Rebuilding the Iraqi State:

The Regional Dimension of Ethno-Sectarian Conflict (2003-2016)

Submitted by Zubir R. Ahmed, to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Middle East politics, February 2017.

I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis addresses the relationship between state-building and ethno-sectarian conflict in Iraq from 2003 to 2016 in the regional context among Iraq's core neighbours: Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. The purpose of this study is to examine how and why Iraq's neighbours engaged in the process of state-building in Iraq after the fall of Saddam's regime. Part of this research's significance lies in the fact that there is a lack of research projects that examine Iraq's state-building process in its regional dimension, and of studies that address internal and external factors that shape security policies in the Persian Gulf. The majority of previous studies so far have addressed the state/nation-building process in Iraq as an internal issue among Iraq's different sectarian, ethnic, and political factions. However, this study has found that the involvement of Iraq's neighbours in the ethno-sectarian conflict has been an enduring part of the state-building process in post-2003 Iraq. Furthermore, one of the central issues that this study has demonstrated regarding the involvement of Iraq's neighbours is the constant interaction of three main variables: security complex dynamics, ethno-sectarian conflict, and the state-building process in post-2003 Iraq.

Based on the theoretical contribution of RSC, this research has found that the engagement of Iraq's neighbours in the state-building process and ethno-sectarian conflict following the U.S. invasion of Iraq is rooted in the RSC dynamics of Iraq with its neighbours in the region, on the one hand, and among the neighbours themselves, on the other hand.

The engagement of Iraq's neighbours in the state-building process in Iraq has been driven by both internal and external dimensions of the regional security complex. Moreover, the thesis found that both Turkey and Iran have built institutional bases for their leverage in post-2003 Iraq. Turkey through the KRG and a part of the Arab Sunnis, and Iran through the Shi'a-centric state and part of the Iraqi Kurds, have built institutional links with Iraq's components. However, both Saudi Arabia and Syria lacked the capability to build such institutional relations with post-2003 Iraq, and this has been a main cause for their ineffective positions in the process of state-building in Iraq after 2003.Thus, the ethno-sectarian conflict in post-2003 Iraq has been a form of intervention by Iraq's neighbours in the state-building process.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAH	Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq
AKP	Justice and Development Party [Turkey]
AQI	Al-Qaida in Iraq or Al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia
CHP	Republican People's Party [Turkey]
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency [America]
CPA	Coalition Provisional Authority
FSA	Free Syrian Army
GDP	Cross Domestic Production
HDP	Peoples' Democratic Party [Turkey]
ICP	Iraqi Communist Party (ICP)
IDP	Islamic Daw'a Party
IGC	Iraqi Governing Council
INA	Iraqi National Alliance
INC	The Iraqi National Congress
IRGC	Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps
ISCI	The Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq
ISF	Iraqi security forces (ISF)
ITF	Iraqi Turkoman Front
JAM	Jaysh al-Mahdi
KDP	Kurdistan Democratic Party [Iraq]
KH	Kata'ib Hizbuallah or the Hezbullah Brigades
KNC	Kurdish National Council [Syria]
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government [Iraq]
KRI	Kurdistan Region of Iraq
MHP	Nationalist Action Party [Turkey]

NIL	National Iraqi List
ORHA	Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance
PJAK	Party of Free Life of Kurdistan [Iran]
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party [Turkey]
PMU	Popular Mobilization Unites/Forces
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan [Iraq]
PYD	Democratic Union Party [Syria]
QF	Quds Forces
RSC	Regional Security Complex
RSCT	Regional Security Complex Theory
SD	U.S State Department
SFA	Strategic Framework Agreement
SLC	State of Law Coalition
SOFAs	Status of Forces Agreement Status of Forces Agreements
TAL	Transitional Administration Law
U.S	United States of America
YPG	People's Protection Units [Syria]

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Chapter One: Introduction

1. Introduction

Following the U.S-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, the role of Iraq's neighbours in Iraqi internal affairs has always been a problematic and complicated issue, whether considered by the U.S or Iraqi officials. This subject encompasses various issues, such as an apparent negligence on the U.S. side prior to the invasion regarding the influence of Iraq's neighbours, or a lack of understanding of Iraq's regional security interconnectedness and its dynamics with its neighbours after the invasion. This is particularly in terms of the ramifications of the occupation of Iraq within the context of the regional power balance in the Persian Gulf on one hand, and 'regional conflict complexes' on the other, in addition to the "persistent permeability" of the regional state system, including Iraq and its neighbours (see Salloukh and Brynen, 2004, p.4). Given its historical, economic, religious and demographical factors, Iraq is in a very volatile position, whereby it has the potential to be a source of great regional influence, with the possibility to either stabilise or destabilise the region itself. Thus, having a number of regional middle powers in the region, such as Iran, Turkey and Syria in a penetrated regional state system like the Persian Gulf and the Levant, with a number of significantly less powerful states, such as Lebanon, Palestine, Iraq and Syria (after 2011), can be extremely challenging for a state-building process such as in post-2003 Iraq. As Buzan et al (1998, p.11) point out, "most political and military threats travel more easily over short distances than over long ones, insecurity is often associated with proximity." For example, Iran and Syria's involvement in supporting Iraq's insurgent groups directly after the U.S. invasion, such as Ba'athist and jihadist groups, has been a hindrance to the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA)'s efforts and thereafter the state-building process in Iraq.

It is vital to emphasise at this point that relations between Iraq and its neighbours have long been a controversial matter since the creation of the Iraqi state in 1921. The interaction between the Iraqi state and its neighbours was often complicated and marked by mutual suspicion or even open hostility.

During the rule of the Ba'ath regime, relations between Iraq and its neighbours deteriorated even further, as Iraq began to pose a serious threat for its neighbours. These threats then materialised in the form of bloody conflicts, such as the Iran-Iraq War in 1980-1988 and the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990. The volatile situation of the region and the threat posed by regional actors led to the number of alliances formed in the region, such as the Iraq-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) alliance which was mainly directed against Iran during the eight years of the Iran-Iraq War, the Syria-Iran alliance against Iraq during the same war, and the Gulf-Arab countries alliance against Iraq as a result of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1991. However, after the U.S.-led invasion, the dynamics of the relations between Iraq and its neighbours were reversed, whereby it was now Iraq's neighbours that represented a vital threat to the state-building process of the new Iraqi state. Furthermore, the period after the U.S. invasion of Iraq has witnessed various forms of intervention by Iraq's neighbours in internal Iraqi affairs. Consequently, these interventions have challenged the process of rebuilding the Iraqi state in the aftermath of the invasion and shaped the ethnic and sectarian conflict not only among Iraqi factions but also among Iraq's neighbours in the region.

In this context, this study will focus on two essential stages of involvement of regional powers in the process of state formation in post- 2003 Iraq. The first stage is concerned with the regional dimensions of ethno-sectarian conflict prior to the withdrawal of the U.S. troops from Iraq at the end of 2011, whilst the second stage includes the regional dimensions of ethno-sectarian conflicts after the U.S. troops' withdrawal from Iraq. Such a division into two stages also reflects the fact that the involvement of regional powers and their mechanisms in Iraq have differed from one country to another. Both Iran and Syria displayed a strong tendency for interfering in Iraq's internal affairs right after the U.S. invasion of Iraq, whereas other countries, such as Saudi Arabia and Turkey, were less active in Iraq during the presence of the U.S. troops, yet became more and more involved once the U.S. troops left Iraq. This latter period witnessed the strong presence of Turkey and Saudi Arabia on the Iraqi political scene. This is evident both through the Turkish relations with the Sunni Arab anti-Maliki opposition, and a major shift in its relations with the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG).

This study has employed the concept of the regional dimensions of ethno-sectarian conflicts in Iraq with reference to the four major regional actors that have been extensively linked with Iraq's internal and external affairs: Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. The main reason for choosing these four countries is because of their foreign policies, with all four of them being, to different extents, middle powers in a penetrated regional system (see Ehteshami and Hinnebusch, 1997). In addition to their strategic security links with Iraq within the framework of the regional security complex, what will be addressed are factors related to the existence of the common ethnic (such as the Kurds in Turkey, Iran and Syria) and sectarian tensions among these four addressed countries (such as Saudi Arabia, Syria and even Turkey and Iran after the Arab uprisings). The framework of regional security complex is based on a premise that the security of each individual country in this region cannot be separated from the security of other neighbouring countries (Buzan, 2003, p.190). Meanwhile, due to the influence of the major regional powers, this region is characterised by a number of cross-regional issues, including the presence of transitional identities of Arabs, Turks and Kurds, the Sunni-Shi'a divide with its far-reaching political consequences, and most importantly the complex system of amity and enmity among countries in the region which is a source of various political, ethno-religious and economic problems. Finally, this region's salient feature is the existence of ongoing conflicts, as well as diverse forms of permeability of the regional state system, through local, regional, and international interventions which have been paramount in putting the regional and international relations of the region into a state of permanent tension.

The primary purpose of this thesis is to investigate the relation between the process of state-building in Iraq and the ethno-sectarian conflict, and the role of Iraq's neighbours. This can be framed through the influence of regional factors in the process of rebuilding the Iraqi state after 2003, by answering the thesis's main research question: how and why have Iraq's neighbours (Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia and Turkey) engaged in the process of state-building in Iraq after the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime? This study will cover from 2003 and until the end of 2016. All terms such as 'after 2003', 'post-2003 Iraq' and 'post-Saddam' or 'post-Ba'ath regime' that have been used in this study refer to the period from 2003 to 2016.

The abovementioned question in the period of 2003-2016 can provide cohesion to an investigation into understanding the relationship between three important variables: the state-building process in post-2003 Iraq, Iraq's neighbours, and regional dimensions of ethnic and sectarian conflict.

It can be argued that most of the political phenomena and case studies regarding Middle East studies have not been examined in the regional context. Regions have been ignored as analytical units in Middle East studies. As Kaufman (1997, p. 201) observed, post-Cold War regional sub-systems have become increasingly independent from global forces and have their own ramifications on international relations. Researchers have paid much less attention to the relation between the state-building process and ethno-sectarian conflict in its regional context. Moreover, as Buzan and Wæver (2003, p.202) point out, there has been a lack of actual research that looks for internal and external factors which shape security policies in the Persian and Levant sub-region. For the purpose of studying the regional dimensions of the ethno-sectarian conflict in Iraq and its impact on the state-building process in post-2003 Iraq, the focus on a regional level as an analytical category is theoretically appropriate and analytically interesting. Because of the clear interrelations between the local state levels of analysis, on the one hand, and a regional level of analysis on the other hand, Iraq has continuously been an active regional agent in the Persian Gulf. As Marr (2004, p.185) reveals, Iraq has always been part of several regions, such as the Arab world which at the same time includes the Levant and the Persian Gulf, as well as having ethno-religious links with countries outside the Arab world, such as Turkey and Iran. Having all these regional faces with its neighbours has pushed Iraq into a persistent, sophisticated position to differentiate itself from other regional powers. All this is to say is that Iraq has long suffered from its geopolitical position alongside its internal challenges, and its challenges for its neighbours have always been a source of tension in the region.

1.1. Statement of hypothesis

Since the creation of the Iraqi state in 1921, the process of state-building has been highly affected by three of Iraq's main ethnic and religious identities:

Shi'a, Sunni, and Kurd. After the U.S. invasion of Iraq, the three mentioned dominating identities obtained a wider space and greater capacity for maneuvering, whether inside, through their conflicts with each other, or outside the frame of the state, through their cross-border ethnic and sectarian links with Iraq's neighbouring countries. It can be argued that the ethnic and religious roles played by Iraq's groups, inside and outside the state, have been a challenge to the state-building process. As Ghassan Attiyah (cited in Haddad, 2011, p.12) argued, ethnic and sectarian relations have historically been a persistent problem in Iraq, but after the Islamic revolution of Iran in 1979, become unmanageable. However, prior to the U.S. invasion of Iraq, particularly until Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, the ethnic and sectarian issues were primarily Iraq's internal concern, and had not been penetrated or instrumentalised by Iraq's neighbours as a regional concern among regional powers. After the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, both the state-building process and Iraq's ethnic and sectarian conflict have become regional issues and at the same time shaped regional security complex dynamics among Iraq's neighbours

There are two central arguments that this thesis points out for understanding the relationship between regional dimensions of the ethnic and religious conflict and the state-building process after the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq. In the first argument, I propose that the involvement of Iraq's neighbours (Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia and Turkey) in the ethno-sectarian conflict in Iraq has been an enduring part of the state-building process in Iraq after regime change in 2003. The second argument is linked to the first: the state-building process in post-2003 Iraq has become part of the regional security complex dynamics of Iraq's neighbours and is directly linked with cross-border ethno-sectarian identities in the region.

Based on the abovementioned arguments, it can be argued that, at the regional level, there are two fundamental factors that constitute major incentives for Iraq's neighbours' involvement in Iraq's internal affairs after regime change in 2003. First, due to the existence of the regional security complex formation of both the Persian Gulf and the Levant sub-complex regions, most of Iraq's neighbours are linked with Iraq through their internal, regional and international security complex dynamics. The three security levels of the four of Iraq's neighbours being addressed have interdepended substantially on one another

within the region. In Buzan's words, these countries "cannot realistically be considered apart from one another" (Buzan, 1991, p.190). Furthermore, the relationship among Iraqi groups themselves on the one hand, and their links with Iraq's neighbours on the other hand, have created a powerful connection between internal and external factors. These relations have historical, ethnic and sectarian roots, whereby if one group considers its political and sectarian rights as not being protected, they seek support from their external allies. This has been a case for Shi'a, Sunni and Kurd after the U.S invasion of Iraq.

Second, the U.S. invasion of Iraq has unintentionally tilted the regional balance of power in the region in favour of Iran at the expense of Saudi Arabia, Turkey and even Syria. Due to the regional security interconnectedness of Iraq with its neighbours, the main forces driving this shift were the ethnic and sectarian factors. Consequently, the recent socio-political developments in Iraq after 2003 have divided Iraq's neighbours into opposing ethno-sectarian blocks of rivals. This division subsequently has led to regular interference from Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia and Turkey in Iraq's domestic affairs. Moreover, the U.S. presence in Iraq has posed a strategic threat for regional powers, particularly those whose relationship with the U.S. is dictated by mutual distrust or even enmity, such as Iran and Syria.

The regional balance of power has been relatively stable in the Persian Gulf between Arab states and Iran. This situation continued in the region for about eight decades, from the fall of the Ottoman Empire in 1918 until the collapse of Iraq in 2003 (see Qablan, 2015, p. 5). The U.S. has played a major role in protecting this balance; the international coalition against Saddam's invasion to Kuwait in 1990 was part of ensuring the balance.

In addition, the permeability of the regional state structure in the region has also been another factor which prompted Iraq's neighbours' engagement in the process of state-building in Iraq. Iraq's neighbours viewed its social and political links with Iraq's fractions as a source of security concerns. As Buzan (1991, p. 100) pointed out, for the weak states most of the threats are internal and will be portrayed in the context of national security threats. What makes this circumstance viable in the region is the nature of Iraq's neighbours. As Ayoob (1995, p.86) makes clear, those states "attempt to portray threats to their regime as a threat to the state". On the other hand, the historical failure of Iraqi

state-building to create a unified Iraqi identity capable of gathering all Iraqi factions as citizens has been another motivation regarding Iraq's neighbours' interference. This situation has significantly weakened the Iraqi state and its national institutions, whilst at the same time creating a platform for regional powers' meddling in Iraqi internal affairs after 2003.

Meanwhile, the abovementioned equation does not only stand in a narrow scope of the ethnic and religious alignment among opposing parties. This is due to the regional involvement in the ethno-sectarian strife in post-2003 Iraq having complicated dimensions which go beyond local factors and cannot be examined only through sectarian and ethnic narratives. To illustrate this point, take for example Iran's and Syria's support of jihadist and Ba'athist groups in the period right after the invasion of Iraq, or Turkey's economic and political cooperation with the KRG. Yet, at the same time, the political calculus based on ethno-sectarian motives has frequently been a part of Iraq's neighbours' regional policies, with Iraq often being their main target .

Both domestic and regional factors have existed intensely in the ethno-sectarian conflicts in Iraq after 2003. However, this study will focus on the regional dimension of the ethno-sectarian conflict as an essential factor highly engaged in the process of state-building in Iraq, and becoming the crucial factor for directing Iraqi internal and regional polices and reshaping the regional balance of power. Meanwhile there are the local dynamics of the attitudes of the ethnic and religious factions towards the state-building process in Iraq, which have contributed to the vulnerability of this process. The state-building process in Iraq after 2003 has primarily been linked with three internal dynamics among Iraq's divided factions, which could be framed as the following:

First, rebuilding the state essentially means the re-establishment of political and constitutional institutions, yet this process is more complex and sensitive in the case of Iraq. The rebuilding of any political, economic, judicial, or social institutions in Iraq after 2003 means disrupting the existing equilibrium between the ethnic and sectarian groups. To a degree, state-building may be perceived as an existential threat to the other minority groups or the excluded ethnic and religious groups. This view is not something new, and was embedded in the Iraqi social fabric, since the Ba'ath regime had controlled by

force. This had been the case in relation to both Shi'a and Kurd since the creation of the Iraqi state.

Second, rebuilding state structures entailed the redistribution of political, economic and social values, which, according to David Easton's logic, represents the "authoritative allocation of value" (Easton, 1965 p.50). Most importantly, in the case of Iraq, these values are often framed in the ethno-sectarian context. From the view of Iraq's identities, state-building redraws the lines of hegemony amongst Iraq's local identities. Unfortunately this was the case in 1921 when the British fashioned the Iraqi state (Osman, 2012). In Iraq, the state was always more a source of hegemony for one sect/ethnicity over the other excluded components than a source of security. For example, the British model of the Sunni-centric state in 1921 led to the Sunni-Ba'ath domination. To a degree, both Shi'a and Kurd were largely shut out of the state for more than eight decades.

Third, the historical concern of possible imbalance created between various identities in Iraqi society by the redistribution of political values, was the key challenge which faced the U.S. in the process of state-building in Iraq. Therefore, the factions have fought to strengthen their political (ethnic and sectarian) roles, as illustrated during the process of writing of the new Iraqi constitution and the constitutional referendum in October 2005.

The presented hypothesis (see figure 1) may be considered as demonstrating the key factors contributing to the Iraq's neighbours' engagement in the state-building process following the U.S invasion of Iraq.
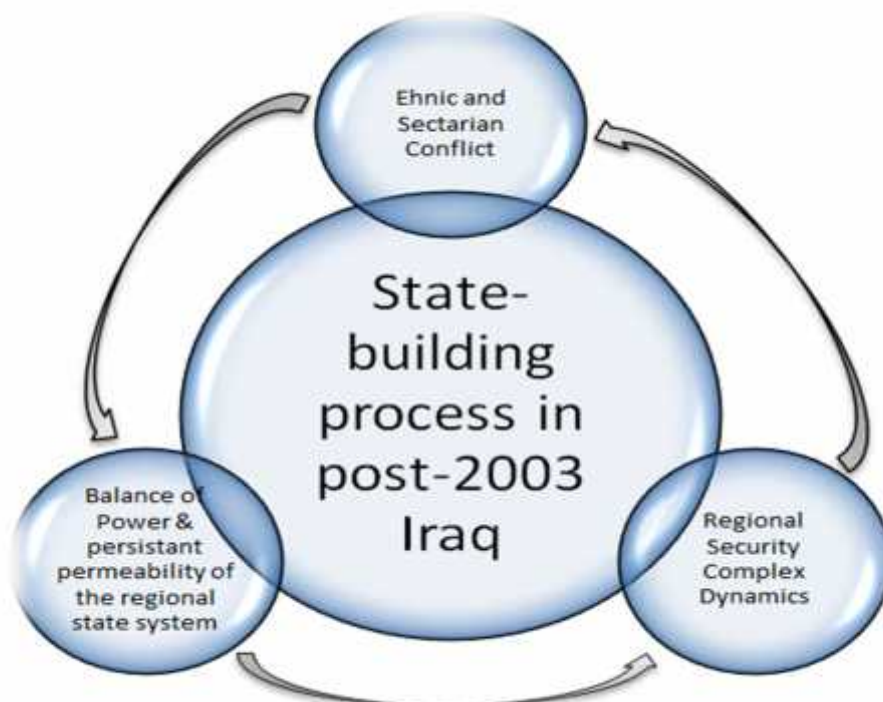
Figure (1) The regional dimensions of the state-building process in post-2003 Iraq

1.2. The application of the term state-building in this thesis

It can be argued that there is a kind of confusion in academic literature over the terms "state-building" and "nation-building". There are authors who have used both terms interchangeably, while others use both terms with different meanings (Scott, 2007, p.6). For example, the Rand Report on the "nation-building" efforts of the U.S., United Nations, and European Union has used the term nation-building; however, throughout the report the focus is on the state rather than the nation (see Dobbins et al, 2003; 2005; 2007; 2008). The same is true of Fukuyama; he uses the term "nation-building". However, acknowledging that the terms have different meanings, he claims that in the language of politics the term 'nation-building' is used most commonly in a way which in fact has the same meaning as state-building in academic literature (see Fukuyama, 2004).

However, there are a number of authors that distinguish between these two terms, such as Chesterman et al. 2004; Goldsmith 2007; and Ottaway

1999. For instance, Goldsmith (2007, p.26) argued that nation-building is "the establishment of a common national identity within a given geographical area, based on shared language and culture". This means that nation-building is more about inventing a cultural identity which is mainly related to the specific territory or state. However, most of what are called nation-building endeavours have failed to build a national identity and mostly have ended up as failures. Ottaway (1999, p.85) takes the argument a step further by arguing that the terms are not synonyms and are even in conflict with each other; state-building aims to develop democratic political systems, while nation-building attempts to engage ethnic and nationalist groups within a state framework in order to prevent them feeling excluded.

According to Ottaway, nation-building can be a challenging process for multi-ethnic or multi-religious states, such as Iraq, in a way that might undermine the state-building process. She has argued that "nation-building is not necessarily a quagmire" and is the real task is not actually building a nation, or imposing common identities on deeply divided societies, but to organise and find a common ground for divided people to live under the state's umbrella (Ottaway, 2002, p.2). Arguably, the concept of state-building has been used more broadly, whether under the term of nation-building or as state-building, than the concept of nation-building, especially in political science literature. The term nation-building generally means promoting a nationalist sense within a group of people, which is closer to the socialisation process rather than building a state capacity, whereas state-building remains as an important requirement for every nation-building process.

In American literature the term 'state-building' has been widely used under the name 'nation-building' (Dobbins, 2003; Fukuyama, 2006; Rand Corporation, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007; Carnegie Endowment, 2003). The concept refers to the use of military force by the U.S. as a part of a broader attempt to accomplish the political and economic reforms necessary for facilitating the transformation of a society, together with the region it is positioned in, in the post-conflict context (Dobbins et al, 2007, p. xvii). It can be said that the term 'nation-building' used in American literature is highly misleading (see Tripp, 2004, p. 547), due to its consanguinity with the terms state-building and reconstruction, sometimes used in the same context. Between 1920 and 1932 the British

carried out both nation-building and state-building in Iraq. This process, besides establishing a new political framework for the three remnants of Iraq inherited from the Ottoman Empire (Basra, Baghdad and Mosul), also supported the creation of a new Iraqi state by building constitutional and political institutions.

