's education system was implemented. Today, education is provided free of charge. Primary education is compulsory in Iraq, beginning at age six and lasting for six years. Secondary education begins at 12 years of age and lasts for up to six years, divided into two cycles of three years each. There are 47 technical institutes and colleges, two postgraduate commissions, and 20 universities.

Literacy

Total population (age 15 and over) that can read and write: 86%

Male: 91%
Female: 80% (2017 est.)

12. AESTHETICS AND RECREATION

Iraqi Men's Clothing

Generally speaking, Arabs in Iraq wear two types of clothing. Western clothing men includes trousers, a shirt, jacket, and/or coat. The young especially favor this style. Educated people or those holding government positions also dress in Western attire. Traditional Iraqi clothing is more likely to be seen on farmers, those with strong connections to tribal groups, religious people and the elderly. The number of people wearing traditional clothing has increased in recent years, as people associate themselves more closely with their tribe.

Headdresses (*Kuffiyeh* or *Ghutra*)

Farmers and tribal people often wear a cloth headdress falling to the shoulders and held in place by a twisted black headband (*Egal*). The cloth is plain white or checkered black or red. Some traditional men wrap their head with this piece of cloth to form a loose turban.

Turbans

Men associated with a mosque may wear a skullcap (*Kufi* or *Taqiyah*). Religious scholars wear turbans of various kinds depending on their sect, status and role. In general, Shi'a scholars wear a rounded turban of either white or black. Those performing services in the shrines of saints, like those in Najaf and Karbala, wear a tall, red, cylindrical turban. Sunni scholars wear a white cylindrical turban.

Dishdasha

Many Iraqis wear the traditional long, loose robe (*dishdasha*) at home because it's more comfortable than trousers, especially in the summer. Shi'a and Sunni theologians wear a similar robe that opens in the front and is tied in a knot or with a belt.

Iraqi Women's Clothing

Veil (Niqab)

Iraqi Women usually do not veil their faces except in the most rural areas or conservative families. Veiling, in large part, is a matter of local custom and not a religious requirement. In fact, the Qur'an says nothing specific about veiling; however, it does urge women to dress modestly. In Iraq, women are expected to dress conservatively and would not consider wearing mini-skirts, sleeveless blouses, or low-cut sweaters in public.

Cloaks (Abaya) and Head Scarves (Hijab)

Women who wear traditional clothing may also wear a black cloak (abaya), or may cover their heads with a scarf (hijab).

Concept of Image and Dress

The way a person dresses indicates his or her wealth and social standing. There may be surprise when a well-to-do foreigner wears faded jeans and a tattered T-shirt, with a question as to why the person would dress poorly when he or she could afford better.

Appropriate Attire for You

- It is generally appropriate for Westerners to wear typical Western clothing in Iraq, but several precautions should be taken to avoid offense.
- Shorts should not be worn by either sex.
- Women should always wear clothing that is at or below the elbow and at or below the knee.
- Hats are appropriate outdoors, but as a courtesy you should remove your hat when you go inside **someone's** house.
- Tattoos are traditionally used for medical reasons, and it is not considered appropriate to display them to the public.

Leisure Activities - Organized sports

Football ("Soccer")

Football, or what is commonly referred to as soccer in the US, is extremely popular throughout Iraq. During the Iran- Iraq war years of the 1980–1988, soccer provided an outlet for Iraqis. In recent years, soccer has put Iraq in the limelight. The national football team made it to the Asian Cup finals in 2006, a first for them in over 20 years. In 2007, Iraq won the Asian Cup title.

Other International Sports

Iraq teams participate in several other international sports including weightlifting, wrestling, boxing, shooting, taekwondo and table tennis.

Other Leisure Activities

Men often spend time together playing backgammon, chess, dominoes, or smoking *shisha* or *hookah* (water pipes with flavored tobacco) in cafés and coffee shops. Watching nightly television programming is a common family pastime.

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