The employment of the term state-building in this thesis can be traced back to Iraq's de facto status as a post-war conflict state, going through the state-building process since 2003. Based on this argument, almost all of the political, economic, military and social activities which have occurred can be counted as parts of an ongoing process of the rebuilding of the Iraqi state. The CPA's endeavours, and the conflict between Iraq's parties after the invasion whether ethnic, religious or political, can all be seen as part of the state-building process in post-2003 Iraq. Meanwhile, the engagement of Iraq's neighbours in post-2003 Iraq has played a significant role in this process and cannot be decoupled from their calculations of directing the form of the new Iraqi state, the redistribution of power among Iraq's parties, and the rebuilding of Iraq's regional role.

It can be argued that not every military operation aims to conduct steps related to state-building. Pei and Kasper (2003, p. 1) have reported that there should be a number of criteria clearly formulated as constituting the core of the state-building process, such as the aim of changing the regime, the deployment of troops on the ground, and the assistance of both civilian and military resources in the formation of a new political administration of a given country. In this regard, the Rand Report (Dobbins et al, 2003, p. xiii) adopted a different definition of state-building, insofar as according to this report's definition, each nation-building process must indicate "the use of military force in the aftermath of a conflict to underpin rapid and fundamental societal transformation". It is worth highlighting that according to both reports and their presented criteria, the steps performed by the U.S. administration following the invasion of Iraq in 2003 can be considered as being a part of the state-building process.

This thesis understands the term state-building as a process whereby a state that has been subjected to an intervention by an external force is then being rebuilt by foreign powers, most often the U.S. and/or UN, through the process of re-establishing political, economic, and social structures. In this regard, it seems that Dobbins (2003, p. xiii) offers the most appropriate

definition of these types of 'state-building' processes, since he defined state-building as "the use of armed force in the aftermath of a conflict to underpin an enduring transition to democracy". This kind of state-building can be illustrated with the example of post-war reconstructions of states such as Germany, Japan, Somalia, Haiti, Kosovo, Bosnia, and Afghanistan, as they all passed through the stage of occupation followed by re-building processes. The attention of this thesis lies with the overview of the political process following 2003 as period of state-building process, which has been penetrated by regional actors, rather than with the events of democratisation or institution building. It is worth explaining that, what is meant by the adoption of the term "state building" in this thesis is to describe post-2003 Iraq as a new phase of the state-building process in Iraq, in which Iraq's neighbours engagement in Iraq have been mainly focused in that direction. Therefore the terms of state-building and ethno-sectarian conflict in post 2003-Iraq can be used interchangeably in this thesis. Thus, this study does not engage in analysing the concept of state-building in depth, as it is with the case of development studies. The main focus is to analyse regional dimensions of ethnic and sectarian conflict as a dominating factor encompassing the state-building process in post-2003 Iraq.

1.3. Theoretical framework

The majority of scholars studying the international relations of the Middle East have acknowledged the complexity of the theoretical framework that defines intraregional relations. Therefore, it may be considered hardly plausible to construct a model or formulate a theoretical approach encompassing the whole variety and the nature of international relations in the Middle East. This region, as Halliday (2005, p.14) has duly described, has been profoundly affected by internal, regional and external armed conflicts, interventions of western powers, the impact of oil, and ethno-religious tensions; hence, no single theory can offer a complete analysis of the Middle East in this regard. Notwithstanding this, there are several theoretical models of particular relevance which have attempted to define the international relations of the Middle East.

One of the key problems with formulating any theoretical conceptualisation of the relations between Iraq and its neighbours, and their development since 2003, revolves around the fact that a considerable portion of these relations were shaped outside the traditionally delimited realm of foreign policy and formal state institutions. Also, as Kamrava (2011, p.186) correctly argued, since the 1980s the Persian Gulf region has been highly securitized, to a degree that foreign and security policies are hardly separable. Therefore any analysis of Iraq's neighbours' involvement in state-building and thereafter ethnic and sectarian conflict must take security factors into consideration. Meanwhile, an active involvement of a significant number of non-state actors, including terrorist and extremist groups, such as Al-Qaida in Iraq, Ansar al-Islam, Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM), Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq (AAH, or League of the Righteous), Kata'ib Hizbuallah (KH, or the Hezbullah Brigades), the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (IS or ISIS, ad-Dawla al-Isl miyya fi al-'Ir q wa-sh-Sh m) has been a salient feature of these relations. It can, therefore, be argued that the factors mentioned have increased the level of complexity of the socio-political developments in Iraq since 2003, particularly regarding Iraq's foreign policy and international relations with other regional powers.

However, there are a number of scholars that have emphasised the usefulness of applying certain theories in the context of the Middle East, especially the theories of realism and constructivism. For example, Joseph Nye (as cited in Fawcett, 2009, p. 6) describes realism as a very potent tool for an investigation of the patterns of conflicts in the Middle East. However, most theories related to international relations have failed to distinguish between the nature of state relations in the Middle East and in Western states. The limited suitability of these theories is according to Fawcett (2009) primarily due to their inability to fully account for developments in the matrix of intraregional relations of the Middle Eastern countries.

It is worth highlighting at this point that most of the literature discussing ethno-sectarian conflicts in post-2003 Iraq has overlooked the examination of these conflicts from the perspectives of international security theories. In this regard, most studies have applied theories of nationalism, identity, communal violence, and social identity. Nevertheless, whilst these theories may be able to examine the historical and social dynamics of ethno-sectarian tensions in Iraq,

they fail however to provide comprehensive conclusions when used to analyse the regional engagement of Iraq's neighbours in post-2003 Iraq. This is mainly due to the high level of complexity which characterises the regional dimension of the ethno-sectarian strife in the new Iraq, which, in fact, often exceeds the traditional framework of sectarian and ethnic dynamics.

In my view, to frame the engagement of Iraq's neighbours in the process of state-building in post-2003 Iraq, we should first understand the political position of the Persian Gulf as a sub-regional security complex, in addition to understanding the interplay between internal, regional and global factors that have shaped regional security among Iraq's neighbours after the U.S. invasion of Iraq. In this regard RSCT can offer a considerable ability to explain the intensity of Iraq's regional neighbours' (Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iran and Syria) engagement in the process of state-building in post-2003 Iraq.

1.3.1   The Persian Gulf as a sub-regional security complex

"Most states fear their neighbour more than distant powers; consequently, security interdependence across international system as a whole is far from uniform." (Buzan, 2008, p.11).

The idea of the Regional Security Complex theory was initially developed by Buzan, but has been further elaborated by Wæver, and now is a part of the "Copenhagen School's collective theoretical approach to security". This theory mainly is an attempt to bridge neo-realism and constructivism. The RSCT uses the theory of international security as its platform, in which it has been influenced by neo-classical realism and globalism. Thus, the RSCT is based on three international security structures in the post-Cold War world: super power, great power and regional power. Buzan divides the international security complex into a group of complex, sub-complex and mini-complex regions.

Regarding the Middle East, the theory has divided regional security into three sub-complex regions, the Gulf, Levant and Maghreb regions. In addition to "insulator" countries, such as Turkey, which can be a part of a number of regions, Buzan and Wæver (2033, p. 52) mention that Iraq belongs to both the group Gulf sub-complex and the larger Middle East, or Iraq could be a member

of both the Gulf and the Levant if these two sub-complex regions are seen as separate RSCs. According to Buzan the concept of security level is not applicable in regard to larger distances. Another point that is worth considering in this thesis is that this theory devotes particular importance to the social aspects of security which can be crucial regarding the regional dimension of ethnic and sectarian conflict in post-2003 Iraq (Buzan and Wæver, 2003, p. 44, 484, 485).

Prior to the Cold War, regions as a key subject of international and regional security studies had not been given much attention, especially in regional and international studies. It was only after the Cold War and particularly in the aftermath of 9/11 that the number of studies that consider the regional dimensions as a major factor influencing security increased. However, the focus and style of these studies have varied from one to another. On the other hand, regional studies have helped to shift the primary focus of security studies from the state and international organisations to regions and non-state actors, including ethnic groups (Wolff, 2011, p.96).

It seems almost implausible to attempt to comprehend the complexity of the process of rebuilding the Iraqi state after 2003 without understanding the patterns of regional interference and foreign policies of countries that are linked with sectarian and ethnic conflicts in Iraq. Simultaneously, the process of state-building has caused new political repercussions in the region. An example of such repercussions is the redistribution of power in the Persian Gulf, which entails the deconstruction of the old geopolitical equilibrium and the forging of a new power structure in the region; this process might give a fresh impetus to the process of destabilisation of the regional security complex. The notion of the regional implications of the Iraqi political turmoil is particularly relevant given the bloody history of ethno-religions conflicts in the sub-complex region of the Persian Gulf. Thus, it is possible to claim that the process of rebuilding the Iraqi state after 2003 has represented not only an internal transformation of the Iraqi socio-political structures, but, most importantly, it has symbolised a watershed in the development of the regional security system. It is worth highlighting at this point that Iraq was one of the major regional powers beside Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia and Turkey in the regional milieu before the invasion of Kuwait. In order to investigate how an internal conflict becomes an issue of regional security

dynamics, it is important to adopt materials from the Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT). This is because the U.S. invasion of Iraq has affected the regional security dynamics by creating real security issues in the Persian Gulf. Thus, the invasion has been a significant security concern for Iran, Syria, Turkey and Saudi Arabia.

Buzan (2003, p.190) defined the "security complex as a group of states whose primary security concerns link together sufficiently closely that their national securities cannot realistically be considered apart from one another", whilst the relation between these units is represented by "durable patterns of amity and enmity". In this case the RSCT can explain the new structure of regional security that has emerged in the region after the U.S.-led invasion in 2003, through addressing standard forms of a RSC among Iraq and its neighbours including patterns of rivalry and alliance, and balance of power (see Buzan and Wæver p.47).

In the context of Iraq's neighbours' involvement with state-formation (ethno-sectarian conflict) in post-2003 Iraq, the RSCT might play an important role in analysing a type of relationship between regional actors within one region on one side, and two sub complex regions on the other. According to Buzan (2003, p.487), the Persian Gulf or "Gulf sub complex region", comprises Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia and other GCC countries. In this regard, Turkey has a special status, and it is described by Buzan as an "insulator" state. The author further highlights the existence of political, social and economic relationships between the "Levant sub complex region" (Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Israel) and the Gulf sub complex region. Due to the complexity of the issues pertaining to regional security, each unit within the sub complex region is intertwined with the others, but also in certain cases these units have strong links across the sub complex region, as is the case for the relationship between Syria and Iraq. Considering the position of Turkey and Syria in the RSCT, it is important to explain the standing of these states in Buzan's theory and the reasons for including both countries in the theoretical framework of this study[1].

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[1] The RSCT may have some limitations: for example, Turkey is not a member of the Gulf sub-complex region, but rather it is marked as an "insulator country" which according to Buzan and Waever can play a passive role (Buzan and Waever, 2003, p.484-485). However, since 2002 Turkey has become very active in the Middle East and the RSCs that surround it. Thus, it will be
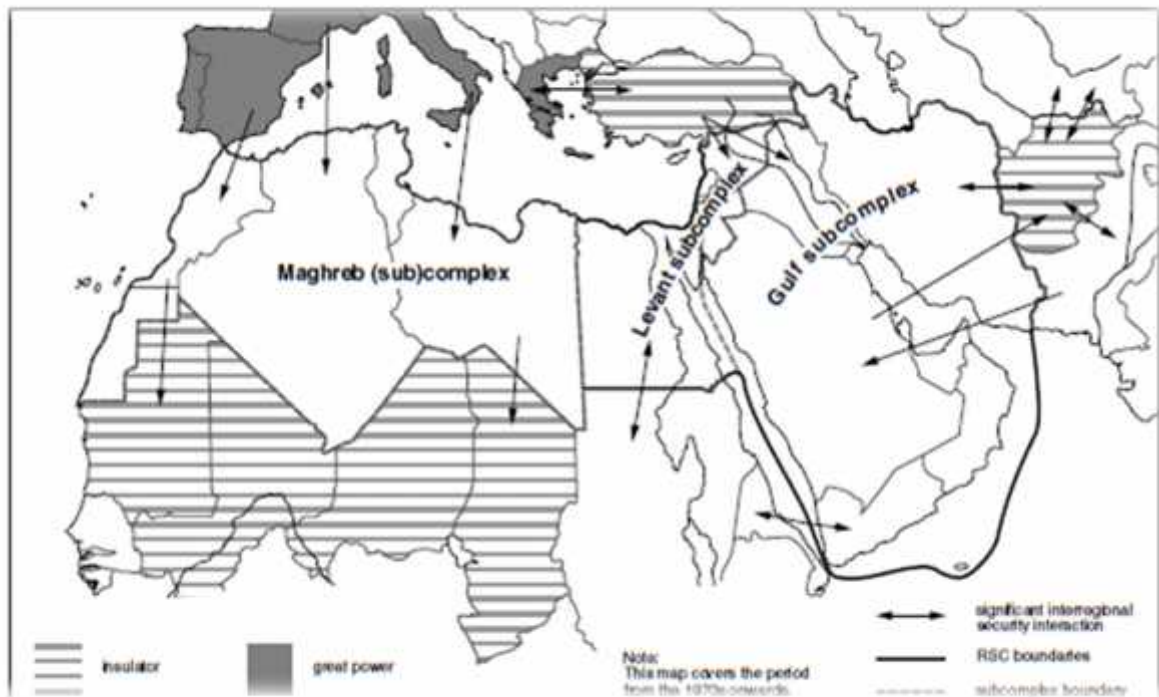
Map (1**) The Middle Eastern Regeional Security Complex**

(Buzan and waever, 2003, p. 189)

hard to remove Turkey from both the Levant and Persian Gulf sub-complex regions. This is especially relevant after Turkey's foreign policy shift towards the Middle East, particularly towards Arab Gulf countries, adhering to the notion of a zero-problem policy. The legacy of the Ottoman Empire in the Persian region should also not be disregarded. The RSCT puts Syria in the group of the Eastern Mediterranean region. However, there are a number of incentives for Syria to play an active role in the ethno-sectarian turf war in Iraq: firstly, there was a strong ideological link between the Syrian and the Iraqi Ba'ath regimes before 2003; secondly, the alignment of Iran and Syria; thirdly, the collapse of the Ba'ath's regime in Iraq after 2003, which forced Syria to seek a new position in Shi'a-dominated Iraq; fourthly, Syria's antagonism towards the U.S., another factor governing Syria's policies in the Persian region, particularly given its long border with Iraq. Therefore, in this research, four of Iraq's neighbours, namely Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey, are used in an analysis of the regional dimension of Iraq's political process focusing on the contribution of the ethnic and sectarian divide and its impact on the failure of the U.S.-led process of rebuilding the Iraqi state after 2003. Another limitation which might also confront this study is the position of the U.S. which is not a member of any RSC in the region according to the RSCT. However, as Gause (2010, pp. 5, 6) pointed out, it would be "foolish" to study the regional security in the Persian Gulf without including the U.S. as a core member. Therefore, this study has paid a significant attention to the role played by the U.S. whether prior to its withdrawal from Iraq, or after its withdrawal, as an active member despite its changing involvement over time.

The 'Gulf sub-complex region' began to be more pronounced on the geopolitical map of the world after Britain's withdrawal from the region in 1971. The region is formed by the complex of a triangular enmity between Iran, Iraq and Arab Gulf states led by Saudi Arabia (Buzan and Waever, 2003). Despite the considerable socio-political transformation of the region, its political map preserved the same form until the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. This invasion has overturned the political view in the region towards the ethnic and sectarian cleavages as political realities, which has had a formidable impact on the regional security policies. To an extent, this impact reconfigured the regional powers' political calculus in terms of their considering the ethno-sectarian divide in the region as a major factor of the regional security. RSC can provide this research with an explanation of the factors that are shaping security threats for Iraq's neighbours on the one hand, and their involvement in the state-building process and ethno-sectarian conflict after the breakdown of Iraq's Ba'ath regime on the other hand.

One of the salient elements of the Gulf sub-complex region is therefore the element of security, which is characterised by various transnational identities, depending to a large degree on the regional ethnic and religious divisions, for instance Arabs versus Jews versus Iranians, or the historically-rooted tension between Arab and Turks which dates back to the era of World War 1, and last but not least the Kurdish issue which affects several countries in the region (see Gause, 2011, p.7). Furthermore, there is a religious rivalry between Shi'as and Sunnis, Muslims and Jews, and in some countries, namely Egypt and Lebanon, an animosity between Muslims and Christians. In this regard, different conflicts relate to different countries within the region (Buzan and Waever, 2003). The ethno-sectarian map after 2003 has become even more complex in terms of the number of actors and the level of animosity between them. Thus, after the withdrawal of U.S. forces, several regional powers, namely Turkey, Iran, and Saudi Arabia, have exerted influence over Iraq's domestic affairs, which was seen by some as a demonstration of neo-Ottoman and neo-Persian regional aspirations.

The question that remains open is, why did the state-building process become an issue for Iraq's neighbours? The answer to this question lies in the interconnected security of Iraq's regional neighbours with one another on the

one hand and with Iraq on the other. For example, the issue of Kurdish identity has been part of the security issue between Iraq, Syria, Turkey, and Iran, as has been seen in the case of the movement of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) between Syria and Turkey from the 1980s, and even during the Syrian crisis in the case of the Democratic Union Party (PYD) (see Cagaptay, 2011).

The RSC theory has drawn attention to four basic levels of analysis and how these levels are interrelated. First, the patterns of security are deeply connected internally through the extent by which one state is influenced by other states or to which the state is perceived as weak or strong in its domestic order, which means that this kind of security theorisation fears the particular weakness of a state. The domestic level shows the vulnerabilities of Iraq's neighbours, and their domestic motivations to interfere in Iraq, because "the specific vulnerability of a state defines the kind of security fears it has" (Buzan and Weaver, p. 52). This level applies to all of Iraq's neighbours addressed by this study which have internal security dynamics with Iraq. Second are state-to-state relations or relations between two or more states, for instance the pattern of persistent amity and enmity between Iraq and its neighbours and among Iraq's neighbours at the same time Third, is the regional level, how the region is connected with neighbouring regions; in the case of Iraq, which belongs to the Gulf sub-complex region and Syria which belongs Levant sub-complex region. The same is true of Iraq and Turkey or Turkey and Syria. Finally, the fourth level acknowledges that the global powers role in the region, which is represented by the interaction between the global and regional security structures. This can be clearly noticed in the U.S.'s notable role in the region, or to a lesser extent the roles of Russia and the European Union. Yet ultimately, regional factors do not have to be always dominant, but they will always be operative (Buzan and Weaver, p. 52).

The security complex does not only contain states but also nations or non-state actors (e.g., Kurds, Palestinians) (Buzan, et.al, p.17). These four levels together compose the security profile of a particular state (Buzan and Waever, 2003). This systematic matrix of RSCT can provide this study with a better understanding of the degree to which the new Iraqi state has been affected by regional powers. Simultaneously, the theory considers and addresses the position of global powers and superpowers in the international order; thus for

instance, it helps to explain the role of the U.S. in the Persian Gulf on one side, and other regional actors' response to the U.S. presence in the region on the other side. Part of both Iranian and Syrian engagement in post-war Iraq can be assessed in this context.

The fundamental structure in a security complex is constituted by the pattern of cooperation and conflict which is formed by a diverse set of issues, which are applicable in the case of regional involvement in Iraq after 2003, in four levels, outlined below.

1.3.1.1. Long-standing Historical Links

The structures of Iraq's neighbours' security complexes are characterised by a strong historical relationship between the region's subjects, whether in terms of common Arab national identity (Iraq, Syria, and Saudi Arabia), shared Islamic religious heritage between all countries, or the historical legacy of the Ottoman Empire in the region. All these common features constitute a pattern of amity. However, there are patterns of an opposite nature that stem from traditional forms of rivalry and disputes, such as ethno-sectarian conflicts between Shi'as and Sunnis, represented on a state level by the enmity between Iran and Saudi Arabia (see Gause, 2011, p.7). For example, the majority of Shi'as in Iraq view Saudi Arabia as the main culprit of the failure of the political process in Iraq after 2003. They also believe that the majority of the foreign fighters in Iraq have come from Saudi Arabia and have been indoctrinated by Wahhabism. For example, Iraqi officials have accused Saudi Arabia many times of supporting Sunni and jihadi insurgent groups in Iraq. Conversely, the Saudi government perceives Iranian power as a threat for the regional power equilibrium (see Kane, 2011), particularly if Iran reaches a position of hegemony in Iraq's domestic affairs. In addition, the vast majority of Saudis consider Americans to be an occupier in the Arab world, and thus regard resistance as a legitimate means of fighting against what is perceived as an effort of the Shi'as to dominate the political sphere in Iraq (see Gause, 2007). The Saudis' and other GCC countries' private donations for jihadist groups in post-2003 Iraq is a good example in this regard.

1.3.1.2 Border and Territorial Disputes

The region has experienced a large number of unresolved border disputes that have made some commentators dub the region 'a ticking bomb' that is prone to explode at any moment. For example, the conflicts include Bahrain-Qatar (Hawar Islands), Qatar- Abu Dhabi (Khwar Al 'Udayb), Iran-UAE (Abu Musa and the Tunbs Islands), Saudi-Kuwait (Natural Zone), UAE-Oman, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia (Abu Sa'fah Offshore Oil Field), Iran-Qatar (North field Gas), the Iraq-Kuwait border, Saudi Arabia-Iran (Al 'Arabiyah and Farsi Island) (Peterson, 2011, pp. 22-46). Furthermore, most neighbours of Saudi Arabia have not yet reached an agreement that would present the line of demarcation in a way that no objection is raised. Syria, Turkey and Iran have all been involved in border disputes with Iraq, in the case of the latter country during the Iran-Iraq war of 1980-88; Iran has also been involved in a border dispute with the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia and Qatar had a border dispute in 1992, which resulted in a war. On the one hand this has led to the complex type of relations among these countries in a form of a durable pattern of enmity and amity, enmity against each other internally, and unity against a stranger when it poses a threat from outside. That division can be noticed in the Arab policy toward Israel and Iran, or the Arab view towards the Syrian crisis after 2011. On the other hand, the volatile position of the countries bordering Iraq has a significant impact on the state-building process in post-2003 Iraq, especially in the form of the flow of insurgent groups and foreign fighters. This can be clearly seen between the Syria-Iraq borders from the onset of the Iraq invasion in 2003 to the advert of Islamic State. This can be ascribed to the close security links of Iraq's neighbours (Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Syria) with Iraq, whether in term of ethnic and sectarian dynamics or in the form of regional security order.

1.3.1.3 Interests in Ethnically Related Populations

The whole region represents a diverse ethno-sectarian body, with this diversity being further underlined by the presence of Kurds in Iraq, Iran, Syria

and Turkey as a security matter used as a political card in their regional conflicts. This has been the case during the eight year Iran-Iraq War, as well as between Turkey and Syria in case of the PKK, and even between Turkey and Iraq after 2003, with Turkey's engagement with the KRG, especially in the case of selling the KRG oil through Turkey without Baghdad's permission (see Lundgren, 2007, pp. 78-88). In the case of Iraq, after 2003, Iraqi Kurds have managed to form a strong regional government that often works as a quasi-state. Such a state is naturally perceived as a source of serious threat for other regional powers that fear that the example of Iraqi Kurdistan will become an inspiration in the quest of self-determination for their own Kurdish ethnic minorities. The same is true of the de facto Kurdish autonomous region in Northern Syria (Rojava) after the Syrian crisis in 2011. Turkey's special relations with PDK and Iran's relations with the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) can be assessed in this context[2]. The Kurdish factor has been regionally a matter of state-building process following the U.S. invasion of 2003. Similarly, the growth of political influence and power of various Shi'a groups with the presence of Arab ethnic groups in Iran constitutes a considerable security issue for the 'affected' countries in the region. Such a complex ethno-sectarian matrix has spurred the formation of a web of mutual amity and enmity among the regional actors, whereby the former is due to a strong link between an ethnic state and its diasporic communities in the region, whilst the latter is based on the attitude of a state towards its ethnic or religious minorities, particularly if these minorities are majorities in this state's regional rival.

1.3.1.4   Ideological alignments and polarisation among the units

One of the peculiarities of the Gulf sub-complex region is the ideological alignments between the countries within the region in the form of amity and enmity. The map of regional alignments includes different forms of ideological alliances, which might be illustrated by the example of the semi-alliance of the whole region against Israel based on ethno-religious concerns, or the example of the Gulf States' alignment against Iran during the Iran-Iraq War. Another form of alignment may take the form of a regional security pact, such as the GCC

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[2] I will analyse this point in detail in chapters four and seven.

alliance against Iraq during the second Gulf War, or during the same time, the anti-American axis comprising Syria and Iran (see Buzan and Weaver, 2003, p. 192). Furthermore, there are other forms of polarisations that have an ethno-sectarian character, such as the Iran, Iraq and Syria alignment after 2011 which connects and promulgates sectarian objectives of political Shi'itism. In addition, there has been an implicit alignment between Turkey, Iran and Syria aimed at mitigating Kurdish national aspirations.

The theoretical points presented above are of significant relevance in the case of the regional dimension of the process of rebuilding the Iraqi state after 2003. These points constitute a theoretical framework that will assist the understanding of the regional dimension of the process of state-building in Iraq in several aspects: 1) the political configuration of the region after 2003; 2) the types of amity and enmity between the units in the region; 3) the regional influence of Saudi Arabia and Turkey in Iraq on the one hand and Iran and Syria on the other hand; and 4) the linkage between the ethno-sectarian composition and the regional security of the Persian Gulf.

So, it can be assumed that the RSCT may help to draw a future image of the ethno-sectarian strife in the Persian Gulf. This strife will be to a certain extent based on the fact that Iraq remains a place for proxies of the regional powers such as Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey to fight for political dominance in the new Iraqi state. Furthermore, the strong presence of Shi'as in the Gulf countries, particularly in Bahrain with 70% of the population, Kuwait with 25%, Saudi Arabia 11%, and Qatar 10%, may add another element to the already complex geopolitical profile of the region (see Nasr, 2006; Pelham, 2008, p 225-226). This regional rivalry will encourage other regional actors and the U.S. to maintain a strong presence in the region. It is worth underlining the fact that all the aforementioned have been part of the process of state-building in Iraq after 2003.

1.4. Understanding the regional dimension of ethno-sectarian conflict and the state-building process in post-2003 Iraq

Given the focus of this chapter, it is worth mentioning the plethora of written material either explicitly or implicitly discussing the process of state-building in Iraq since the U.S. invasion in April 2003. In particular, the pertinent literature has focused on the nature of Iraqi society and its inter-communal enmity. Regardless of the substantial portion of literature discussing issues surrounding the state-building process in Iraq under the U.S. invasion, it is not possible to review all of these studies here. Among studies that have dealt with the subject of state-building in Iraq comprehensively, one can mention the works of Fukyama, 2004; Williams, 2005; Hippler, 2005; Zartman, 2005; Doyle and Sambanis, 2006; Lederach, 2006; Patrick and Brown, 2007; Coyne, 2008; Ghani and Lockhart, 2008; Kaplan, 2008; Ismael, and Ismael, 2010. However, to analyse these studies would be beyond the scope of this thesis. Therefore, the present study will attempt to review the literature that has directly addressed the regional dynamics of the ethno-sectarian conflicts in post-2003 Iraq and the links with both state-building and security dimensions. This review is guided by three major questions: firstly, how and why have the regional powers (Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia and Turkey) been engaged in the process of state-building in Iraq after the regime change in 2003; secondly, how have the regional dimensions of ethno-sectarian conflicts become an enduring factor of the process of state-building in post-2003 Iraq; and thirdly, in what way has each of Iraq's neighbours been involved in this process? These three questions then provide a framework for understanding the regional ethno-sectarian involvement after regime change in 2003.

Due to the nature of the present study, the literature that addresses state-building and ethnic and sectarianism has been divided into two parts.

1.4.1 State-building as a security issue

Understanding the relationship between the state-building process and ethno-sectarian conflict in post-2003 Iraq may require a brief analysis of the

state-building process in Europe, which in fact witnessed a significant connection between state-building and violence (Rear, 2008, p.37). It can be said that a number of studies and theories on the subject of early Western European state-building are built upon Charles Tilly's theory of the relationship between state-building and war, summarised as: "War made the state and the state made war" (Tilly, 1975, p. 42). For instance, Rear (2008, p.24) argues that in the post-colonial states, ethnic violence has been part of the empirical state-building process, as in the initial stages of state formation in Western Europe. Porter (1994, p. 12) even goes a step further and states that civil wars played a significant role in shaping states in medieval Europe. According to Porter's view, these civil wars were part of state-building rather than state collapse, because they led to the fragmentation of the feudal societies in Europe and actually provided a chance to the state to centralise its political power. Rear (2008, p. 35) reaches the conclusion that, if ethnic violence and civil wars became part of the state-building process in Europe, "then does external intervention in the form of peacekeeping or peace enforcement in contemporary ethnic civil wars interfere with the creation of viable states?" (Rear, 2008, p. 35).

However, it is important to know that the process of state-building in Western Europe has been a product of indigenous factors, while in Iraq and perhaps most of the Middle East cases, the state has come to exist through external powers, such as colonial interventions. Regarding Iraq, the cross-border ethnic and religious identities have also been part of the state-building process. However, the ethnic and sectarian conflict in Iraq has not fragmented the primordial identities in favour of a centralising political power under the control of the state, as has been the case in Europe, especially after the end of the Cold War.

In order to make our argument relevant to the regional dimensions of ethnic and sectarian conflict in the Persian Gulf after the U.S. invasion of Iraq, it is important to engage with that literature which has directly addressed the factors that are shaping security either in the Arab state system or in the Middle East state.

In his book *The Third World Security Predicament: State Making, Regional Conflict, and the International System*, Mohammed Ayoob (1995) build his argument on a relationship between insecurity and state-building in the 'Third

World' state to uncover the sources of insecurity in the Third World state. According to Ayoob (1995, pp.73-75) the source of insecurity in the Middle Eastern states is related to the fragility and incompletion of the 'state making' process. Although most of these security issues have an interstate dimension which making them "genuinely regional", the insecurity has originated from internal dimensions, such as state-building, state-breaking, regime legitimacy and the involvement of various factions in conflicts (Ayoob, p. 49). Ayoob's argument, like that of many other western scholars, has sought the insecurity in the Middle East state in the process of state-making, which to a great extent is assumed to be similar to the early stages of the state building process in Western Europe in the last decades of the 20th century.

Following Ayoob's argument, Iraq's neighbours' engagement in ethno-sectarian conflict in post-2003 Iraq has been highly driven their states' fragility which related to their internal security dynamics with Iraq. However, Ayoob's argument overlooks regional factors, especially the regional rivalries among actors such as Iran and Saudi Arabia, which sometimes may have been less relevant than the domestic factors; however, Ayoob's argument can be helpful to understand how ethnic and religious conflict in Iraq become a source of regional insecurity for Iraq's neighbours. However, this insecurity situation is not necessarily always driven by domestic factors. For instance, as Lu and Thies, (2012, p. 241-242) argued, international wars and regional issues, such as Pan-Arabism and Arab-Israeli conflict, have highly shaped the security dynamics of the Middle East.

Most of the literature dealing with state-building/making, especially post-September 11, links state-building with state fragility or war-torn states. However, as Paris and Sisk (2009, p.11) argue, the trajectories of state-building in both Iraq and Afghanistan are deeply different from most other operations. The majority of other state-building processes have been carried out after civil wars, not after external invasion as has been the case in both Afghanistan and Iraq. However, this difference between cases is often unrecognized. In the case of post-2003 Iraq, the exogenous process of state-building in itself reached civil war in the form of sectarian conflict, especially in 2006-2007.

According to Paris and Sisk (2009, p.11), regional neighbourhoods are often responsible for state fragility and create challenges for post-war states to

build new institutions and end civil wars. However, in contrast to a number of other scholars who blame weak and failed states for insecurity, Paris and Sisk (2009, p.290) point out that "in many respects the relevant unit of analysis is a failed region rather than failed state". Paris and Sisk's work supports Buzan and Waever's work *Regions and Powers* which reveals that the structure of the region can shape the type of security interdependency among units. However, despite the importance of the regional level for security analysis in the international system, Buzan (1991, p. 106) asserts that both global and domestic factors are at play in the framework of RSCT (see Buzan and Waever, 2003, p. 51). The anarchical character of the global system and large number of fragile states, are threats to international security, especially when there is a growing risk of intra-sate and inter-state conflicts.

In a study of *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, Buzan et al (1998, p.21) try to reconceptualise the study of security. The authors assert that what makes something a security subject are political actors, not analysts. According to Buzan et al (1998, p.22) there are five sectors for *existential threats:* military, political, economic, environmental, and social*.* What are most relevant to the current study are the political and societal sectors, since most of the ethnic and religious issues that arise in post-2003 Iraq can be located in these sectors:

In the political sector, existential threats are traditionally defined in term of the constitutional principle, sovereignty but sometimes also ideology of the state [and] in the societal sector the referent object is large-scale collective identities that can function independent of the state, such as nations and religions (Buzan et al, pp. 22-23).

What can be concluded from above discussion is that both ethnic and sectarian issues can be politicized and securitised as a response to internal and external threats. This has been the case regarding Iraq's neighbours' reaction to the post-2003 invasion of Iraq.

In this context, it is important to incorporate the co-author's work (Dobbins, et al, 2003): *The United States and State-Building in Iraq*. This research was conducted prior to the U.S. invasion of Iraq and published a few months after the invasion. This volume was designed primarily to be a set of guidelines for America after the invasion of Iraq in 2003. On the back cover of this book there is a warm endorsement from Paul Bremer, the U.S. Governor General of Iraq from May 2003 until June 2004. He described the book as "a marvellous

manual for post conflict stabilization and reconstruction. I have kept a copy handy for ready consultation since my arrival in Baghdad" (Dobbins, et al, 2003, p. cover).

The book analysed the U.S. and international activities in the political, military, and economic sectors in post-conflict countries since World War II (Dobbins, et al, 2003). Seven case studies have been addressed, Germany, Japan, Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan, with the lessons learned then applied to the case of Iraq. The book has paid a great attention to the security situation, such as chaos and expressive violence, force and regime protection and law and disorder (Dobbins, et al, 2003, p.172). Furthermore, the regional interventions from Iraq's neighbours Turkey, Iran and Syria have been shown to be of concern for the U.S. in post-2003 Iraq, due to the fragility of the Iraqi state after the fall of Ba'ath regime (Dobbins, et al, 2003, p.175). However, most of the security challenges addressed by the authors are rooted in local violence against state institutions, especially from post-invasion disorder and supporters of the former regime. It is true that the issue of ''foreign intervention'' (especially from Turkey, Iran and Syria) was expected, but was considered far from any concerns to make a regional security dilemma among Iraq's neighbours or in the form of RSC framework shaped by ethnic and sectarian conflict. The research project failed to address the change of security dynamics in the sub-complex Persian Gulf, especially between Iran and Saudi Arabia, or how western powers can intervene in order to change regional security dynamics. For instance, after the end of the war in the former Yugoslavia, the EU played an important role in postconflict peace-building and changing the relations among the newly established states, through providing assistance, such as help with institutionalization and political reform which later changed the patterns of cooperation and competition among these states (Kova evi , 2011, p. 59). As Tripp (2004, p.15) correctly argued, "much that has happened since the publication of this book goes against many of its principal recommendations".

1.4.2 Understanding ethno-sectarian conflict in post-2003 Iraq

The notion that the factor of sectarian conflicts has been pivotal in hindering the state-building process in Iraq since the creation of the modern Iraqi state in 1921, especially after the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, is supported by various studies, such as Khadduri, 1969; Kedourie, 1987; al-Urzi, 1991; al-Samarai, 1993; Lukitz, 1995; Tripp, 2002; Anderson and Stansfield, 2005. On the other hand, others such as Sluglett, and Farouk-Sluglett, 1978; Visser, 2007, 2008 underestimate the impact of sectarian factors in favour of other factors, namely geopolitics, colonial legacy, the role of ruling elites and the nature of Iraq's political system.

In the discussion concerning the role of sectarian factors on the Iraqi national identity and state-building, Osman (2012, p.2), after examining the relationship between sectarianism, and the "making of state" and "nation" in Iraq, concludes that:

 [The] sectarianism has been an enduring feature of the state-making trajectory in Iraq due to the failure to resolve the inherent tensions between ubiquitous primordial non-state, including and above all sectarian, ethnic and/or tribal identities, on the one hand, and concepts of unified nationhood and a uniform citizenry inherent in building a nation-state, on the other.

Arguably, Osman's study has well understood the relation between the state-building process and sectarianism since the creation of the Iraqi state, whilst, like many others, attributing the failure of the state-building process in Iraq to the influence of pre-state identities, such as sectarianism, ethnicism and tribalism. Regarding such a claim, one can ask a vital question: why have these dynamics become abiding hindrances of the state-building process in Iraq, whilst their presence in a number of other countries in the Middle East did not have the same impact? No one can deny the role of the aforementioned factors, while after the U.S. invasion of Iraq these local identities have exceeded their internal dimensions and become part of the regional conflict among actors in the region. The U.S. invasion of Iraq has altered both the regional balance of power and regional security dynamics. On the other hand, the process of state-building in post-2003 Iraq has led to the rise of two of Iraq's main local identities, Kurd and Shi'a, which have become source of concern among regional actors, especially those neighbours that have the same communities at home.

Two important events highlighted the role of regional actors in state-making in Iraq, but have been overlooked by almost all studies that have examined the role of ethno-sectarian conflict and state-building in Iraq. One was the U.S. invasion of Iraq in April 2003 and their withdrawal from Iraq in late 2011, which spurred some regional actors to fill the political vacuum that the U.S. left in Iraq and that directly affected the regional security order among Iraq's neighbours. The second has been the Arab uprisings, which redrew the map of the nation-state in the Arab world, in particular in the context of the Syrian crisis. Thus, it can be argued that there are other factors outside the realm of domestic sectarian conflicts that might have contributed to the state-building process in Iraq. Osman's study has totally ignored the role of the regional dimensions of the ethno-sectarian conflict, as well as Iraq's neighbours' involvement in the state-building operations following the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq. These regional dimensions of the state-building process have been mainly a product of the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, whilst these dimensions in post-2003 Iraq have been interrelated with the ethno-denominational conflict among Iraq's neighbours.

Al-Qarawee (2012) has taken a step forward in his study, *Imagining the nation: nationalism, sectarianism and socio-political conflict in Iraq* by arguing that what shapes collective identities and their political representation is socio-political conflict and not vice versa (Al-Qarawee, 2012, p. 2). He argues that the sectarian identities of Shi'a and Sunni were not the only identities by which the Iraqi people defined themselves. Al-Qarawee's work is a good step towards understanding the roots of the Shi'a-Sunni conflict beyond the traditional dynamics of sectarianism in post-2003 Iraq. However, this study also fails to elucidate how ethnicity and sectarianism can shape the internal and external dynamics of security policies between Iraq and its neighbours, in order to answer a question of the current thesis, how and why Iraq's neighbours became involved in the state-building process and thereafter ethnic and sectarian conflict in post-2003 Iraq.

Having reviewed both Osman's and Al-Qarawee's positions, it is apparent that both authors have to a large degree neglected the possibility of the regional powers (Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia and Turkey) being a source of ethno-sectarian

tensions, security concerns and hence part of the state-building process in post-2003 Iraq.

However, in a slightly different way from Osman and Al-Qarawee's rationalisation of the failing state-building process, Fanar Haddad (2011) has tried to understand the sectarian relations in post-2003 Iraq through examination of the popular culture, in particular myth-symbols, folk poetry and the sectarian argument within Iraqi society. The main aim of Haddad's research has been to understand "the role that sectarian identity plays in conceptions of self, other and state" (Haddad, 2011, p. 3). In this regard, the author concludes that "sectarian identity must be viewed as a form of group identity whose dynamics are no different from those of ethnicity or race" (Haddad, 2011, p. 3). Haddad's notion of sectarian identity may be helpful in understanding the domestic dynamics of the religious strife within Iraqi society, together with the level of sectarian antipathy or inter-communal enmity in Iraq. Notwithstanding, the applicability of Haddad's approach may be limited, insofar as the interplay between the sectarian identity and the state, or ruling elites cannot be explained merely as just a reflection of the popular culture in the form of poetry and music (Haddad, 2011, p.5). Meanwhile, this approach, by relying predominantly on the sectarian discussion 'from below' from the street level, may not be able to properly account for the regional dimension of the ethno-religious conflicts in Iraq. The reason for this is twofold. First, the regional engagement in internal Iraqi affairs is less relevant with the level of popular culture than its relations with the elite and state. Second, the 'symbolism of sects' may form or become the symbolism of state or even nation, yet its effect on the formulation of political strategies of Iraq's neighbours is a rather questionable assumption.

Unlike Haddad, Dodge (2012) has dealt with the issues surrounding the ethno-sectarian conflict in post-2003 Iraq more generally. This is evident from Dodge's (2012, p. 15) identification of three main sources of the pertinent conflict, insofar as the socio-cultural factors promulgated by Haddad are accompanied by the factor of the inner-political fragility of the Iraqi state and its institutions and by the factor of the new Iraqi constitution, which was formulated by embracing the ethno-sectarian solutions through what Dodge called the "exclusive elite bargaining". Furthermore, Dodge (2012, p. 15) asserts that the abovementioned factors are the major reason dragging the post-Saddam Iraq

into an ethno-religious civil war. However, at the same time, Dodge's work overlooks the regional dynamics that have substantially nourished the inter-communal enmity in Iraq after 2003. Dodge's (2012) central focus in his study is to examine the future of the Iraqi state regarding the possibility of avoiding a civil war, the on-going form of democracy and the political system under the new Iraqi ruling elites. Concerning the regional dimensions of the process of rebuilding the Iraqi state, Dodge (2012, p. 15) highlights that Iraq has always been a source of instability for both its region as well as international relations in the Middle East. It can be argued that the main concern of a large portion of relevant literature, including the Dodge's work, is whether Iraq poses a threat to its neighbours, whilst simultaneously neglecting or omitting from their analyses the challenges that the neighbouring countries (Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia and Turkey) have come to constitute for the process of state-building in post-2003 Iraq.

It can be argued that a salient feature of the studies discussing regional factors and their impact on post-2003 Iraq is an increased attention that they pay to the regional spill-over emanating from political developments in Iraq. This interplay, according to these studies, has two aspects: first, the shifting of the balance of power in the region in favour of non-Arab states, such as Iran, Turkey and Israel; and second, the threats that the new Iraqi state might pose for its neighbours. For example, Wehery et al (2010) has drawn attention to three main points with regard to 'the Iraqi effect' on the Middle East after the U.S-led invasion in 2003. First, the invasion has facilitated the tilting of the power balance in favour of non-Arab states, especially Iran. Second, the invasion has exacerbated the sectarian strife between Shi'a and Sunni, and also contributed to the largest refugee crises in the region since the Arab-Israeli war in 1948 (Wehrey et al., 2010, pp.xiv-11). Third, the impact of the socio-political developments on the regional issues, particularly surrounding activities of the global terrorist networks, cannot be overlooked. It can be noted that Wehrey, et al.'s (2010, p.152) focus on the regional dimensions of the state-building process is in compliance with the overall approach of a number of other think tank reports aiming to provide the U.S. government with a blueprint to create a new strategic framework for the region that would encompass Iraq's neighbours. In addition, this framework would consider possible measures to

mitigate a negative impact of various regional developments related to the state-building process in Iraq.

The U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 has created a new environment conducive to the formation of alliances governed by the regional ethno-sectarian dynamic. For example, there is a theoretical potential for cooperation among Shi'as living in Iran, Iraq, Bahrain, Lebanon and Syria on one side, and among Sunni communities in Iraq, Syria, Jordan and the Gulf countries on the other. The same might be true of the socio-political relations among Kurds in Iraq, Syria, Iran and Turkey. In this regard, Faleh A. Jabar's (2003) work (*The Shi'ite Movement in Iraq*) can be very helpful to understand social, cultural and ideological roots of Shi'a Islamism in Iraq and how it connects to the transnational Shi'a movements in the region. He argued that Shi'a Islamist groups in Iraq are on one hand part of a combination of the general rise of Islamist movements in the Middle East, and on the other hand a domestic response to political oppression at home (A. Jabar, 2003, p. 35). Jabar's work would have been more important if it had covered the role of Shi'a Islamist movements after 2003 and the transnational dimensions of Iraq's immediate neighbours. The interregional connections among communities with similar religious or ethnic affiliations have become part of the regional security concern. This inter-state ethnic and sectarian solidarity has been more obvious following the Syrian crisis and the Islamic State's arrival in Iraq in June 2014.

Gause (2010) tries to understand the international politics of the Persian Gulf region since the British withdrawal from the region in 1971. He argued that "regional states acted more against perceived threats to their own domestic stability emanating from abroad than to counter unfavorable change in the distribution of power or to take advantage of favorable power imbalances." (2010, p. 9). This may be true of some states, but not for all states in the Persian Gulf. The countries that are less fragile at home might have fewer concerns about domestic threats than regional or global threats. For example, after the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, despite the importance of domestic threats for both Tehran and Riyadh, the power imbalance or the U.S. presence in the region for Tehran and Damascus was more serious than the Shi'a domestic threat in Saudi Arabia or the Kurdish threat in Iran and Syria. Gause (2010, p. 4) excluded both Turkey and Syria from the Persian Gulf sub-region, for which he

cannot be criticised, due to the nature of his study (see p. 4). However, it will be hard to understand the regional security dynamics in the region without Syria and Turkey, in particular after the changing dynamics of Turkey's foreign policy towards the Middle East, and more precisely towards Iraq and Syria. After the Syrian crisis and the advent of the Islamic State (IS or ISIS) to the region, Turkish and Syrian security have been significantly interconnected with the regional security complex dynamics and the transnational identities in the Persian Gulf and Levant.

In a slightly different approach to that of Gause (2010) and Wehrey et al. (2010), Bingo (2004, p. 50) tries to address the regional and international ramifications of 'new' Iraq. The study found that the shifting of power from Sunnis to Shi'as and Kurds may have affected the regional powers, especially Iran, Syria and Turkey, mainly owing to what the author calls 'the Kurdish factor'. The study further argues that Iran had welcomed the end of Saddam's regime, yet was alarmed by the continuous presence of U.S. troops in the region. However, some Iranian officials responsible for foreign policy considered the new developments in Iraq as a good opportunity for establishing a link with Shi'a factions or Kurds, such as the PUK, thus enhancing their regional status.

Through a closer examination, it is evident that Bingo's (2004) study does not adequately cover the nature of each country's engagement with the ethno-religious conflicts in Iraq, and how this is interrelated with the state-building process in post-2003 Iraq. Furthermore, the study has failed to see the whole picture of the changes in the international relationships within the region, in particular with regard to the regional engagement in the post-2003 state-building trajectory in Iraq. This was pivotal for the formation of ethno-sectarian alliances among Iraq's neighbours, especially since the Syrian upheaval from 2011 onwards. In addition, the roles of Syria and Saudi Arabia in post-2003 Iraq were overlooked. The abovementioned shortcomings could be to some extent explained by time constraints, given that the study was published only few months after the U.S. invasion Iraq in 2003; hence, the study was unable to address the second phase of interference by Iraq's neighbours in its internal affairs, commencing after the U.S. withdrawal. This involvement of regional powers in Iraq has been aimed, as will be argued throughout the present study,

at boosting their standing in the region in general and in Iraq in particular by using Iraqi proxies to pursue their own political interests.

Similarly to a number of other studies, Ostergard's work *Regional spillover effects from Iraq's upheaval* (2010) shows the regional dimensions of post-2003 Iraq's socio-political developments. His book focuses predominantly on the regional instability that may be caused by the volatile political situation in Iraq. The range of possible spill-over effects stemming from this volatility, according to Ostergard (2010, p. 16), could cover all Iraq's neighbours, including even Israel. It is evident that the author highlights the probability of Iraq being the threat for its neighbours, whilst neglecting in his analysis the possibility that these neighbours would become a source of destabilisation for Iraq after the fall of Saddam's regime, and also neglecting their security complex interconnections with Iraq. Hence, further elaboration on the impact of Iraq's neighbours on the process of state-building in Iraq was also absent.

A more comprehensive study in this regard was conducted by a collective of authors: *Iraq, its Neighbors, and the United States: Competition, Crisis, and the Reordering of Power* (2011). This study focuses on the impact of post-Saddam Iraq on its neighbours and the region as a whole. The authors (Henri, Scott, and Marr, 2011, p. 2) included in their analysis all of Iraq's neighbours in terms of their influences on Iraq and vice versa, highlighting particularly economic, social and political aspects of this interaction, which has been both of a negative and a positive character. It can be noticed that the monograph comprises number of studies that have been apparently written under the influence of the Baker-Hamilton report on Iraq in 2006. This report called for U.S. engagement with Iraq's neighbours including Iran and Syria on one hand, and with the Arab Gulf countries and Turkey in order to mitigate Iran's influence in Iraq on the other. This group of countries was particularly alienated by Iran's increasing leverage on the socio-political developments in Iraq. Furthermore, a part of the book outlines the areas of common interests between Iraq's neighbours and the U.S. (see Henri, Scott, and Marr, 2011, p.8).

Despite the above work (Henri, Scott, and Marr, 2011) touching upon a number of old problems that Iraq still has with its neighbours, it limits its aim to identifying ways of and reasons for the regional powers' involvement in the process of state-building in Iraq. In addition, the study seems to overlook the

"securitization" of ethno-sectarian conflicts inside Iraq and their connection with the regional ethno-sectarian dynamics that have become a crucial element in the regional security strategies among Iraq's neighbours. Yet regardless of these shortcomings, the study in question has contributed significantly to the debate surrounding the interaction of Iraq with its neighbours and vice versa. Moreover, the study attempts to formulate a blueprint for the U.S. policy regarding Iraq's neighbours, especially how to face the challenge of Iranian supremacy in Iraq, which constitutes a considerable concern for Iraq's neighbours.

The analysis of relevant literature discussing the pertinent matters regarding the post-2003 situation in Iraq has revealed that despite a significant literary output, none of the reviewed studies focus primarily on investigating the ways in which regional powers have contributed to the state-building process in Iraq and what motives have governed this involvement. Moreover, these studies fail to highlight the relation between regional dimensions of ethno-sectarian conflict and the state-building process in post-2003 Iraq. Most of the studies thus neglected to address extremely important questions regarding the relationship between ethno-sectarian conflicts in Iraq and their broader regional security complex dynamics, or the possibility of ethnic conflict and sectarianism becoming forms of regional security complex among Iraq and its neighbours. For instance, why are the four neighbours of Iraq under discussion (Iran, Syria Saudi Arabia and Turkey) involved in and affected more by the state-building process in Iraq than other Iraq's neighbours in the region, for instance Jordan or Kuwait?

Highlighting these shortcomings has enabled the author of this thesis to identify a gap in the literature dealing with ethno-sectarian conflicts post-2003 and its relationship with the state-building process. This gap is particularly evident when regional dimensions of these conflicts are considered, such as those related to Iran, Turkey, Syria and Saudi Arabia. These countries have engaged in the process of state-building through different ways, the regional security complex dynamics of the region being the salient reasons for this engagement, and not transnational identities as has been argued by Gause (2010, p. 9). This aforementioned discussion makes it possible to distinguish this work from what has come before. The key difference lies in the fact that

current study is less concerned with the causes of the state-building process than with Iraq's neighbours' involvement in the ethno-sectarian conflict, especially the interdependent security complex among the units in post-2003 Iraq.

Furthermore, none of the aforementioned studies have shifted the focus from ethno-sectarian conflict to the security complex dynamics that have shaped regional security policies in the Persian region after the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Most of them have been limited to addressing in a more comprehensive manner the conduct of the regional security polices of the four countries in question, not in the context of two conflicting political blocs involved into the process of state-building in Iraq. To fully understand the relationship between the state-building process in post-2003 Iraq and ethno-sectarian conflict, it is necessary to shift the focus from historical, religious and internal dynamics to the regional dynamics of the ethno-sectarian conflict within the framework of regional security complex levels on the one hand, and the security complex interconnectedness of Iraq's neighbours with Iraq on the other. This abovementioned aspect of the thesis has not been given much attention in the both state-building and ethno-sectarian literature after 2003. By analysing the ethno-sectarian conflicts in Iraq from regional context, this research will fill a gap left by previous studies on the subject.

1.5. Methodology and sources of the research

"When trying to make sense of the Middle East, one of the most important rules to keep in mind is this: What politicians here tell you in private is usually irrelevant. What matters most, and what explains their behavior more times than not, is what they say in public in their own language to their own people." (Thomas Friedman, 11 Nov 2014).

In order to answer the presented research question, this study utilises mainly qualitative methods. To achieve this, the thesis has used a variety of data collection techniques, such as reading documents, newspaper and journal articles, official documents, analysing video clips, leaked documents, press

releases, memoir and field research. It is vital to emphasise at this point that the thesis has largely relied on document analysis; as Johnson and Reynolds (2012, p. 257) point out "this type of data collection relies heavily on the record-keeping activates of government agencies, private institutions, interest groups [and] media magazines". The extent to which the thesis is limited regarding interview data is a reflection of the difficulties by which essential data, mostly in the forms of intelligence reports or interviews with the official figures and decision makers are quite difficult to obtain in Iraq and its neighbours. In addition to the dangerous security situation, especially in Iraq and Syria, the limitation of accessibility to this kind of information is partly embedded in the nature of political systems in most Middle Eastern countries, and partly also relates to the fact that the process of regional engagement in Iraqi internal affairs has not always been a part of the official foreign policy of the Iraq's neighbours, but rather part of the security policies and various forms of interventions are conducted clandestinely by organisations sponsored by states or by non-state actors.

According to my personal research experience in the region and taking three field visits in 2012, 2013 and 2014 to Iraq, I realised that conducting interviews with decision makers and leaders of militia groups would be extremely difficult if not impossible. However, I have substituted for the lack of such interviews by applying a variety of qualitative data collection techniques and data analysis at the same time. The importance of the qualitative approach to social science research emphasises the necessity of both collecting and analysing data. As Creswell states:

Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of imperial materials – case studies, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts- that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives (Creswell, 1998, p.15).

From qualitative methods' point of view, there are two important aspects that can be adopted in this study. First is the way of collecting data, through several methods within the qualitative approach. The second is the technique of analysing the collected data through an interpretive process within the qualitative method. The reason behind adapting qualitative approaches is the issue of validity or credibility, which cannot be overestimated in the research

fields. As Brady and Collier (2010, p.133) point out, the research should "maximize the validity of measurements", meaning that, "it should use reliable data-collection procedures that, if applied again, would yield the same data".

Thus, a part of the process of data collection in this thesis depends on a variety of official materials and non-official materials. Official documents contain materials that have been issued by one of the official institutions of the government. As examples are such documents as might serve the U.S. foreign policy, documents from the time of the Bush administration, official documents that have been published by the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) in Iraq, or official documents from the Iraqi state. Besides, there are some data and statistics that have been published by official institutions of government that were also analysed for the purpose of this study .

Furthermore, intelligence agencies, personal memoirs of official figures, such as Paul Bremer's memoir which is particularly interesting given his position as the civil governor of Iraq following the 2003 invasion, have also been drawn upon. Considering Wikileaks as a valid source of information may be questionable in the academic field (Malkan, 2016; O'Loughlin, 2016)[3], however, the Wikileaks cables can provide significant data regarding Iraq's neighbours' involvement in both the state-building process and ethnic and religious strife in the region. However, the author has been aware of the possibly biased nature of these documents. Therefore, these documents have been subjected to an analytical and comparative process with other data in order to check their reliability. In addition, some of these data have been confirmed by local authorities, for instance what are called the Sinjar documents (see Fishman, ed. 2008).

Many may criticise my reliance on think tanks; however due to the lack of some official and up-to-date data and statistics from other sources, such as books and journal articles, in addition to think tanks' special links with decision makers and their access to the up-to-date information, this thesis has relied on

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[3] Considering Wikileaks as a non-valid source of information does not mean that Wikileaks is not a reliable source. For example, Wikileaks released a number of government files to the *New York Times* regarding the conflict in Afghanistan. After the documents were brought to the White House and verified, it was found that those particular files were authentic (see Ferrer, A., 1 Jan 2017).

some think tank studies. This is especially apt considering the role that think tanks play in shaping state policy agendas at the present time. Moreover, the recent scope of the study, which covers 2003-2016, made it difficult for the author to obtain enough data from books or journals. However this information has not been adopted without analysis and comparison with other sources. The thesis's reliance on Wikileaks and think tank reports has been mainly for the sake of obtaining data rather than furnishing analysis.

Another portion of collected data will consist of press conferences, official statements and newspaper articles that were written during the period of forming this thesis. Furthermore, academic conferences to which the researcher has had access (in both Iraq and Europe) will be used.

Other material sources used in this study are in the form of published literature, such as books and journal articles. The thesis also uses several unpublished works of academic research discussing relevant topics, including works in English, Arabic, Persian and Kurdish. Such a multilingual base of source material is of particular importance given the regional dimensions of the thesis's focus, which includes Iraq's neighbours which have populations speaking Arabic, Persian, Turkish and Kurdish. Beside all the above mentioned methods and materials, the personal knowledge of the researcher together with his academic experience, journalistic work, collaboration with think tank research foundations and civil society organisations in Iraq are a supporting factor in the effort to accomplish the objectives of this thesis.

The case studies that are presented in this thesis are best defined "as an intensive study of a single unit with an aim to generalize a cross a larger set of units" (Gerring, 2004, p. 327). Thus, in order to address the thesis research question appropriately, this thesis has focused on multiple case studies. Each of the four of Iraq's neighbours represented, Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia and Turkey, has been divided into single case studies with the purpose to generalise across a larger set of cases, on the one hand, and to narrow down a very wide area of research into the simply researchable topic on the other. In addition, the role of the U.S. and its ramifications on Iraq's neighbours' involvement after 2003 in Iraq have been considered. All this is aiming to address a complementary aspect of the main research question of how and why Iraq's neighbours engaged in the process of state-building.

All the collected material and analytical techniques are to provide the researcher with a deep understanding of the reasons for and manners in which the regional dimensions of the ethno-sectarian divide have affected the process of state-building in Iraq after 2003, together with the knowledge about the regional security complex that spurred regional powers to interfere in Iraqi domestic affairs. In addition, the collected material helps to reveal the motives of Iraq's neighbours for intervention in its internal political process, and how Iraq is perceived from the geopolitical point of view by the ruling regimes in Iran, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Turkey.

1.6. The structure of the thesis

This thesis has been divided into eight chapters:

Chapter one: the first chapter includes the introduction, hypothesis, theoretical framework, the literature review and methodology. In the theoretical framework I have discussed RSCT in order to understand the regional dimensions of ethno-sectarian conflicts in the Persian Gulf. The chapter also consists of a literature review that will critically present most of the studies dealing with the state-building process and the regional dimensions of ethno-sectarian conflicts in post-2003 Iraq. The aim of this chapter is to structure a theoretical framework to the thesis's argument of how and why the ethno-sectarian conflict in post-2003 Iraq has become the defining dynamic for an RSC amongst Iraq and its neighbours. .

Chapter two: this chapter explores the challenges faced by the Iraqi state from its creation until 2003 through an analysis of two main stages of the Iraqi state: the monarchic regime (1921-1958) and republican regime (1958-2003), in addition to the regional factors and their influence on the state-building process in these two periods. The main attention of this chapter is devoted to analysing how Britain dealt with the process of state building during the monarchic era, and how the Iraqi ruling classes were associated with state-building process in this period. This is in order to constitute a link between the two models of state building applied in Iraq: the British model from 1921-1933 and the U.S. model in 2003-2011.

Chapter three: this chapter shows why it is necessary to understand the state-building carried out by the U.S. after the invasion in order to analyse the regional dimensions of the ethno-sectarian conflict in Iraq after 2003. It is also important to bear in mind that the interference in Iraqi internal policies by the four countries mentioned could have been a reaction to the U.S. version of state-building in Iraq. In order to understand the U.S. model of state-building in Iraq, this study examines the three different factors leading the state-building operations in the country after Saddam's fall. The first deals with the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) during the U.S. process of state-building. The second analyses the constitutional process and redistribution of power. The third looks to the Strategic Framework Agreement (SFA) which sketched the U.S.'s commitment to Iraq after the U.S. withdrawal, which has not been without its regional repercussions.

Chapter four: the main question of this chapter revolves around how and why Iran contributed to the process of state-building in Iraq after 2003. Despite the complexity and multi-level engagement of Iran in Iraq, this chapter will analyse how and why Iran became involved in the state-building process and ethnic and sectarian conflict following the 2003 US-led invasion in Iraq, considering the following three points. Firstly, Iran's support to the Shi'a-centric state in Iraq; secondly, the Iranian engagement with the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) will be discussed; thirdly, shows how and why Iran attempted to exhaust U.S. troops in Iraq. The second part of this chapter will analyse the ramifications of the Iranian hegemony on the region with a particular attention to Saudi Arabia and Turkey, in order to understand the reaction of the pro-Sunni countries in the region.

Chapter five: this chapter aims to show the Syrian involvement in the process of state-building in Iraq and its ideological and sectarian dimensions. The chapter shows how and why the Syrian regime contributed to the post-conflict state building process in Iraq. The analysis will focus on three main points: firstly, the Syrian support of Iraqi Ba'athist, insurgent groups and al-Qaeda linked ideological terrorist groups; secondly, how Syria engaged with the Iraqi Kurds and the consequences for the Kurds after the Syrian uprising. The chapter will also examine the significant shifting of Iraqi-Syrian relations after the Syrian uprising and how these relations have transferred the relationship

from an ideological enmity (1971-2003) to sectarian amity after 2011. An explanation of the transformation of the Syrian crisis and its ramifications on Iraq after 2011 has been another aim of this chapter. The third section examines Daesh (IS or ISIS) and its impact on the process of state-building and ethnic and sectarian conflict in Iraq.

Chapter six will address Saudi Arabia's engagement in the state-making process after 2003. The chapter will analyse two main points: the first seeks to understand Saudi Arabia's interest in opposing the pro-Iranian Shi'a-dominated government, a fact denied by Saudi authorities. Second traces Saudi Arabia's concern towards the new regional security order that arose after the U.S. invasion of Iraq, in favour of Iran. The chapter also investigates the impact of Saudi Arabia on the process of state-building after 2003, and its ramifications on the Iranian and Syrian strategies in both Iraq and the Persian Gulf.

Chapter seven: this chapter answers the question of how and why Turkey became involved in the state-building process after the 2003 war of Iraq, taking into account two distinct periods. The first shows the Turkish engagement in Iraq before the U.S. withdrawal in 2011, and the second, the Turkish engagement in Iraq after 2011. This last part will show how the regional security complex shifted Turkish strategy towards the state-building process in Iraq. This is especially regarding Turkish-KRG political and economic relations and Turkish involvement in the Syrian crisis. The second section of this chapter will deal with the regional reactions towards Turkish hegemony in Iraq, in particular for Iran and Syria.

Chapter eight: this chapter will conclude and discuss the results of the study, answering the main questions posed by the investigation, and at the same time will show the original contribution and significance of the thesis. I will also discuss the broader theoretical implications of the findings as well as the theoretical connection between the state-building process, regional dimensions of the ethno-sectarian conflict and regional security complex dynamics. Furthermore, the chapter will also present the limitations of the study and propose new paths and questions for future studies.

Chapter Two:

2 Challenges to state-building in Iraq: The regional dimension (1921-2003)

Introduction:

"If we think there is a fast solution to changing the governance of Iraq, then we don't understand history, the nature of the country, the divisions, or the underneath suppressed passions that could rise up. God help us if we think this transition will occur easily. The attempts I've seen to install democracy in short periods of time where there is no history and no roots have failed. Take it to Somalia" (Marine General Anthony Zinni (retired) Head of U.S. Central Command from 1997 to 2000, 10 October 2002, (Cited in Dodge, 2003, p. 157).

The objective of this chapter is not to discuss the history of the creation of the Iraqi state in detail, but rather to address two main questions. First, how did ethno-sectarian conflict accompany the process of state-building from the creation of the Iraqi state in 1921 until the U.S. invasion of Iraq? Second, what were Iraq's neighbours roles in the state-building process during that period? The purpose behind asking these questions goes back to the importance of the state-building process, ethnic and sectarian conflict and Iraq's neighbours' engagement in these processes as three main factors that have played to varying degrees major roles in the structure of the Iraqi state. Meanwhile, addressing the abovementioned areas could be one way to respond to the major questions of why the Iraqi state-building process has remained highly problematic since the British creation of the modern Iraqi state in 1921, and until the U.S. invasion in April 2003.

The questions outlined above can be prefaced by asking, firstly, what was the form of the state-building process during the Hashemite Monarchy? Secondly, what was the logical result of state-building in the republican period? And last but not least, what are the implications of the regional factors of the

state-building process in Iraq from 1921 to 2003? This chapter seeks to say that, although ethnic and religious tension has been the dominant factor to varying degrees in the state-building process from the creation of the Iraqi state in 1921 until its fall in 2003, Iraq's neighbours' engagement in the state-building process has not been through contributing to the ethnic and sectarian conflict, as has been the case since 2003. Or, more precisely, the ethnic and sectarian issue had not shaped security policies for Iraq's neighbours' prior to the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

In addition, this chapter draws a connection between the beginnings of the embryonic Iraqi state in 1921 onwards, which was primarily motivated by the British, and the Iraqi state-building after 2003 (which this study deals with in the next chapters), and was mostly driven by the U.S.. Furthermore, understanding the initial stages of creating the modern Iraqi state by the British in 1921 can be considered a key factor for understanding the Iraqi state-building process in the present, which is a fact to which Americans did not pay enough attention. It may be argued that most of these historical problematic issues that have faced Iraqi state-building in the monarchical period and onwards, such as identity, citizenship, authoritarianism, constitutionalism, along with the Kurdish issue, have arisen again more intensely after the U.S.-led invasion in 2003 (see Davis, 2005;).

2.1. Iraqi state-building in the Hashemite Monarchy (1921-1958)

As is well represented in the historical literature, the modern Iraqi state is a political and constitutional entity built on the remnants of three provinces (Wilayet- Vilayet), namely Basra, Baghdad and Mosul, which were administrated by the Ottoman Empire[4]. The process of the creation of the

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[4] There is a difference between researchers regarding the history of using the name 'Iraq'. For example, Kadhim (2012, p.7) has asserted that the name Iraq is "the historic territory that carried this name for more than fourteen centuries and was never identified by another name throughout that period". Both Kadhim (2012) and Visser (2005) have argued that Iraq was not invented by the British, that what was invented was a political entity, and that Iraq as a territory has been clearly defined by their people, always known as "Ahl al- 'Iraq" (the people of Iraq). He reports that the Greek word "Mesopotamia" was used in the British sources, but had not been used by the Arab people until the British occupation of Iraq. Kadhim's argument might be

modern state of Iraq was not achieved in 1921, as is commonly held among researchers. The creation of the modern Iraqi state as a state-building process by the British was between 1914 and 1932 in the aftermath of World War I, and between 1920 and 1925 the Iraqi state acquired a legal framework[5] (Dodge, 2003, p.1). After that, in 1921 King Faisal was appointed in the Cairo Conference as the king of the recently created Kingdom of Iraq. He had never visited Iraq before his selection as its king; further, there was an agreement that the new state would be a constitutional, democratic and parliamentary kingdom (Allawi, 2014, p. 339). In July 1921, the British tried to provide some legitimacy to Faisal's rule through a superficial referendum, which was in reality more similar to the *bay'a* (allegiance sessions)[6] than the constitutional means of democratic election. As expected, the results were 96 percent in favour of King Faisal, and in March 1921 Britain imposed its tutelage over a newly created territory now formally known as Iraq (Husni, 1989, p. 232).

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geographically correct; however, these three provinces had never been a political integrated reality. According to Tripp, the term *al-Iraq* in that period had only a geographical connotation, and it referred to "the shore of a great river along its length, as well as the grazing land surrounding it... [and] to the great alluvial plain of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers". (See Tripp, 2002, p.8). Whatever the claims about the existence of Iraq's historical and collective memories among the people who lived there, Iraq as a modern political nation-state was created for the first time in 1921.

[5] The institutional building process started during the monarchical period and took about five years and went through different phases, from the formation of the temporary government (25th of October) to the coronation of King Faisal on 23 August 1921, the (re)formation of Abdulrahman al-Naqeeb's cabinet and promulgation of the electoral law. Later, on the 25th of February 1924, elections were held for the Constituent Assembly and on 11 of June the Council ratified the Iraqi-British treaty. These first steps formed the basis of the modern Iraqi state (see al-Husni, p. 233-252).

[6] Despite the referendum result which was highly in favour of King Faisal, there was an opposition which had been concerned about 'borrowing' a new king, in addition to a number of claims. For example, the province of Kirkuk had voted against King Faisal, and Sulaimanya province did not vote, while Erbil and Mosul demanded guarantees regarding minorities' rights (see al-Husni, 1989, p 232).With regard to Basra there were two main arguments, either to separate from the new state or stay in a confederative formula with Iraq under the name of ''United Province of Iraq and Basra'' *(wilayata al- 'iraq wa-al- basra al-muttahidan)* (see Visser, 2005, p. 73-74).

It is worth considering that the creation of the Iraqi state cannot be separated from a number of subjective and objective factors related to the international order after World War I on one hand, and the period of both the Ottoman Empire and European imperialism on the other. That is to say, the creation of the modern Iraqi state corresponded with the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and both the financial and military fatigue of the British in this period. As Dodge (2003, p.1) correctly argues, the creation of the Iraqi state was different from the usual territorial imperialism, and took place at the beginning of the end of the dominance of the British Empire internationally, particularly in the policies of the British India Office. All these factors have had a great influence on the whole trajectory of state-building in Iraq, in particular in monarchic Iraq.

A number of factors need to be addressed to understand the trajectory of the state-building process in the monarchist period. It is true that the ethnic and religious tensions have had a longer history than the arrival of the British in Iraq; however the major part of this issue has had a direct relation with the British invasion of Iraq and formation of the beginning steps of the new state. As Tejel (2012, p.90) argued, the British perception of the Iraqi society as a country divided between three unified blocs (Shi'as, Sunnis and Kurds) contributed to the creation of sub-Iraqi identities. To an extent, until now, and after more than nine decades, the Iraqi state is still suffering from the same problems. These features that have impact the path of state-building in Iraq can be grouped into the factors following below.

2.1.1.   The impact of the internal and external factors on the British polices in Iraq

It can be said that the modern Iraqi state had been influenced directly by the British vision and their policies in the Middle East and the Persian region on the one hand, and the internal and external conditions of the British Empire on the other. All these factors have left their influences on the trajectory of state-building in Iraq. Between 1920 and 1932, which was an important period in Iraqi state formation, British foreign policy faced significant military and financial problems Between 1919 and 1923, the defence budget of the British army was

cut down by half each year, and this pushed the British to impose a higher tax on the tribes, especially in southern Iraq, which drove some tribes to revolt against the British policies (Dodge, 2003, pp.134-135). From May 1920 onwards, Secretary of State for War, and then for the Colonies, Churchill, pushed both the administration and the cabinet in Iraq to take in consideration the unsustainable nature of the prevailing situation. He employed a very radical policy by recommending that, if the British forces pulled out from Basra, the cost of the occupation could be reduced from £30 million to £8 million. The British vision for making the Iraqi state was influenced to a great extent on the Indian model, which was guided by the philosophy of the nineteenth century and of the "white man's burden", which meant that the British had to rule the new Iraqi state indirectly, since the Colonial Indian Office did not believe that the Iraqi people could rule Iraq wisely and fairly (Simon and Tejirian, 2004, p. 22). The above-mentioned factors most likely directed the British toward the specific form of the state, whereby they took into consideration the position of the British Empire more than the status of Iraqi society, at the expense of a possible model which would have considered Iraq's social, political and cultural peculiarities. In this context it may be argued that the British tried to build a kind of state which could help them to alleviate their own economic and political burdens. In this context, the creation of a new Iraq was a product of this difficult stage in the history of the British Empire[7].

Furthermore, the mandate period coincided with two decisive global events or trends: first, the political and military decline of British hegemony; second, the significant progress of the U.S. economy and the expansion of free markets all over the world (Dodge, 2003, p.5). These factors forced a radical shift regarding the position of British Empire, as well as on the territories that were under British tutelage, in particular the newly created Iraqi state. Blackwell (2005, p.446) has pointed out that an essential problem of the mandate was that the British had lacked the resources that were necessary to implement their 'traditional methods'; in addition, they wanted to build Iraqi society according to what they preferred it to be, rather than taking into account the wishes of the

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[7] Allawi indicated that when the British or Indian Expeditionary Force first landed in Basra in November 1914, there was no plan to capture the whole of Mesopotamia (Iraq); the British main objective was to secure Basra and the headlands of the Gulf (see Allawi, A., *Faisal I of Iraq*, 2004, p.341,).

Iraqi people. Meanwhile, the mandate failed to resolve the relationship between the individual and the state, which later created serious problems for the structure of the Iraqi state. On this basis it may be inferred that, besides it being the British vision that had designed the main pillars of the modern Iraqi state, British efforts were highly influenced by the regional and international events in the mandate era. This was especially the case during the period of the making of the Iraqi state between 1914 and 1932, which has been considered as an essential period for the growth of almost all the basic parameters of the Iraqi state.

2.1.2.   The dominance of the Army on political and economic life

A salient characteristic that can be observed in the monarchical era was military control of political and economic life in the new Iraqi state. This process did not occur by an accident, but it was achieved through systematic support of the British and King Faisal. This could be noticed during the creation of the Iraqi Army, which was instituted officially on the 6th of January 1921, even before the formation of the Iraqi government. The British attempted to provide a new military as a tool in the hand of the King to reinforce his new kingdom, especially to counter the tribes' broad power, due to the royal family not having roots in Iraqi society[8] (Hikmat, 2008, p. 93). It can be argued that Faisal's weakness could have been one of the reasons that pushed him to approach and form links with the former Sharifian officers[9]. It can be argued that the

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[8] One of the significant problems that both the British and Faisal faced in the beginning years of their rule was the power of the tribes, which was above the ability of the young state to handle, to the degree that the government possessed about fifteen thousand guns, while the average number of guns which were possessed by tribes is estimated to be one hundred thousand (see Allawi, 2014, 537).

[9] It has been noted that the modern Iraqi state mainly stood on two fundamental pillars: first were the Sharifian officers who had studied in the military academic school in Istanbul and participated with Faisal's father (Sharif Hussain) in the Arab revolt in Hejaz against the Ottomans, which resulted in their later taking positions of hegemony in almost all of the critical offices of the state; second, the Shaikhs, or tribal leaders, who had control of the social and economic position in Iraqi society. The cabinet was dominated by the *Sharifian* officers, and the council (parliament) by the tribal Shaikhs (see Mufti, 1993, p. 18, 37).

British, through different policies, supported the Sunni minority in Iraq against the domination of the majority (al-Alawi, 1999, p148). Fomenting the internal divisions resulted in a winning policy for Britain, which managed to keep Iraq under its colonial control for a long period. This policy showed its successes especially during the monarchy period, when King Faisal, the Iraqi ruling class, and especially the sometime Prime Minister Nuri al-Said, showed their support to the British.

Since the beginning of the Iraqi state, the ruling elite kept a strict control of the army, which witnessed a significant expansion during the period of the mandate, when it increased from 3,500 to 12,000 men (Eisenstadt and Mathewson, 2003, p. 7). In addition, the number of Iraqi officers increased from 12,000 to 43,300 between 1932 and 1941 (Tripp, 2002, p. 78). These officers later played a major role in shaping policies of the Iraqi state with the support of both the British and King Faisal.

Furthermore, Marr (2012, p. 43) points out that the military institution grew rapidly in both size and effect. From 1921 to 1958, the monarchical era witnessed 58 ministerial cabinets which were chaired by 23 persons, 15 of them belonging to the military. In addition the army which dominated the political process was also under the control of the Arab Sunnis, who used it as an instrument in domestic political conflicts or against other Iraqi components, such as the Kurds and the Assyrians. This made the military institution appear as a non-national and sometimes repressive, ethnic and sectarian organisation. The same was true regarding the executive authority; the Shi'a received premiership only five times out of 59 ministerial cabinets throughout the monarchy era, which accounts for 8.78 percent even though they constituted the majority. In all these cases they were called to rule the country in the event of serious political crises. For example, Salih Jabir was selected as a first Shi'a prime minister when, in 1947, the Iraqi state wanted to sign the Portsmouth Agreement against the wishes of the majority of the Iraqi people (al-Alawi, 1990, 200). However, the signing of the Portsmouth Agreement led to the end of both Salih's cabinet and the Portsmouth Treaty in 1948.

Thus it could be concluded that the British, instead of building social and economic structures, tried to build the Iraqi state through building a military institution that was loyal to them. Therefore, they saw the army as a backbone

of the new state and national integration, which has been the case in many countries in the Middle East, for instance Turkey. This model of state-building produced a number of negative outcomes: first, the domination of army characteristics on the social, legal, and political institutions, which led to the destruction of Iraqi civil society. Second, the hegemony of the army paved the ground for marginalising the constitution and meanwhile gave less attention to the peaceful transition of power, which situated the Iraqi political process in the trench of military coups. Third, the military hegemony led to the emergence of ambitions of military expansion, especially toward the neighbouring countries. Fourth and most importantly, the Sunni domination on the Army deepened ethnic and sectarian division within the state.

2.1.3. The dominance of a single identity and the lack of a citizenship framework

One of the most serious problems that both the British and King Faisal faced during the formation of the modern Iraqi state was how to incorporate the diversity of ethnic and religious identities, in particular the Shi'a Arabs, the Sunni Arabs and the Kurds. However, these three groups have never constituted a monolithic political entity, and usually have been divided politically, socially and economically (see Nakash, 2003, p.277). Each of these components forms the majority percentage in their territorial provinces, with the vast majority of Shi'as living in Basra, Sunnis in Baghdad and Kurds in Mosul. In some academic literature there has been a debate arguing that the British preferred the Sunnis to the other Iraqi components, especially the Shi'a and Kurds, who formed around 80 percent of the Iraqi population. This claim of Sunni preference is made on the pretext that both the Shi'a and Kurds formed the ignorant majority, or did not have the ability to run the state (see Elliot, 1996; Eisenstadt and Mathewson, 2003; Mufti 1993), which is very questionable. In fact, the hegemony of Sunnis in the monarchy period was not because of the above claim but is instead attributable to two main factors. First, when the British first invaded Basra and later Baghdad and Mosul, they came to the territories that had been ruled by the Ottoman Empire for three hundred years, which meant that the British came on the legacy of the Ottomans. Visser (2009,

p. 146) points out that in 1880, when the Ottomans were ruling these areas, they were very concerned about the spreading of Shi'ism in the eastern part of their empire. Furthermore, they commented in their reports about "the day- to-day spread of Shi'ism in Iraq *(Hitta-i Irak'de Siilik yevman fa yevman tavsi ettegi olup)*" (Visser, 2009, p. 146). Also in 1907, there was a cabinet decision to "strengthen dogma and Sunnism in Iraq, *(Hitta-i Irak'de ittikad ve sunniligin takviyesi)*", and this increased the payment of Sunni preachers in Basra and Baghdad (cited in Visser, 2009, p.146).

Despite the Ottoman authorities' attempts to reduce Shi'i activities through the implementation of different policies, these actually increased during the second half of the nineteenth century (see Nakash, 2003, p. 42). Due to the remoteness of Iraq from the centre of the Ottoman Empire in Istanbul, it was difficult to control Shi'ism. In addition, the Iranian pressures from 1508 to 1638 helped the spread of Shi'ism in the country. With the British occupation of Basra in 1914, Ottoman rule became nominal (Nakash, 2003, p. 34). However, the British model followed the legacy of the Ottoman Empire as it was, and kept it as a de facto process for building the new Iraqi state. The British believed that to hold these three diverse provinces, they mainly needed a central and strong coherent government (Eisenstaedt and Matheson, 2003, p. 70). On the other hand, a united Iraq also would facilitate the process of controlling tribes and tax collection for the new state; as well as this, the unified Iraq would impose the acceptance of the authority of the centre on the Shi'a and the Kurds.

The British also played the sectarian chord during the building of their framework of the modern Iraqi state. For example, Gertrude Bell (who became very influential with regard to British imperial policy-making) clearly demonstrated this in one of her letters, when she suggested that "Sunni Mosul must be retained as a part of the Mesopotamian state in order to adjust the [sectarian] balance .... I don't for a moment doubt that the final authority must be in the hands of the Sunnis, in spite of their numerical inferiority; otherwise you will have a mujtahid-run, theocratic state, which is the very devil'' (Visser, 2008, p. 87). This may be evidence for why Sunni Mosul, which was where the vast majority of the Kurds were living, had been annexed to the new Iraqi state, in order to keep a sectarian balance between the Shi'a and the Sunnis. This was

the form that the British depended on for making the Iraqi nation state (See Visser, 2008, p. 83-99).

There is evidence to support the contention that both the Shi'a and the Kurds had taken a strong stand against the British occupation, especially at the beginning of the mandate. For instance, during the British mandate, Iraq witnessed a number of revolts against British occupation, in particular during the 1920 revolution. Most of these revolts were by the Kurds and the Shi'a, for example the Kurdish revolts in 1919-1920, 1923-1924, 1931-1932, and the Shi'a uprising from 1935-1936 (see Kadhim, 2012, pp. 50, 70; Eisenstaedt and Matheson, 2003, p. 68). It is arguable that these revolts are evidence that both the Shi'a and the Kurds did not accept the British form of the new Iraqi state. Many Shi'a even preferred direct rule by the British, or even separation from the new country, due to the fact that they knew well that modern Iraq would lead to the dominance of the Sunnis (Mufti, 1993, p.34).

With regard to the Kurds, they were never pleased with the formation of new Iraq. They regarded their annexation to the new state as having been forced upon them, and at the same time as a kind of betrayal, since they had been promised by the League of Nations an independent territory, as had been specified in the Sèvres Treaty in August 1920 (Kirmanj, 2010, p.45). However, the Assyrians also demanded that London give them autonomy, while Iraq's Jews sought a guarantee of British citizenship[10] (see Mufti, 1993, p34). Indeed, the citizenship issue remained a huge challenge for the modern Iraqi state. This problem can be seen as far back as the time of Midhat Pasha, governor of Baghdad between 1869-1871, who attempted to reform the country after the

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[10] Despite the kind of tolerance that existed in the early years of the monarchy period in Iraq, as Bashkin (2009, p.193) addresses; however, the Jews in Iraq were not considered Iraqi citizens and were singled out as a threat to the Iraqi state. For example, Nuri al-Said, who had a prominent role in monarchic Iraq, threatened the Jewish population with expulsion if Palestinians refugees were not return to their homes after the creation of the State of Israel in 1948. This threat later turned into an offer to exchange them with an equivalent number of Palestinian refugees, and to have their confiscated properties assigned to the Palestinians to compensate for what they lost in Palestine (see Tripp, 2002, p.125).

ideas of western liberalism. He established new military schools in Baghdad from which Shi'a were excluded (al-Alawi, 1990, p. 171).

The case was even harder for ethnic minorities under the monarchist regime; and most of them were concerned about the creation of the modern Iraqi state. This fear became quite clear when the Iraqi state got its independence from the League of Nations in 1932. Kurds and other minorities, such as Assyrians, Yazidis, Jews, and to lesser extent Turkomans, asked both the British and the League of Nations for international protection. This pushed the Assyrians to hold a general conference in Mosul, where they asked for a 'special consideration', or to be allowed to migrate to Syria or outside the Middle East (see Tripp, 2002, p. 75). As a reaction to the Assyrians' demands, in 1933 the Iraqi armed forces committed a massacre in Mosul, which led to the escape of a large group of Assyrians to Syria (Davis, 2005, p.61). The case of Assyrians and Jews can be an outstanding example when Nuri al-Said, Iraqi prime minister issued an ordinance number 62 of August 1933 and ordered the withdrawal of Iraqi citizenship from thousands of Assyrians; laws number 1 in 1950, number 5 in 1951 and number 12 in 1963 also deprived thousands of Jews of Iraqi citizenship and confiscated their properties (Kreyenbroek, & Sperl, 1991, p. 102). These processes have also been systematically applied by both republican and Ba'ath regimes against the Kurds and the Shi'a.

However, in general the integration process in the monarchical era as noticed by Batatue (1978, pp.27-32) and Marr, (2012, p.122) was positive, in particular in the last decade of the monarchy. However, this process had been mostly characterised by inclusive and coercive policies (Jabar, 2003, p.56); for instance, the political level was through national institutions, such as schools, the army and the parliament. On the level of infrastructure was the construction of roads, railway and steamboats. Moreover, tribes begun for the first time to settle down, and tribal Sheikhs transformed into land-owning class. It is true that the social and economic interests of the middle class were on growth (see Jabar, 2003, p.58). However, at the level of representation, both Shi'a and Kurd were not totally integrated in the process of decision making in the constitutional monarchy.

To an extent, both the British and King Faisal were well aware of the marginalisation of the Shi'a and Kurds, but in fact little or nothing was done by

the monarchic governments to address this historical predicament (see Elliot, 1996, p. 19). This was emphasised by King Faisal himself; he acknowledged in his memoirs that Iraq was a Sunni kingdom, ruled by a Sunni Arab government, and that there was a gap between people because of the sectarian divisions which were created by persecution that was inflicted upon the Shi'a by Ottoman rule, and that the Shi'a were not able to participate in government institutions (see Allawi, 2014, p. 536-537; al-Urzi, n.d. p. 2-4). Given this evidence, it can be seen that the ethnic and religious issue was an obstacle to Iraq's state formation during the monarchical era.

2.1.4. The mobilisation of tribes

One of the other pillars of the British model of state-building in the monarchy period was the utilisation of the tribal powers within traditional Iraqi society, a strategy the British inherited from the Ottomans. However, tribal power became more systematic in the monarchic period, due to British success in shifting tribal power from the traditional structure to a type of political deal between tribal leaders, such as Shaikhs and Aghas, and state institutions. This was through the stipulation that the new state (Iraq) would support the tribal powers, provide them with privileges and involve them in government institutions, provided that the tribes obeyed the new state (see Batatu, 1978, pp. 88, 319).

It can be said that the British built their relations with Iraqi society through tribal Shaikhs, and they dealt with Iraq as a pre-modern and rural society. The British had applied the policy of subsidising Shaikhs to the extent that "some Shaikhs had received a monthly subsidy and occasionally the right to regulate the movement of any Bedouin from his designated area to markets and urban centres" (Dodge, 2003, p. 84). For example, Fahad Beg ibn Hadhdhal, received a monthly subsidy of Rs. 12000. The policy faced opposition from Iraqi cabinets because it increased the Shaikhs' power, jeopardising the government's authority. In order to control the Shaikhs' power, the first Iraqi Assembly decided to concede 20 percent of its seats to elected Shaikhs. The result was that out of a total of 99 members, 34 were Shaikhs (Batatu 1978, p. 95).

Batatu (1978, p.101) comments that "the tribes between 1941-1958 were largely in harmony with the government; and following the mid-1930s and the events of 1941, the authority stopped trusting the army and relied on the tribal leaders" . Indeed, not just the government but also the political parties tried to link with tribal leaders. For example, the Prime Minister Nuri al-Said reserved 17 out of 46 of the parliamentary seats of his party (the Constitutional Union) to the tribes.

Dodge (2003, p.5) has drawn attention to the fact that the British, through their model of state-building in Iraq, had been preoccupied with two main arguments; should the state have a direct linkage with individuals, or should it be ruled by "tribal organisations" and their local leaders? However, it seems that the British chose the second way, because the first required a powerful civil society and the individual's power, when in fact Iraqi society lacked both of these factors in the monarchic period. In the meantime, it would be costly to the British in both manpower and money. In addition, this way might take a long time without any guarantees of its success.

Furthermore, the intermarriage between the Sherifian elite and tribal Shaikhs, especially Shi'i tribal leaders of the mid-Euphrates alongside ex-Sharifyan officers, constituted a backbone of the Faisal I regime, and it continued practically until the fall of the monarchy in 1958, through an "independent legal system" that the British established exclusively for the tribes (Fattah, 2009, p.164). However, the military was sometimes been against tribal elements, especially in order to contain any Shi'i interference. This happened in particular during the governments of Yasin al-Hashimi, Nuri al-Said and Ja'far al-Askari (see, Salame, 1997, p.151).

The British dependence on tribes in general and Shaikhs in particular can be understood by two reasons. First, some of the British officials, especially Gertrude Bell (1868–1926), the Eastern secretary to the high commissioner, viewed tribes as a main pillar of political power in the Arab countries. This view was originally part of the Europeans' understanding of the Middle East between the 1920s and 1930s (Fattah, 2009. p.168). Second, the British believed that "[the shaikh] was the readiest medium at hand on which [the British] could carry on the administration of the countryside" (Batatu, 1978, p. 88).

From this point of view, it can be argued that modern Iraq from 1921 to 1958 had been ruled through the indirect marriage between the military elite, which was the Sherifian officers, and tribal leaders. Also, if the sectarian background was a notable characteristic of the Sharifyan officers, the monarchy's reliance on tribal leaders had not depended on the ethnic and sectarian background of the tribal Shaikhs. As has been mentioned above, most of the tribal leaders were from mid-Euphrates Shi'i tribes. Meanwhile, the tribal backgrounds of the Sherifian officers were most likely a supporting factor to the political elite. As well as this, the hegemony of tribes impeded democratic growth, especially within the Iraqi social structure.

2.1.5. Use of violence and ineffectiveness of the constitution

One of the other aspects of political life which had latterly been deeply involved in the process of state-building in monarchic Iraq was the use of violence in political conflicts. The initial steps of using the army against the Iraqi people had been practiced even before the inventing of the Iraqi state by the British, for example in the 1920 revolution in which mass bombing had been used against Kurdish tribes, which later produced a model for the *Anfal* campaigns that was systematically practiced by Saddam's regime in the late eighties (see Kadhim, 2012, pp. 21, 22).

It can be said, in the absence of a national army, and the existence of political, ethnical and sectarian conflicts, and at the same time the domination of an oligarchic military elite on the monarchist Iraqi state, that all of these factors produced a model of the state which has used violence against its own citizens. For example in 1920, the army had been used against Shi'i tribal rebellions and later against the Kurds, and also in 1935 and 1936, the army was used for quelling the Shi'a insurgencies, as well as against the Assyrians, which was known as the Assyrian pogrom in 1933 (see Eisenstaedt and Matheson, 2003, p.31). All of these mentioned events confirm the use of violence for ethnic, sectarian and political aims in support of the Sunni elite. In addition to the above, the military coups in 1936, 1941 and finally in 1958 led to the end of the monarchist system, and violence intensified in the structure of all successive political systems in the modern Iraqi state.

One of the serious problems that monarchic Iraq had to face was the application of the constitution as a contract between the ruling class and the citizens. Despite Iraq being a constitutional monarchy, the King along with the Sunni oligarchy constituted the real basis of political power. This was due to the fact that the 1925 constitution was imposed by a committee of British advisors operating in the Iraqi ministry of justice. The Iraqi constitution was based on a number of constitutional experiences of other countries, including Persia, Turkey, Belgium, New Zealand and Australia (Eisenstad, and Mathewson, 2003, p. 19). However, the monarchical constitution ratified by the King in 1925 gave him ample powers; for example, any parliamentary law could not be passed without his consent, and at the same time the government had to refer to the king and not to the parliament, leaving it and the other components of Iraq's government without any power.

In this context, the constitution and electoral law were often criticised by the Shi'a. For example, the main request of the Popular Socialist Party (PSP) founded by Salih al-Jabr in 1951 was that the parliament members should be elected directly by the people (see Nakash, p. 131). Both the Shi'a and the Kurds criticised the electoral law as well as the official lists of candidates to the parliament. This was because, despite the existence of election lists, the government and the king usually had their own lists, transforming the parliament into a powerless institution. This led to the nomination of the candidates favoured by the government and the king weakening the legislative power and strengthening the executive. This tendency would go on to have a very detrimental effect on Iraq's most recent history, paving the way to the cycle of violence affecting the whole society and preventing the country from developing a modern civil society.

2.1.6.   The failure of reforms

As a result of many structural problems that became a part of modern monarchist Iraq, as have been stated above, both the British and King Faisal were aware and did not hide their concerns over the mismanagement of political processes in this period. Consequently, in 1932, King Faisal called for quick reforms in several areas (Khadduri, 1951, p36-37), such as, 1) increasing the

size of the armed forces and their logistic capabilities, to an extent that they had the ability to face danger on multiple fronts at the same time, which could happen in two different parts of Iraq; 2) giving political guarantees for equalities between the two main religious sects, Shi'a and Sunni, as well as other non-Islamic religious minorities; 3) increasing the power of the provinces and municipal councils; and 4) making a separation between the executive and legislative power, aside from other reforms in the areas of education and the health system.

Muhammad Husain Kashif al-Ghita's project can be seen as one of these attempts, when he called for the resignation from parliament of the Shi'i members appointed by the government and asked for a direct, democratic election (see al-Alawi, 1990, p. 346, 347, 348). A great number of Arab tribal leaders, especially Shi'a leaders in Najaf, responded positively to this call. It can be said that this general reform project was meant to tackle the traditional oligarchic sectarian and institutional attitude towards the Shi'a. Another main purpose of the project was to amend the election law and give a greater role and representation to the Shi'as. This could give them the opportunity to have a highly active role in governmental institutions[11]. However, the project was not successful, and was opposed even by a group of Shi'a leaders involved in the monarchic government.

The evidence seems to be strong that both the British and King Faisal depended on Nuri al-Said and his parliament to achieve these reforms, as a response to the opposition parties that called many times for reforms. But indeed, neither Nuri nor the others in the government had the intention to carry out these reforms, and this pushed the British ambassador Sir Michael Wright in July 1957, to describe Nuri al-Said as "no reformer", and that Nuri did not belong to the same school as Ataturk insofar as introducing reforms that would have a significant impact on government and society (Elliot, 1996, p.165). On the other hand, the relationship between the state structure and the permanence of colonialism in monarchic Iraq made any reform efforts very dangerous, due to the alliance between the Iraqi unified oligarchic elite and their links with the British.

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[11] The Kashif al-Ghita' project included 12 articles and was presented to King Ghazi and Prime Minister Yasin al-Hashimi in March 1935 (al-Alawi, 1990, p. 346, 347).

Thus, it can be concluded that the British and the monarchist regime failed for more than three decades to build up an appropriate framework for the process of state-building and governance which could encompass all the different factions of Iraqi people. It is worth considering that the monarchic regime remained to a high extent estranged from its population, in particular from its middle class. Thus, as Batatu states, the monarchic state from its creation to its downfall was an oligarchic system: "there was often no close correspondence between the local distribution of wealth and local distribution of power" (cited in Ismael, 2008, p.16). Furthermore, the identity of the monarchist state remained an ethno-sectarian identity. Aside from this, as Ghasan Salame (1997, p. 86) points out, the process of material transformation and state-building in Iraq did not produce a civil society or class to base the state upon, and therefore the state remained weak and resorted to coercive means to impose its hegemony on society. Meanwhile, as Dodge (2006, p.187) observes, "the British colonial officials never had the resources to transform the despotic power deployed by the state into sustainable infrastructural capacity".

Given the aforementioned, it can be argued that monarchical Iraq was a political deal amongst tribes and the Sharifian officers on the one hand, and the King and the British on the other, on the base of the distribution of power and interests among these parties. Having the political contract among these powers instead of the social contract between the Iraqi people and the political system produced a model of state which lost its political and social legitimacy and ability to impose order and stability. Thus, it can be argued that the logical conclusion in monarchist Iraq was the rule of a limited elite that can be called a Sunni military oligarchy, which struggled with power and monopolised the state institutions.

2.2. Iraqi state-building in the republican era (1958-2003)

The republican regime was the product of a military coup carried out on 14 July 1958 and headed by Abdulkarim Qasim and General Abd al-Salam Arif. This had massive popular support and was influenced by the struggle against British colonialism and the monarchic system. Furthermore, this event cannot

be separated from regional events, such as the emergence of liberation and nationalist movements in the Arab world, in particular the influences of the Egyptian revolution in 1952 and the Syrian coup in 1954 (see Al-Qarawee, 2012, pp. 91, 95). This period has been divided into various segments by historians and political scholars[12], whilst this study prefers to divide this period of the modern Iraqi state into three main stages, as each of these stages had its own vision of the political, social and economic process which directly affected the state-building process in Iraq for a long time after.

2.2.1 The first decade of the republican era (1958-1968)

The revolutionary era, or more precisely Qasim's military republic in 1958, was a political-military reaction to the monarchist system and imperialism, which depended to a great extent on the mass mobilisation that manufactured a specific form of political chaos. This simultaneously produced a radical paradigm of organized violence (see Bayat, 2013, p.8). The 1958 coup produced two salient realities in Iraqi political life which later drew the parameters of the political process in Iraq. First, both military power and the military elite emerged as vital sources of political power. Second, "mass mobilisation" was used as a mechanism in political conflicts (Anderson and Stansfield 2005, p.33). The use of the masses became an easy instrument for creating political crises and confrontations, which finally led to the fall of Qasim's regime in 1963.

Qasim tried especially in the early years of his rule to find a way to create a common Iraqi identity for all the components of Iraqi society. The creation of a three-man sovereignty council, in which was represented the three main Iraqi elements of Sunni Arab, Shi'a Arab and Kurd, was a first step towards shrinking

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[12] For example, there are many studies that divide the Iraqi state regimes according to their political systems, such as first republican in 1958, second republican after 8 February 1963, third republican after 18 November 1963 and fourth republican after 17 July 1968. Others have depended on the role of the leaders of the political system; for example Marr (2012) has divided these periods according the role of the leaders, such as the Qasim era 1958-1963, the Arab nationalists in power 1963-1968, the era of Ba'ath Party rule 1968-1979, the Saddam Husain regime 1979-1989 and the second period of Saddam's regime 1990-2003.

the hegemony of a single identity in the political process (see Rubin, 2007, p.357) . Initially the Kurds looked favourably on Qasim's regime, because they saw it as an opportunity to solve the Kurdish issue. Moreover, there was enthusiastic support by the Kurds for Qasim, particularly when the new temporary constitution recognised Kurds for the first time besides Arabs as partners in the new Iraqi state (article 3) (Marr, 2012, p. 104-105)[13]. However, this development between Qasim and the Kurds under the leadership of Mustafa Barzani did not last long, and on 9 September 1961 Qasim's regime ordered the aerial bombardment of Kurdistan region which led to a Kurdish uprising. In addition, on 23 September of the same year the KDP party was banned in Baghdad and a number of its leaders were arrested (see Ismael, 2008, p. 103).

Although the representation of the middle class improved under Qasim's regime, especially through achieving their social and economic interests, the percentage of Shi'i ministers was no more than 17.7 percent of the ministerial appointments in the first decade of monarchy, whereas it reached 34.7 percent in the last decade of the monarchy (Batatu, 1987, p.209). However, the new military regime destroyed the old ruling class and interrupted the process of national integration that had emerged in the monarchy era, especially when the new regime's officer corps was historically dominated by Sunnis (Jabar, 2003, p.58). So, despite the expectations that the majority of Iraqi people had from Qasim's regime, the regime failed to represent the ethnic and religious diversity of Iraqi society. The aftermath of the 1958 revolution witnessed the emergence of Shi'a Islamic movement. The revival of the Shi'a movement after 1958 was mainly a reaction to the Qasim government's social and economic reforms on the one hand, and the intensive secular and leftist policies of the new regime on the other (Al-Qarawee, 2012, p.102). This had provoked conservative and religious Shi'a elements to support the new Shi'a movement. Qasim's land distribution law shocked the landlords, tribal leaders and wealthy Shi'a, and was another reason for the rising Shi'a religious movement. A Shi'a cleric Muhsin al-Hakim issued a *fatwa* (religious decree) against communism which later

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[13] The Kurds played a major role in suppressing the revolt of Abd al-Wahab al-Shawaf against Qasim's regime in Mosul in 1959, when thousands of Kurds volunteered to fight the insurgency (see Shuman, 2013, p. 85).

contributed actively to the formation of the Shi'a Islamic party (Marr, 2004, p.103).

The revival of the Shi'a movement, then, was not reaction to the sectarian discrimination against the Shi'a, but as Jabar (2003, p.75) observed was a direct response to the shift that was occurred as a result of the shift of socio-political power from the old landowning and clerical elite to the modern middle class. In particular, three main reasons provoked Shi'a clerics to take an oppositional stand against Qasim's regime: the demise of the Sheikhly landlord class, the new Family Law and the spread of communism among Shi'as of lower and middle class[14]. The Shi'a clerics viewed Marxism as a threat to Islam and at the same time to the source of their social power (Jabar, 2003, p.75).

Nevertheless, communism attracted significant sympathy among Shi'as, especially from of the lower and middle classes. The Shi'a adherence to communism grew gradually from late 1940s and 1950s, as well as after the revival of Shi'a Islamic movement in the 1960s and 1970s in Iraq, mainly because of the deprivation of the new Shi'a generation and their exclusion from the political process (Naqash, 2003, p.132). The Shi'a attraction to the communism in 1950s was mainly because of the failure of Pan-Arabism to become a political and national framework for Iraqi Shi'a, since the Pan-Arabists were mostly Sunni urban politicians whose interests different from those of the Shi'as (Naqash, 2003, p. 133). Communism was favoured by some Shi'a because of its principles, such as equality among Iraq's different classes and ethnic and religious groups. To an extent during the revolutionary years 1958-59, Shi'as had a significant weight within the communist party, including the office of First Secretary and positions such as secretaries of Baghdad, the Mid-

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[14] Apart from the agrarian sector, Qasim also touched an important aspect in Iraqi society through organising family relations in a form of new Personal Status Law in December 1959, which was traditionally controlled by Islamic law (*Al-Shari'a Al-Islamiyya*). The new law limited the right of polygamy, which was widely spread in Iraqi society. According to the new law, men were not allowed to take a second wife without the permission of a judge. Also articles 8 and 9 set a minimum age for marriage at eighteen. Furthermore article 74 of the new law provided women with equal rights with men regarding inheritance issues, and the code applied to both Shi'a and Sunni (see Marr, 2004, p.100). The new family law aroused significant opposition among religious leaders, clerics, 'Ulamas, and conservative citizens, which later contributed to the revival of the Shi'a Islamic movement against Qasim.

Euphrates region, the Farmers' Bureau and the Military Organization of the communist party. It is true that communist Shi'a acted primarily as communists; but they kept their Shi'a identity clear and did not deny it (Batatu, 1987, p. 209). However, it is important to know that the emergence of Da'wa party and the dominance of Ba'athist after Arif's coup d'état in 1963 limited the Shi'as' weight within both the communist party and the Ba'ath party, which was later gradually reflected in the weaking of Shi'a representation in the state institutions. This began to raise the sectarian question across the whole of Iraq's political system.

Despite the short period of Qasim's rule, there was an attempt by Qasim to carry out essential reforms in a number of aspects of government, particularly in the service sector and civil rights. With regard to service aspects, the number of hospitals increased significantly by 25 percent between 1957 and 1963, and also the education field experienced an outstanding development; for example, the number of primary and secondary schools increased from 520,000 in 1958 to 930,000 in 1960 (Eppel, 2004, p.158). Furthermore, the issuance of the law of associations and political parties in 1961 had an important effect on the expansion of association and political parties. This created a public sphere in which freedoms could be exercised, but unfortunately did not last long[15].

Based on the abovementioned argument, it can be said that both King Faisal's and Qasim's attempts can be located in the field of nation-building and state-building processes at the same time. The creation of the Iraqi state in 1921 was an attempt to make a nation-state through integrating various religious and ethnic identities. That is to say, in Iraq the processes of building a nation-state and state-building accompanied each other. However, considering Iraq's multi-ethnic and religious character, these processes were not easy work. It is true that most of the earliest modern state-building examples in Europe have gone through a similar process (Ayoob, 1995, p.24). However, as Smith (1983, p.11) points out, "the Western model is essentially a 'state system' rather than a nation system". The model of the state that the British built in Iraq was highly based on Arab nationality, and within the Arab nationality on a narrow

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[15] In January 1961 for the first time in the Arab world a woman (Dr. Naziha Dulaymi) was appointed as a government minister when she was made head of the protection of women's rights ministry in Iraq (see, Eppel, 2004).

Sunni identity, which was magnified in particular from 1963 onwards, and reached a peak under the rule of the Ba'ath party.

From this point of view, the Pan-Arabist ideology had challenged Qasim's regime both internally and externally[16]; internally he had to deal with the criticism of the Ba'athist and nationalist parties regarding his alleged engagement with the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP). On the other hand, after the Mosul revolt, the ICP pushed Qasim to provide them with a greater role in the government (Ismael, 2008, p. 87). Externally, the regional challenges remained a huge threat for him. For example, in 1958 the United Arab Republic (UAR) accused him of anti-Arab sentiments. In addition, he faced further isolation when after 1961 he warned Kuwait that the 1899 agreement between Britain and Kuwait was illegal (Ismael, 2008, p. 102). This attitude caused the enmity of Arab countries and his internal enemies took advantage of it in order to weaken his regime.

It can be said that Qasim had many opportunities to ensure the process of Iraqi state building was moving in the right direction. There were a number of reasons for this. First, Qasim gained great popular support, especially in the earlier years of his rule (Marr, 2012, p. 104-105). Particularly popular among the wide base of rural and landowning peasants, was his Agrarian Reform Law of redistribution of land which Qassim declared on 30th of September 1958 (see Batatu, p.837). Second, Qasim's family background was mixed Sunni, Shi'a, and Kurd (Batatu, p. 836). This gave him a kind of trust from these three main components, which could have produced the political stability needed to build national institutions. However, this period on the contrary paved the way for the new model of governance which relied primarily on violence and military coups. This can be traced back firstly to the conflict between the Communist Party and the Ba'athists, second to the hegemony of the military on the political process which eased the way to the military coups, and third to the fact that Qasim failed to find a solution to the Kurdish issue, as well as displaying the inability to integrate the Shi'a into the political process. All these factors paved the way for a military coup which was led by Ba'athists and nationalists on 8 January 1963 and put an end to Qasim's regime in a tragic and brutal way.

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[16] Qasim was not an ideological leader, especially in the beginning (Batatu 1978, pp. 808–809). However, he soon became a believer in Iraqi nationalism.

The coup immediately installed the National Council of the Revolution Command (NCRC), which was headed by Abd al-Salam Arif. The Ba'athists controlled the most important positions in both the council and cabinet, including the Prime Minister Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr (see, Marr, 2012, p.16; Anderson and Stansfield, 2005, p. 39). As Marr (2012) points out, the Ba'athists made a great shift in Iraqi state policy towards the Pan-Arabism model. This step was attractive to the youth, who were very enthusiastic toward Arab integration; however, this enthusiasm was used negatively, and even caused great damage to the process of state-building in Iraq. Under Arif's rule the Shi'a's sense of exclusion was exacerbated, in particular through the Sunnization of the political elite. As has been discussed earlier, despite the tendency of the ethnic and sectarian outlook under both monarchy and Qasim's regime, both Shi'a and Kurd had their representation in the state institutions. However, from 1963 onwards the political map of Iraqi leadership started to shift toward Sunni domination: for example among the new Ba'ath leadership of November 1963 there were only three Shi'a, whereas the Sunnis' seats were 15. Prior to 1963 the percentage of Shias was 38.5 with 7.5 for the Kurds (al-Fukaiki, 1993, 352).

Despite the aforementioned issue, this period witnessed two state-building attempts; the first step started in 1964 with the launching of a new law which led to the process of nationalising all banks and insurance companies, and industries such as cement and cigarette companies. Also, the government controlled the distribution of commodities, like cars, tea, sugar and pharmaceuticals (Marr, 2012, p.125). The second step was led by the al-Bazzaz government in September 1965, by reducing the influence of military officers in the government; he also tried to alter the direction of the Iraqi economy from the public sector to the private sector, especially by encouraging the industrial sector (Eppil, 2004, p. 227). Through this initiative al-Bazzaz may have hoped that he could decrease the influence of the army elite in the government institutions, in favour of the elite civilian bureaucrats of which he was one.

However, both Arif brothers' efforts failed to address outstanding problems, in particular the Kurdish problem, to which both brothers promised to find an appropriate solution during the 12-point peace plan in June 1966, which was indeed a good initiative for solving Kurdish question. However, the plan

was immediately withdrawn, and both the Iraqi regime and the Kurdish people paid a price for this step; in addition, the continuity of ethno-sectarian discrimination reached a peak. Between 1958 to 1968, of the 38 political leaders only six were Arab Shi'a and only two were Kurds (Anderson and Stansfield, 2005, p.40). Also, the Ba'ath party had totally dominated the political process and state institutions. The core of real power was concentrated in the National Revolutionary Command. Out of the eighteen members who constituted the council, sixteen were Pan-Arab Ba'athists (Batatu, p. 1003). It is not an exaggeration to say that the era of Abdul Salam Arif's was the most ethno-sectarian ever seen in Iraq, especially for the Shi'as and the Kurds[17]. The first and second republic deepened the rifts among the Iraqi people on the basis of their ethnic and religious differences.

2.2.2   The era of Ba'ath Party rule (1968-2003)

The Ba'athist period is one of the most influential periods in the life of the Iraqi state and society, particularly for the process of state-building, in terms of both the length of Ba'athist rule and the establishing of roots of the totalitarian regime, which later penetrated deeply into all facets of the Iraqi state. The coup of 17 July 1968 reinforced the hegemony of two Ba'athist figures. The first was Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr, who became prime minister and the president of the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) on 30 July 1968; and the second figure was Saddam Hussein, who became the deputy to al-Bakr (Marr, 2012, p.138). Both figures (Bakr from 1968 until 1979 and Saddam from 1979 to 2003) shaped the parameters of the Iraqi state.

The first decade of the Ba'athist model produced three essential changes in the new political system (Marr, 2012, p.139): first, the RCC (Revolutionary

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[17] Abd al-Salam's regime did not keep its promise to resolve the Kurdish issue. On the contrary, it encouraged the higher Shi'i religious authority, Grand Ayatollah Mohsin al-Hakim, to issue a *fatwa* in order to support the fighting against Kurds. However, Ayatollah Mohsin al-Hakim refused to issue it. In the same way, the amended law of 1930 number 130, called the law of inheritance tax, excluded the Shi'a from the tax break conceded to other components when funding their own schools, on the pretext that the Shi'a schools were informal institutions (see, Shuman, 2013, p. 97).

Command Council) was fully controlled by the army; second, the RCC was also dominated by the Tikriti clan; and third, the government was completely monopolised by the Ba'athists. It could be seen that the Ba'ath regime in the earlier years focused mainly on two major planks to strengthen the structure of their power. The first step was based on the concerted plan to liquidate the Ba'ath's opponents, such as Ba'athist members whose loyalties were questionable in the Ba'athist leadership's eyes; in addition, thousands of communists were murdered or arrested (see Sassoon, 2012, pp. 222-223). The second step was openness over the Kurdish issue. It is well known that a part of the breakdown of both Qasim's and Arif's regimes has been attributed to the instability in the north (Kurdistan). That is why the outcome of this plan was the manifesto of 11 March 1970, which adopted for the first time the "autonomy" of Kurdistan, and also was a good step towards dealing with the Kurdish issue. This step provided Kurds with a chance to benefit from a number of social and cultural rights, in particular in education. But the 11 March agreement, like other agreements with the Kurds, was never implemented; on the contrary, Iraq reached another agreement with Iran known as the Algiers Agreement in 1975[18]. The agreement completely eliminated the peace process between the Kurds and the Iraqi government. Further, Mustafa Barzani and the Kurds were accused of being separatists, and Saddam claimed that "we were debating a draft for autonomy and not for a new state in Iraq" (Farouk-Sluglett, 2001, p.165).

The Ba'ath's main project for state-building in this period was concentrated on two major aspects: first, how to raise the military capability of the Iraqi state to play a regional role, especially toward Arab and regional issues by relying on Iraq's huge oil revenue, which witnessed a significant increase in 1972 from $575 million to $26 billion in 1980; secondly, the adoption of a long-term economic project, particularly to improve the standard of living, alongside

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[18] The Algiers agreement was a severe blow to the Kurdish national movement in Iraq because it isolated them from external assistance. The greater part of the agreement was related to the end of Iran's support to the Kurds, which had been a major support in that period. It can be argued that the Iranian Shah gained a great benefit from the Algiers agreement. According to the agreement the Shah should stop supporting the Kurds in exchange for the sovereignty over half of the Shatt Al-Arab and three islands, while Iraq would cede the oil-rich region of Khuzestan (see, Charountaki, 2010, p. 140; Farouk-Sluglett, 2001, p.164).

building the military (see, Marr, 2012, p. 159). Consequently, the agricultural, industrial and educational sectors witnessed significant progress.

With regard to the military, in 1974 the Ba'ath regime secretly planned to establish a three-man strategic development committee in order to develop nuclear, chemical, and later biological weapons; the committee was headed by Saddam Hussein. The first outcome of this committee was an agreement with France for purchasing a nuclear reactor for the purpose of research (Marr, 2012, p. 162). Furthermore, the nationalisation of Iraqi oil in 1972 played an important role in building Iraqi military capabilities. The oil income provided the Ba'athist regime with a great chance to impose their control on the Iraqi natural resources and use this to extend their hegemony over both state and society to the extent that in 1974 the total oil revenue[19] reached 5.7 billion dollars (Eppel, 2004, p. 254). In 1979 oil production contributed about 63 percent of Iraq's GDP. According to some sources the military expenditure was 30 percent of Iraqi GNP by 1980 (Marr, 2012, 159) - see table (1). All these steps paved the way for the Ba'ath regime to build Iraq into a huge regional military power, which later posed a serious threat to its neighbours.

	Value in ID millions	% of GDP
1960	209.7	37.1
1965	285.9	33.0
1970	370.5	30.9
1975	2,287.7	57.6
1979	5,686.5	62.7

Table (1) Oil as a percentage of Iraq's Gross Domestic Product 1960-1979 in current ID million.

(Cited in Marr, 2012, p. 159)

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[19] In 1973 and 1974 the majority of Arab countries joined the oil boycott campaign against the United States and Israel, while Iraq was the only Arab-majority country that did not join this group. This attitude could explain the importance of this period, which was a golden period for the Ba'athist regime to reshape Iraqi state according to their vision.

Saddam's role here cannot be ignored; he was excessively interested in enhancing the military establishment, especially from the second period of the Ba'ath regime onwards. The state witnessed significant growth; the government's size had increased 18-fold in less than a quarter of a century. Also the number of employees and workers in the Iraqi state reached 885,000 in the early nineties (Abdul-Jabar, 1995, p. 70).

It can be said that Saddam's project of Iraqi state-building greatly depended on reinforcing military institutions and the Ba'ath party. This was especially so after Saddam became an absolute leader from 1979 onward. In the Ba'ath's model it was difficult to distinguish between state, government and party. As has been mentioned by Makiya (1989, pp. 40-41), both military forces and the Ba'ath party were considerably extended. Also, alongside the military forces, Saddam reshaped the party's "paramilitary militia forces" in the name of the Popular Army, *al-Jaish al-Shaabi*, to the extent that by 1980, the number of this army reached 250,000, and during the Iran-Iraq War, roughly one million members. Moreover the Ba'ath Party had deeply penetrated into all spheres of Iraqi society. As Mufti (1996, p. 70) notes, the eyes and ears of the party were everywhere. In addition, the Ba'ath's members jumped from only 5,000 in 1968 to 500,000 in 1978. .

It is, however, important to note that in addition to the military building plan, Saddam also launched a modernisation plan in the education[20], agricultural and industrial sectors. The Ba'athist regime in 1975 paid significant attention to the variety of modernisation, which was based on the socialist principles of Ba'athist ideology. The plan also aimed to transform Iraq from a developing country to a developed country (Sassoon, 2012, p.238). This plan was based on two main aspects. First, it focused on the equitable redistribution of wealth by constructing a kind of welfare state for its people, which might provide some political legitimacy for the regime. The second was the diversification of the Iraqi economy to ensure it was no longer dependent on the single product of oil.

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[20] For more detail about Ba'athist political education, and the project of mass Ba'athification, see Sassoon, 2012, p.61-71. *Saddam Hussein's Ba'th Party: inside authoritarian regime*.

It is important to underline that, Saddam's regime especially from the 1980s until 1990, did not practice economic policies based on ethnic and religious discrimination. His view towards the economy had been through the lense of enhancing Ba'ath party power. As Sassoon (2012, p.326) argued, Saddam believed that the people would not reject a regime's rule if they felt happy and lived in a welfare state. Saddam's vision toward Iraq's economy was neither a communist model nor a western. He explained in a simple way that "what is the point of talking about socialism while people stay hungry?" He told his biographer Fuad Matar, " we believe the private sector and the socialist sector will go hand in hand forever. They are partners in the service of society" (Cited in Sassoon, 2012, p.3270).

By the end of 1975, the consequence of this plan was an outstanding development, especially in building schools and hospitals, free access to health services and providing electricity to rural places, to the extent that for the first time in Iraqi history, 4000 villages received electricity (Anderson and Stansfield, 2005, p. 76; Marr, 2012, p. 161). These development steps had positive outcomes. For example, in the education field the Comprehensive National Campaign for Compulsory Education, which was announced in 1977, led to two million Iraqis learning to read and write in 1982 (Anderson and Stansfield, 2005, p. 77). Consequently, by the end of the 1970s the middle class had witnessed a significant growth, especially in occupations such as doctors, engineers, teachers, civil servants and academics, to the extent that, as Marr (2012, p. 164) has mentioned, the middle class constituted about 35 percent of the urban population in Iraq in 1977.

However, these rapid developments of the Iraqi state under the Ba'athist regime reflected negatively internally and externally; internally it produced an authoritarian state, which seriously pulverised civil society; some observers have pointed out that there was nothing called an Iraqi civil society during the Ba'ath period (see Byman, 2003, p.59). Moreover the Ba'ath regime depended on the most repressive means to oppress any opposing voices that could become a source of threat to the Ba'ath regime. Saddam's regime viewed both Kurds and Arab Shi'a as points of weakness for the process of state-building and growing of the Ba'athist regime, in particular during the Iran-Iraq War, which dealt with both groups in the cruellest fashion. With regard to the Kurds, the

Ba'ath's regime resorted to the liquidation of Kurdish identity through forced displacement and replacement of up to 500,000 Kurds, as well as the destruction of 4000 Kurdish villages, and also through the infamous *Anfal* Campaigns in 1987 and 1988 under the pretext of cutting the sources for the Kurdish opposition movements (Anderson and Stansfield, 2005, p.72); in addition, the Ba'athists used chemical weapons in Halabja city, claiming the lives of 5000 people (including women and children) in a tragic way.

The same happened with the Shi'a in the south. The Ba'ath regime saw the Arab Shi'a as a threat to their political system and sometimes also as potential Iranian agents. For example, in 1980, 40,000 Shi'as "of Iranian origin" were deported to Iran. This number increased to over 400,000 Shi'a refugees fleeing to Iran and Syria during the Iran-Iraq War (Sluglett and Sluglett, 2001, p. 258). Shi'a identity was always viewed with suspicion under the Ba'ath Party, and this sectarian discrimination reached its peak in 1991 when the Shi'a took advantage of the Ba'athist weakness by rising up against the regime. The Ba'ath regime used the most repressive means against the uprising, with the number of people displaced reaching between 100,000 and 190,000, in addition to those people who were executed and killed (Anderson and Stansfield, 2005, p.131).

The rapid expansion of the Ba'ath hegemony in economic and military spheres had created expansionist ambitions in the Ba'ath, and can also be considered as a main reason that drove the Ba'ath regime to the long-term war with its neighbour Iran in 1980 and later with Kuwait in 1990. It may be argued that the long-term war with Iran led to the elimination of all the previous positive efforts that were made by the Ba'ath in the 1970s. Furthermore the human and economic costs to the Iraqi state were very substantial, and this reflected on all aspects of the state. The number of deaths according to some western sources is estimated at 100,000 for Iraq, and about 750,000 injured (Sluglett and Sluglett, 2001, p. 258). The total cost of the war for Iraq was estimated at $456.6 billion, beside the great inflation that faced the Iraqi economy after the war, which was estimated at 45 percent by 1990 (Sluglett and Sluglett, 2001, p. 258).

It can be said that, after the first Gulf War (Iran-Iraq War) the Ba'ath regime became a serious threat to its neighbours. Moreover, Iraq came out of

the Iran-Iraq War with the feeling that it had lost much of its power and prestige, especially with respect to Iraq's economic abilities, the destruction of the agricultural and industrial sectors, financial trouble, and the cheapness of oil in the global markets, in addition to the huge of debts which according to Marr (2012, p. 207), were estimated at $90 billion. It was therefore very difficult for such an exhausted state like Iraq to repay all these debts. All these factors pressed Saddam's regime to look for another crisis with which it might cover its failures, but this time with its southern neighbour Kuwait, which was one of the main supporters of the Ba'athist regime against Iran. The invasion of Kuwait in 1990 was another knockout blow that damaged both Iraqi state and society, to the extent that according to some observers it cost Iraq over $170 billion in damages (see Sluglett and Sluglett, 2001, p. 288), which was again at the expense of the Iraqi state-building process.

It can be argued, as Sassoon (2012, p.158) points out, that the period from 1988 until 2003 was a bleeding stage of the Iraqi state. In this period the Ba'ath regime came out on the losing side in two bloody Gulf wars. In addition, in 1991 Iraq witnessed two extensive uprisings in the south and north, which were led by Arab Shi'a and Kurds. The *intifada* (uprising) included 16 out of 18 Iraqi provinces; the Ba'ath for the first time since 1968 felt that it was losing power. Meanwhile, due to some changes in the Coalition Forces strategy and the lack of organisation of the southern revolt, the Ba'ath regime restored its power in the south, while the north remained under the power of the Kurdish forces.

After Operation Desert Storm in 1991, the Ba'ath regime faced two of shifts. First, the legitimacy of the Ba'ath regime reached its lowest level since 1968, both domestically, in the eyes of Iraqi people in all spheres (Arab Shiite, Arab Sunni, Kurds and other components), and externally, the regime losing its loyalty and respect in the eyes of the Arab people. Saddam no longer remained as the protector of the Arab world's eastern gate. The second transformation can be summarised as the shift of Ba'ath power from regional command and government to the office of the presidency and Saddam's family. The second shift concerned the power of Ba'ath (which might be a reaction to the first shift), which related to the loss of Saddam's legitimacy to protect the regime against any possible threats.

Furthermore, in August 1990 the Iraqi state faced another phase of crises that was no less influential than the first and second Gulf Wars. This conflict was between Saddam's regime and the international community, and was represented by the imposition of international sanctions, through the 687 Resolution by the United Nations to control the Iraqi regime's imports and exports. According to this resolution, the Iraq regime was only allowed to import medical supplies and foodstuffs, in addition to the "materials and supplies for essential civilian needs" (Resolution 687) (see Sluglett and Sluglett, 2001, p. 291). The Shi'a uprising in the South and the Kurdish uprising in the North for the first time since the creation of the modern Iraqi state demonstrated clear ethnic and sectarian lines in the Iraqi state. This was admitted in public discourse for the first time, that Iraqi society had a deep ethnic and sectarian crisis (see Alqarawee, 2012, pp. 129,130). The Ba'ath regime authorised the publication of serious articles in the state's official newspaper *al-Thawra* which publicly criticized some sections of the Iraqi Shi'a (ibid, p.130). However, despite the rising of communalism after the 1990s, the ethnic and sectarian identities were still not a source of shaping regional security complex among Iraq's neighbours, as has been the case after 2003.

The imposition of sanctions damaged both state and society to a great degree. The sanctions seriously weakened the Ba'ath regime, while the impact of the sanctions was yet more powerful on Iraqi society and in particular on the lower and middle class. Marr (2012, p. 240) makes clear that the international sanctions damaged one of the most important sectors in Iraqi society, namely Iraq's youth, who lost their education and future. Moreover, the phase of sanctions destroyed all previous efforts that had been made by the Ba'ath regime to build the Iraqi economy and social welfare, such as developing the Iraqi agricultural and industrial sectors, the modernisation programme, and the development of education. For example, Iraqi per capita income in 1989 was over $2000, while in 1992 it fell to $609 (Marr, 2012, p. 233). Also the period of sanctions caused damage to the middle class, which had witnessed notable progress between 1975 and 1985. The vast majority of the Iraqi people (60 percent) depended on government salaries; the value of government salaries dropped to $5 a month in 1993 (Anderson and Stansfield, 2005, p. 93). The sanction war continued until 1996, after which the United Nations realised that

the main victim was the Iraqi people. Thus, the UN initiated the Oil for Food programme (986 Resolution) to help Iraqi civilians.

After the Iraqi acceptance of the Oil for Food programme in 1996 and until the US-led invasion in 2003, Saddam tried to take advantage of the improvement in the standard of living of the Iraqi people in order to re-organise his power, which had been damaged after the Kuwait war. This period was also a problematic stage for the Ba'athist regime, because of the weapons of mass destruction (WMD) crisis and the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) inspections.

Overall, there were many appropriate opportunities for Ba'athist rule to develop Iraq and initiate an effective state-building process, particularly in terms of the length of time, economic potential, comparative political stability, and international and regional support which had not been available for both the monarchy and Qasim's regime. However, the Ba'ath regime posed the same problem that was faced by previous Iraqi regimes. The question of Sunni dominance, or ethno-sectarian discrimination, became more prominent, with the use of violence reaching its highest level. Furthermore, political instability continued from 1988 until the regime ended in 2003. A closer look at the Ba'athist rule in Iraq can reveal that the Ba'ath regime lost an ideal opportunity to build the Iraqi state by legitimate means. Conversely, Saddam's state-building model was producing a hegemonic state internally and regionally; Saddam really only invented a totalitarian model for surviving as long as possible, and was able to stay in place for 35 years, while all internal efforts failed to defeat this model until the US-led invasion in 2003.

2.3. The regional dimension of the state-building process (1921-2003)

It seems clear that the creation of the modern Iraqi state, in an important geostrategic location the Persian Gulf, could not occur without regional and international repercussions. This is especially the case given that the young state was surrounded by classical empires – the Ottoman Empire to the north and the Persian Empire to the east – and that the British and French retained

interests in the region. The country was also subject to the political and historical tensions from its different ethnic groups, including Arabs, Turks, Persians, and Kurds, and the religious, differences especially in terms of the sectarian, ethnic and political conflict between the Shi'a and Sunnis. Added to these tensions, other factors, such as the struggle between regional and international figures, the ideological conflicts between communism and capitalism, and various bids for nationalism and imperialism have had a profound impact on the trajectory of the Iraqi state-building process and its later relations with Iraq's neighbouring states.

The main argument in this section centres on whether the regional powers (Iran, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Turkey) were involved in the process of state-building in Iraq when it was first formed in 1921 as a monarchy, and how they may have been involved in the following decades up until 2003. It also inquires about what have been the main regional factors that impacted the process of state-building in Iraq from the monarchic period until the demise of Saddam in 2003. As Marr (2004, p.182) has pointed out, one of the main projects of all the successive regimes of Iraq from its inception in 1921 until the Ba'ath's collapse in 2003 was the search for how Iraq could be built as a nation state, or at least how it could become a unified state among a number of equally diverse countries. It can be argued that the Mesopotamian region before the creation of the Iraqi state was economically divided and dependent on several surrounding regional governments. For example, Perston (2003, p. 292) has indicated that the population of Mosul had better economic and cultural relations with the Arab communities of Syria than with those in southern Iraq, and further, that Baghdad was an important centre for the Mesopotamian region, whilst Basra, as a port city, was historically more related to the governments and people of the Persian Gulf and India[21].

The creation of the modern Iraqi state constituted a significant challenge for Iran's regional position in the Persian Gulf and its economic interests. The mandate period limited Iranian hegemony in Iraq. After the establishment of the

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[21] It can be noted that the states bounding Iraq made a huge headache for both the new Iraqi state and other neighbours, economically, ethnically, socially and politically, especially economically, which later led to the bloody wars. The boundaries with Kuwait became a real challenge for the Iraqi economy.

Iraqi monarchic regime, Iran expressed openly its attitude saying that there was no legal basis for its existence (Nakash, 1994, p. 102). Meanwhile, the establishment of the monarchic Iraq constituted a real challenge for Shi'a mujtahids (religious leadership) in the country. The main challenge was transferring the religious leadership (al-Marja'iyya) from the city of Najaf to Qum after the death of Abu al-Hassan Isfahani in 1946 (See Nakash, 1994, p. 88). These shifts damaged both Persian and Iraqi Shi'a positions to the extent that the number of Persians in Najaf decreased from 75 percent of the total population to 12 percent in 1957 (Nakash, 1994, p. 105). The historic link between Iran and Iraq had social, religious, political and economic dimensions, which are keys for understanding the enmity that started from the creation of the Iraqi state and continued through the fall of Saddam's regime until after 2003.

The first king, Faisal, felt the many regional challenges in the earlier years of his reign; they included the Persian influence among the Shi'a, pressure from Saudi Arabia's conservative Wahabism and their raids on the south under the monarchy, and Turkish attacks on Kurdistan in the north (see Mufti, 1996, p. 34). These regional challenges have pressed Iraqi regimes into a lasting pattern of enmity and amity, with most of their neighbours and other regional powers, especially after the signing of the Bagdad pact in 1955[22]. However, worth mentioning is that these challenges were not based on ethnic and religious tensions, and were mainly political.

King Faisal was very cautious and concerned about Iraq's relations with its neighbours on the one hand, and with international powers in the region on the other. This concern may have been caused by the fact that Faisal's new position in the region, which, being established by the British under a League of Nations mandate, was a weak position. In a journal interview with King Faisal by Amin al-Rihani (1980, p. 327) the King emphasised that he did not have any

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[22] The Bagdad pact was a pro-western defence alliance between Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Pakistan, and the United Kingdom. The agreement was a product of the high level of hostility between the eastern camp led by the Soviet Union, and the western camp led by the U.S. and its European allies. The agreement was a challenge to the Nasserists' Pan-Arab ideology, and Nasser and his supporters accused Nuri al-Said, promoter of the agreement in Iraqi, of betrayal. Nuri riposted that the Baghdad Pact was not different from the Anglo-Egyptian agreement signed in 1954, and that it was no more a threat to "Arab collective security" than the Anglo-Egyptian agreement had been (see Tripp, 2002, pp. 140-141).

friends in the region except for the British; he stated also that the Iraqi state was surrounded by greedy neighbours. In the north, Turkey made demands on Mosul; the Kurds in the east were rebelling against the new state; the Shah of Iran incited the Shi'a against the new state, motivated by sectarian ambitions; Wahabis continued to raid southern Iraq and worked to undermine the rule of Faisal's father in Hejaz; and in the west French troops held a mandate over the throne of Syria. Faisal emphasised many times that he had no reliable friends in the region except for the British.

The above-mentioned outlook of King Faisal was reflected in Iraq's foreign policy. Khadduri (1951, p. 224) points out that the basis of Faisal's foreign policy in Iraq was composed of three tenets. First, Faisal worked hard to develop and maintain an Anglo-Arab friendship. Second, Faisal adopted a "good-neighbour" policy with most of the Middle Eastern countries. In his relations with Ibn Sa'ud and with Persia, Faisal continually showed his good intentions to settle regional tensions, making visits to Turkey and Iran in 1931, which became the starting point for the Saadabad Pact in 1937. Third, Faisal tried not to ignore other Arab countries, especially Syria and Palestine, by building reliable relations with them. Diplomatic unity with Syria especially was one of Faisal's wishes. Moreover, King Faisal avoided following the pan-Arab school, which adopted interventionist behaviour in helping other Arab countries to gain their independence. In sum, Iraq's foreign policy during its monarchic era followed British foreign policy, especially with regard to its relations with the super powers. In 1955 this relation took a defensive framework with the signing of the Bagdad Pact by Iraq, Turkey, Pakistan, Iran and Great Britain. The agreement was based on military and economic goals, in particular, and countered the influence of communism in the Middle East.

However, the 14th of July 1958 coup that overthrew the monarchy was a major turning point in Iraq's foreign policy. Although Iraq's foreign policy during the monarchic period was to a high degree pro-Western, especially towards the British and the Americans, the 1958 coup totally changed the direction of Iraq's relations towards a pro-communist and pan-Arab ideology. The new Republic immediately gained recognition from most communist countries, reaching twenty-one countries by 26 July 1958. By that time neither the UK nor the U.S. had recognised the new country, nor were other Western countries among the

states recognising the new government (Romero, 2008, p. 24). Brigadier General Abd al-Karim Qasim's new regime faced a slew of international and regional reactions. Internationally, both the British and the Americans were very concerned about the possibility of Iraq's coup spreading to Iraq's neighbours, especially Kuwait. This pushed Britain to prepare militarily for any emergency threats on Kuwait's oil fields. Regionally, Iraq's former partners in the Baghdad Pact pressed for a military intervention through Turkey against Qasim's regime with the hope of restoring the monarchic regime within twenty-four hours of the coup (Romero, 2008, p. 221, 227). However, the plan was not supported by the U.S. and British at that time[23].

There are a number of factors which affected political instability in Iraq. First, the creation of Israel in 1948 negatively impacted on the political process and the efforts of state-building in Iraq. The creation of Israel angered the Arab and Muslim people in Iraq, which led to the emergence of many nationalist movements within the country, including sympathisers of ultra-nationalist ideas that were influenced by European fascism and Nazism. These groups included Ba'athists, nationalists, and communists. The situation was exploited by these political movements and the Iraqi regimes for popular consumption, and consequently produced two negative outcomes: first, it led to the postponement of state-building and the democratisation process, and second, it provided the regime with a kind of pseudo-legitimacy, especially in regards to the monopolisation of power. A second event, the British withdrawal from the Persian Gulf from 1968-1971, also had repercussions on Iraq and its neighbours, because Iraq then became more confident about its power and assumed an independent regional personality, especially in relation to the small Gulf countries. Iraq became a source of threat for Kuwait, claiming more than

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[23] With regard to Iraqi relations with the great powers, Iraq's greatest power ally up until 1958 was Great Britain, but the Soviet Union took over that role after 1958. Iraq–U.S. relations have often been unstable, and the U.S. has never been Iraq's main ally, while the US was the main Western ally of Turkey and Saudi Arabia in the late 1940s, and has also had a prominent role in Iran, Lebanon, Egypt and Jordan (Rubin, 1982, p. 109-110). It can be said that Iraq tried to move close to the U.S. during the Iraq–Iran war in order to increase support from the great powers. Despite Iraq's expanding relations with the west (see Marr, 2012, p. 166, 194), Iraq remained, until the demise of Saddam's regime, a close partner with the Russians, and the former Soviet Union, particularly in military aspects.

once that Kuwait was an integral part of the Iraqi state (see al-Marashi, 2009, p. 450).

Two other events can also be seen as influential factors contributing to the rise of Iraq's regional role (Niblock, 1982, p. 115). First, the signing of the Camp David Agreement between Egypt and Israel in September 1978 was a fatal blow to Egypt's reputation and leadership among the Arab people. Because of this, Iraq was offered a golden opportunity to take on the role as a protector of Arab nationalism. Second, the demise of the Iranian Shah's regime in 1979 created a power vacuum in the Persian Gulf, when the Western powers lost one of their best friends in the region. This may have pushed Iraq to take advantage of this opportunity to assume Western support. This became especially clear when the Islamic Republic of Iran announced its ambition to spread the principles of Islamic revolution through the region. However, these regional transformations did not favour the state-building process in Iraq, instead encouraged the Ba'ath regime to impose its power on a regional level by engaging in ideological conflicts with Egypt and Syria and in its eight-year armed conflict against Iran.

Iraq's relations with Iran have never been completely stable, and a great part of this tension might be ascribed, as Khadduri (1951) states, to the legacy of Ottoman Empire toward the Persian Empire over boundary disputes, especially over the Shatt al-Arab waterway. The resolution of these disputes was finally drafted into the Treaty of Erzerum (31 May, 1847). Moreover, the Islamic revolution in 1979 had a profound impact on the regional landscape, in particular on the Middle Eastern Shi'a, who saw it as a religious and political revival. Iraq was greatly concerned that the disturbance in 1979 would spill over into Iraq; indeed, the Iranian revolution incited the Shi'a opposition to step forward, especially Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr (Marr, 2012, p. 171). The Iraqi Shi'as were sympathetic to the Iranian revolution, and Sadr clearly stated support for the Islamic revolution in a congratulatory message to Ayatollah Khomeini (Marr, 2012, pp. 171-172).

It can be said that Iraq has usually viewed Iran as a challenge for the achievement of its regional aspirations, and the sectarian factor, which had become involved in political and economic considerations, made the problem more complicated. However, the Iran-Iraq War was more ethnicised than sectarian; both countries, and especially Iraq, avoided using sectarian slogans,

because the majority of the Iraqi soldiers were Shi'i Arabs'[24]. On the Iraqi side the war was formally called *Qadisiyyat Saddam,* which refers to the Arab victory over the Persians in A.D. 636, still vivid in the collective memory of Arabs. On the Iranian side the war was called *Jang-e Tahm l* "imposed war", and *Def '-e Moqaddas* "holy defence", which had religious overtones. Although the enmity between Iraq and Iran had not been without sectarian slogans from both parties, sectarian propaganda was not an active instrument for Iran's involvement in Iraq during Iran-Iraq War, due to the insignificance of the sectarian identity among the Iraqi Army until the Shi'a uprising in the south in 1991.

The Arab Gulf countries were typically cautious over Iraq's strength in the region. However, after the Islamic Revolution in 1979, they too shared the concern over the threat of the expansion of Islamic revolution, with the main reason for this action being the factor of the Shi'a populations in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, and which is why they supported Iraq financially during its war with Iran. For example, Saudi Arabia offered to pay France for the expenditure of reconstructing the Iraqi nuclear reactor that had been destroyed by an Israeli air attack in 1981 (Tahir-Kheli and Ayubi, 1983, p. 153). It can be argued that Iraq had bet on Arab unity under Iraqi leadership through its war with Iran, while in fact the war produced a new division between Arab countries; for example, the Gulf countries, Jordan, and Morocco sided with Iraq, whereas Syria, Libya, South Yemen and the Palestinians were on the Iranian side (Tahir-Kheli and Ayubi, 1983, p. 153).

With the exception of the monarchical period, Iraq's relationship with Syria had seen much tension, especially after 1970 when both Hafiz al-Asad and the Iraqi Ba'athists came to power. The differences between the right-wing Syrian Ba'ath and the left-wing Iraqi Ba'ath transformed into a problem between the two states (see Marr, 2012, p. 145; Eppil, 2004, p. 191). The longstanding hostility between Syria and Iraq had a profound influence on Iraq's internal and

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[24] Both countries played the ethno-minority card. For example, Iraq had supported the Iranian opposition, the People's Mojahedin, (Mojahedin-e-Khalq) as well as subverted Iran's Arab minority in Khuzistan by encouraging their separatist ambitions. Iraqi former foreign minister Tariq Aziz clearly mentioned this aspect by saying that "five small Irans would be better than one big Iran" (see Tripp & Chubin, 1988, p107). In the same way, Iran had also supported Iraqi Shi'a and Kurdish opposition.

regional attitudes. Internally, Saddam viewed the Syrian Ba'ath regime as a source of threat to the Ba'ath's regime in Iraq, and he put in place severe procedures to counter any possible threats from Syria. Regionally, the hostility reached such a point that Syria, unlike most Arab countries, openly backed Iran against Iraq, and this attitude came at a high cost to Iraq's economy. In 1980 the relation between the countries reached its lowest point, and Iraq severed its diplomatic relations with Syria and started supporting the Syrian opposition. In turn Syria cut off the Iraqi oil pipeline in 1982, which cost Iraq $6 billion (Hirschfeld, 2013, p. 116). In spite of the tensions between the countries, however, neither country resorted to using the sectarian card against the other (al-Kayssi, 1998, p.423). This attitude could be explained by the similarity of both countries in terms of ethnic and religious formations,

I would argue that, besides the factors that have been mentioned above, there are two crucial regional events that have had seismic effects on the trajectory of state-building in Iraq. Firstly, the pan-Arabism movement in the region, and nationalist movements, negatively affected the process of state-building, especially after the fall of the monarchic regime and throughout the Qasim and Ba'athist regimes. The emergence of and the coming to power of these groups entered the country into a spiral of bloody conflicts and military coups, which normalised the use of violence for the establishment of power. These nationalistic waves have really been devoted to the dominance of the military and their use of all kinds of violence; meanwhile, the ideology was the main reason behind Iraq's regional aspirations. Second, the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran was a major historical shift in the Middle East, but its implications for Iraq were different from those for the rest of the region. The Islamic revolution led to a Shi'i revival in Iraq, and was supported by Shi'i clerics. This pushed the Ba'ath regime to take the Shi'a as a serious threat until the regime change in 2003[25]. The Kurdish problem was also exploited as a

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[25] In October 1965, Ayatollah Khomeini moved to the holy city of Najaf, Iraq, where he stayed until 1978, when he was pushed to leave by then-Vice President Saddam Hussein. During his exile life in Najaf he gave a number of serious lectures about Islamic government (Hokumat-e Islami: Velayat-e faqih). Khomeini had number of disagreements with other Shi'a clerics in Najaf, in particular with Sayyed Mohsen al-Hakim who was the sole Marja' (source of religious reference) for Shi'as after the death of Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Husayn Borujerdi in 1961.

means to pressure Iraq throughout the Iraq–Iran war. All of these events shifted Iraq's attention from state-building to the building of a hegemony which drove Iraq to become a source of threat for its neighbours.

The above discussion yields the conclusion that Iraq, from its creation and until its demise in 2003, was frequently an active player in the Middle East on the regional level. Iraq's state-building trajectory has been repeatedly influenced by regional events, and at the same time had a major impact on regional events. However, it is worth considering that the regional engagement of Iraq's neighbours in the process of state-building until 2003 was not part of the ethno-religious conflict in the region. The successive Iraqi regimes had worked to construct a regional power in the Persian Gulf and to assume a role of leadership among Arab countries. However, the Iraqi dream of leadership negatively affected the country's state-building process by making the Iraqi regimes' priorities shift from building political, economic and social institutions to concentrating on building a regional hegemony. These temerarious desires of the Iraqi state cost the country much, both financially and in human lives; the three Gulf wars, fought in 1980, 1990, and 2003, are the primary examples of these costs.

2.4.   Conclusion: State-building versus regional hegemony

At the margins of our debate, it can be argued that the Iraqi state, from its creation in 1921 until its overthrow in 2003, lacked the effort to construct the modern state through the building of modern political, social, and constitutional institutions. Both British and Iraqi ruling elites failed to offer an appropriate form of both nation- and state-building that reflected the nature of Iraqi society. Both the state and society were monopolised by an exclusive group, which was unable or unwilling to integrate other factions under the umbrella of a modern state. Instead, the Iraqi regimes' great concern was how to construct a hegemonic regime that could hold control over the state's various populations domestically through seeking legitimacy for its power, and regionally through

playing a leadership role by interfering with the affairs of other states in the region. Thus, the successive Iraqi regimes, in particular after the downfall of the monarchic system, have had an interventionist tendency in regional affairs. However, part of Iraq's regional network of influence may be attributed to Iraq's geostrategic position in the region.

The essential aspects that successive Iraqi regimes failed to deal with were primarily ethno-sectarian issues; in particular the Kurdish national identity, and the Shi'i religious identity, were the main reasons behind the failure of the state-building process. All successive Iraqi regimes failed to build a suitable framework of citizenship to integrate the Kurds and the Shi'a in a new state.

However, regional engagement in the process of state-building in Iraq from 1921 until 2003 has not aimed to orientate state-formation in Iraq toward a certain form of state, or to support a particular ethnic or religious group. Secondly, although ethno-sectarian division has been a durable feature of the state-building process from the creation of the Iraqi state to the collapse of Ba'ath regime in 2003 (see Osman, 2012); throughout this period, Iraq's neighbours' involvement in the process of state-building has not been part of the ethno-religious calculations. For example, between 1950 and 1960, the source of Iraq's neighbours' involvement in Iraq were the Arab left movements and socialist regimes, especially from revolutionary republics, led by pan-Arab nationalist military forces. Even the longstanding Iranian conflict with successive Iraqi regimes was not for the sake of building a Shi'i dominated government in Iraq, but was mainly part of the wider political conflict with Iraq which has been related to building regional hegemony in the Persian Gulf. Therefore, until the Iranian revolution in 1979, the internal and external political disputes over the definition and leadership of Arab nationalism were more often sources of shaping security policies in Arab states than the ethnic and sectarian threats from other regional states. That is to say that the state-building process has not been part of the ethnic and sectarian concerns among Iraq's neighbours in the regional context, as has been the case after the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

Chapter three:

3. U.S. engagement in state-building in Iraq 2003-2011

"Despite past failures, our policy in Iraq will succeed "because it has to."
President George W. Bush (New York Times, January 10, 2007).

Introduction

In the last chapter, I examined how the British, Iraq's political elite, and Iraq's neighbours, engaged in the process of state-building from the creation of the state in 1921 until the fall of Ba'ath regime in 2003. The aim of this chapter is to explore the form of state-building that the U.S. left behind after 2003. I argue that part of Iraq's neighbours' interference and the ethno-confessional conflict which occurred after the U.S.-led invasion in 2003 have been consequences of the state-building model applied by the U.S. in post-2003 Iraq, a method that in the meantime had become the central foundation of the new Iraqi state. The process of the rebuilding of the Iraqi state had been done without having sufficient support from Iraq's main regional neighbours, especially the countries linked directly through ethnic, religious, political and economic ties to Iraq, mainly Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia and Turkey.

In order to explore the basis of the U.S. state-building model in post-2003 Iraq, this chapter examines three stages of the state-building process in Iraq after 2003. The first one was dominated by the role of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). The CPA was the higher authority after the U.S.-led invasion in charge of starting the state-building project envisaged by the White House, and drew up the most important landmarks of power which later became a foundation of the distribution of power in post-2003 Iraq. The second stage was characterised by the process of drafting a new constitution, which was expected to be a factor of stability for the new political process following 2003 invasion, but did not lead to the building of a satisfactory political formula agreed by all of

Iraq's disputing parties. On the contrary, the constitutional process was also partly responsible for the country's political instability. The third stage was the U.S. withdrawal strategy from Iraq at the end of 2011, which interrupted the state-building project undertaken after the invasion. A detailed analysis of these three levels will reveal the design of the state-building that the U.S. left behind in post-2003 Iraq, one the one hand, and influenced by the involvement of Iraq's neighbours' on the other hand.

3.1 The Coalition Provisional Authority: Dismantling the state and establishing the sectarian quota system

The Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), which had followed the Office for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA)[26], was the higher provisional authority in the country after the U.S.-led invasion. The UN Security Council Resolution 1483, of 22 May 2003, provided a legal base to the U.S.,'s and United Kingdom's status as "occupying powers" (see United Nations Security Council Resolution 1483, 22 May 2003)[27]. The CPA was in power between 21 April 2003 and its dissolution on 28 June 2004; throughout these 14 months, the U.S. had set up the most important parameters of the state's

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[26] The ORHA was established by the Pentagon mainly to deal with a possible humanitarian crisis in the aftermath of the Iraqi invasion in 2003. The re-building of the state institutions and set-up of a new political system were never the task of the ORHA. That is why, a few months after the invasion, the ORHA faced a serious problem regarding the political situation on the ground. In particular, this was evident in its inability to stop the looting of all Iraqi ministries (except the ministry of oil), to provide public services, and stop chaos and disorder. Also, Jay Garner (head of the ORHA) has been blamed for being wrong person for the reconstruction process, especially after the visit of Tony Blair's special envoy to Iraq John Sawers, who described the situation as an "unbelievable mess". See Bridoux, J. (2013), p 92; Allawi, A. A. (2008), pp.104-105; Ricks, T. (2006), p. 109.

[27] The CPA and its head ambassador Paul Bremer were treated by the U.S. institutions as the president's envoy to Iraq, in charge of the reconstruction and the rebuilding of the structure of the Iraqi state following the 2003 invasion. There was a kind of obscurity over whether the CPA was a federal agency of the U.S. or an agency belonging the UN Security Council. However, in fact the CPA had been looked upon as a part of the U.S. federal government (see Allawi, 2008, p.106).

political structure and at the same time the political process for the new Iraqi state.

The CPA's engagement in the process of re-building the Iraqi state has been criticised by several researchers, even inside the Bush administration. The CPA can be responsible for institutionalising the basis for ethnic and sectarian division in post-2003 Iraq. However, these blocks were already there even before the invasion of 2003. Other broader reasons have to be explored. The first is the U.S.'s misreading of Iraq's history, in particular its inability to understand the complicated relationship between Iraq and the neighbouring countries and their interests, as well as the regional security system after the invasion. According to the U.S. Central Command documents, the U.S. had assumed that "regional states will not challenge U.S. military operations with conventional forces" (The National Security Archive, 2005, p. 4).

After the Gulf War of 1991, no-fly zone paved the way for shaping the Iraqi state and society across ethnic and sectarian lines, which aimed to protect the Kurds in Northern and Shi'as in Southern Iraq from the Ba'ath regime in the centre. Thus, following the 2003 U.S.-led invasion, the CPA could have followed one of two options, either to accept the post-war de facto divided Iraq as it was, or to insist on the reorganisation of the main divided groups under one unified nation state. The CPA chose the easy option by constitutionalising the post-war situation, which was highly influenced by the desires of the U.S.'s local allies the Shi'as and Kurds, who had collaborated with the U.S. in defeating Saddam's regime; they constituted the majority of nearly 80 percent of the Iraqi population. This does not support the idea that the rise of sectarian violence in Iraq has been related to a creative U.S. chaos policy in the region (Taras, 2006, p.34). However, the U.S. view towards Iraq even prior to the 2003 invasion, was that Iraq is a country which is ethnically and religiously divided among the three main groups of Shi'i Arab, Sunni Arab and Kurd (Taras, 2006, p. 41), in addition to the other smaller minorities, such as Christians, Yazidis and Turkmen. After the 1991 Gulf War, former U.S. president Bush Senior promoted the Shi'as in southern Iraq against Saddam's regime. This continued to be the case when the U.S. supported secular Shi'a exiles, such as Ahmed Chalabi the leader of the INC, against the Ba'athist regime. Chalabi told some western journalists that the U.S. had long intended to build a Shi'a dominated power in Iraq as a

counterweight to the Sunni domination of the region (Hersh, 24 December 2001).

Second, the CPA was under pressure to demonstrate to U.S. public opinion and the rest of the world that they would be successful in the process of rebuilding a new Iraq. Third, the process of state-building in Iraq was part of the U.S.'s war on terror, and was affected by this agenda more than by a sincere desire to implement state-building policies. The CPA placed greater stress on counterinsurgency, especially military capacities, than on rebuilding the efficiency of Iraq's state institutions. Furthermore, the process of state-building, (particularly when led by the U.S.) has always been complicated, and is often judged as a failure; especially in the Middle East, there has not been any single successful case[28].

It can be argued that the CPA efforts following the collapse of the Ba'ath regime cannot be considered a serious contribution to the re-building of Iraqi political and economic institutions. Most of the CPA activities focused on security issues. There was not any sufficient attempt at building the institutional structures of the new state (Chatham House, 2012, p 13). The U.S. had not realised what post-war Iraq would look like. For example, Paul Bremer, the head of the CPA, clearly mentioned in his book "My year in Iraq" that he asked Ryan Crocker (U.S. ambassador to Iraq in the period of the U.S,-led invasion) whether there was a "practical plan" for after the war; Crocker replied "not at all…it was never intended as a post-war plan". Furthermore, Bremer said "it is not that we did not plan, the problem is that we planned for the wrong contingency" (Bremer, 2006, p. 25). It may have been the case that the U.S. invasion of Iraq was viewed by the Americans as a means to another end, rather than an end in itself. As Stratfor (July 2003) noted, "the invasion of Iraq was intended to bring U.S. power to bear against al Qaeda's enablers in the

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[28] According to the Carnegie report, from the sixteen cases of U.S.-led processes of state-building (nation-building) from 1900 to the present, only four of them were successful cases: Germany and Japan, both of which highly homogenous societies, and Panama and Granada, both very small countries. There are another two cases, Sudan and Afghanistan, both of them examples of failure. See Dobbins, J., et al. (2008). *After the war: nation-building from FDR to George W. Bush*, Rand Corporation; Pei, M., & Kasper, S. (2003). *Lessons from the past: the American record on nation building* (Vol. 24). Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

region''. The essential reason for that was that the U.S.'s main purpose in Iraq was winning the war and changing the Ba'ath regime. This can be noticed clearly in David Chasten's interview with Thomas E. Ricks (2006, p.151): "No one had talked about what would happen when we got there", said Chasten. "There was no plan for that. They literally told us once we got there they would pull us back out, take us home. Once we got there it was a clusterfuck, just trying to figure out what to do". The U.S.'s main priority during the rebuilding of post-war Iraq was protecting Iraq's oil reserves, which was the only sector that was protected from looting by the American forces. Iraq's huge reserves prompted the former Deputy Secretary of Defence Paul Wolfowitz to tell the House Appropriation Committee on March 27 2003 "we are dealing with a country that can really finance its own reconstruction and relatively soon." (National Security Archive, document 8, 2005)

In addition to the challenges mentioned earlier, the U.S. did not expect challenges to the state-building process from Iraq's neighbours, in particular from its allies Saudi Arabia and Turkey. However, countries such as Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia and Turkey are directly affected by change in the region, as a result of the composition of the regional security complex among these states (Iraq, Syria, Iran Saudi Arabia and Turkey), in accordance with the theory of RSC. The regional balance of power among these countries has often been deeply linked with Iraq and can be influenced by the balance of power among Iraq's different ethnic and religious groups, particularly when the same ethnic and (to lesser extent) religious identities are politically active in Iraq's neighbouring countries. Despite this, the U.S. acted without consulting them. Therefore, any successful state-building process, not only in Iraq but in the whole Middle East, needs regional collaboration. With this in mind, it is useful to remember the Bonn conference for Afghanistan on 5 December 2011, where the U.S. and its allies consulted Afghanistan's neighbouring countries before their intervention[29].

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[29] Three years after the U.S. invasion of Iraq, especially in 2006 when Iraq faced a bloody ethno-sectarian war, the Iraqi study group set up a wide-ranging plan. In their report, James A. Baker, III, and Lee H. Hamilton, advised the U.S. to take a number of steps to undertake a reasonable state-building project. The most important part of this report recommended the Bush

Despite Iraq's neighbours' rejectionist stance towards the U.S. invasion, the Bush administration called for a model for building a democratic Iraq which became an example for the entire Middle East. The U.S. administration did not take into account that this kind of strategy could alarm countries like Syria and Iran, which felt threatened[30]. On the other hand, the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq did not enjoy international support, especially from other members in the Security Council, like France, China and Russia (see, Dobbins, 2003, p. 167). In addition, important U.S. allies, such as Germany and Turkey, opposed to the invasion. The non-engagement of the U.N. brought into question the legitimacy of the war. This does not mean that a multinational intervention guarantees a successful state-building process; however, the examples of Bosnia and Kosovo where missions were led by U.N. were shorter, cheaper, gained more international legitimacy and were more successful than those had been undertaken by countries unilaterally or bilaterally[31] (see Dobbins, et al, 2001, pp. xxxvii, 245).

Paul Bremer began his administration by issuing two key decisions that jeopardised the entire U.S. process of state-building in Iraq. He first issued the de-Ba'athification decree, excluding those were in 'the top four levels' of the Ba'ath party and those who hold top three levels in each ministry from holding office in the new Iraq (CPA order 1, 16 May 2003). With this decision he eliminated 85,000 to 100,000 people belonging to the previous bureaucratic elite from participating in the process of state-building (Pfiffner, 2010, p.79).

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administration to involve Iraq's neighbours, especially Iran and Syria, in the process (See Baker III and Hamilton, 2006).

[30] According to some leaked documents made public by WikiLeaks, regarding crossing international borders, the American military forces do not required permission before crossing into Syrian or Iranian territory or airspace, when they are in pursuit of former regime or terrorist groups (Wikileaks, 2008).

[31] For example, both state-building processes in Bosnia and Kosovo were under U.S.-leadership, but in were also multinational efforts, involving the likes of the UN, NATO, the World Bank, and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSED), in addition to other international organisations which had a significant role in terms of building legitimacy and lowering costs, this all achieved by sharing power and responsibilities (See Dobbins, et al. 2008, p. xviii).

Cordesman (An interview with Anthony Cordesman, July 18, 2006) pointed out that no one from the CPA realised how many people would be affected by applying this decision. The CPA administration estimated that only 1% of the the Ba'ath party would be targeted, a total of 20,000 people from the two million members of the Ba'ath party before the invasion (Pavel, 2012, p49).

In 2003, unemployment in Iraq was around 40 percent, and the de-Ba'athification order was responsible for nearly 60 percent of unemployment in post-2003 Iraq (Pavel, 2012, p. 39). This deeply affected the service sector in the government following the U.S.-led invasion, especially the top technical positions, such as in schools, electricity, transportation, communications, universities and hospitals. For example, 18,046 people had been excluded in the Ministry of Education, four times more than in any other ministries. The second highest ministry was the Higher Education Ministry with 4,361, and the Ministry of Health came in next with 2,367 excluded members[32] (Sissons & Al-Saiedi, 2013, p22).

A few days after the de-Ba'athification decree, The CPA issued another order on 23 May 2003 which dissolved the Iraqi Army and called for a new army. The former U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said in her recent book (2017, p. 291) that she was not aware of the decision of disbanding the Iraqi Army. She stated that Colin Powell had said "have you seen the order that Jerry [Bremer] sent out in Baghdad? I said that I had not. He disbanded the army". This decision also affected about 385,000 members of the armed forces, 285,000 police in the Interior Ministry and 50,000 members in security apparatus (Pfiffner, 2010, p. 20).

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[32] It can be argued that the de-Ba'athification decree was influenced by the de-Nazification in Germany after World War II, which targeted 2.5 percent of the population from all kinds of employment, while in Iraq the de-Ba'athification was less far-reaching and only the former senior Ba'athists were banned from government jobs (see Dobbins, 2009, p. xxvii).

Frankly, the Iraqi case was much different from Germany's, since the Iraqi government, particularly under Saddam's rule, was practically the only provider of employment, since the economy was entirely dependent on the oil revenues. It was very difficult to live in Iraq without finding employment from the state. The chance of getting a job outside the government was very low, and mainly limited to the business elite, who themselves were close to the Ba'ath Party.

Arguably, both CPA decisions contributed highly to the predicaments faced by the U.S.-led effort of state-building. These decisions were also exploited by the Shi'a, especially through the Higher National de-Ba'athification Commission (HNDC), to the extent that some of Sunnis claimed that de-Ba'athification transformed into a de-Sunnification (al-Hameed, 10 January 2010). Bremer himself admitted that the decision had exceeded its aims; he stated: "clearly I had been wrong to give a political body like the Governing Council responsibility for overseeing the de-Ba'athification policy" (Bremer, 2006, p. 297)[33].

However, both decisions had been welcomed by the Kurds and the Shi'a. Both communities would have withdrawn their support to the CPA if the Ba'athists retained their higher positions, though arguably the CPA should not have issued such a decree as a formal decision because it provided legal support for Shi'i revenge against the Sunnis, while this should have been left for bargaining among political parties. At the same time, after the fall of Saddam's regime, countries like Syria and Jordan openly supported Iraqi Ba'athists. The de-Ba'athification and dissolution of the army pushed many Ba'athists and former members of the Iraqi Army to join the Iraqi insurgency in the neighbouring countries, causing a real challenge for Iraqi security especially between 2006 and 2009.

The CPA also failed to take into account the possibility of the destabilisation of the country following the fall of the regime. The basic condition for starting any state-building process is to establish law and order in the territory, and this cannot be achieved without having enough troops on the ground. This was particularly true in Iraq, a country historically deeply divided by ethnic, political, religious, and even social hatred, where a civil war was likely to

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[33] Although the ideology of the Ba'ath party was more related to the Sunnis, there were also millions of Shi'i members within the Ba'ath party. In 2009, in secret documents authored by the former Iraqi president and released by the U.S. National Archives Saddam pointed out that the Sunni leaders of the party between 1958 and 1963 were very few, and the Secretary-General of the party (Abdul Khaliq al-Rikabi) was a Shi'a from the city of Nasiriyah. Saddam told the investigator ''you might be surprised to know that in 1964 the Secretary-General of the Party was a Kurd'' (Asharq Al-Awsat, 5 July 2009). However, there has been very little information released about these Shi'i Ba'athists after 2003, concerning whether they have been affected by the de-Ba'athification process or not.

happen. The lack of U.S. troops on the ground was a significant cause for spreading chaos, disorder, ethno-sectarian revenge, crime and looting[34].

In line with the historical record, the number of soldiers should be 20 for every thousand people, in order to achieve stability on the ground in the aftermath of conflicts (Bremer, 2006, p.10). The number of the Iraqi population following the invasion, which was almost 25 million, required 500,000 troops to reach to the above standard. However, the U.S. troops numbered only 150,000 soldiers, just a third of the number required (see Aljazeera/in depth, 20/06/2011). Larry Diamond (2004, pp. 35, 36) argued that about 300,000 troops would be enough to control Iraqi security following the 2003 U.S.-led invasion. From this point of view, Iraq's post-war military plan required different kind of troops, in particular military police and other troops in order to achieve civil reconstruction and peace enforcement. For example, tens of thousands of armed forces could have been posted along the borders with Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia and Turkey, in order to stop the foreign fighters' infiltration and prevent the regional powers from supporting the militias and terrorist groups.

The abovementioned data might explain why the main reason behind the failure of U.S. state-building efforts came from Iraq's neighbouring countries, especially those which have been engaged in the ethno-confessional disputes with Iraq following the fall of the Ba'athist regime. It was only in January 2007, following strong pressure because of the civil war, that George Bush sent an additional 20,000 soldiers to Iraq as part of a new strategy adopted by the administration which focused more on security issues. By December 2008 this new strategy had reduced by 80 percent the level of violence and the number of casualties among both Iraqi civilian and American soldiers (see figure 2 and Figure 3).

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[34] The first days of the regime's fall in April 2003 had witnessed widespread looting, which included most of the Iraqi state institutions apart of the Ministry of Oil and the Ministry of Interior, which the U.S. forces protected. It can be said that since then, most of the Iraqi people have believed that Americans did not want to re-build the post-war Iraq.
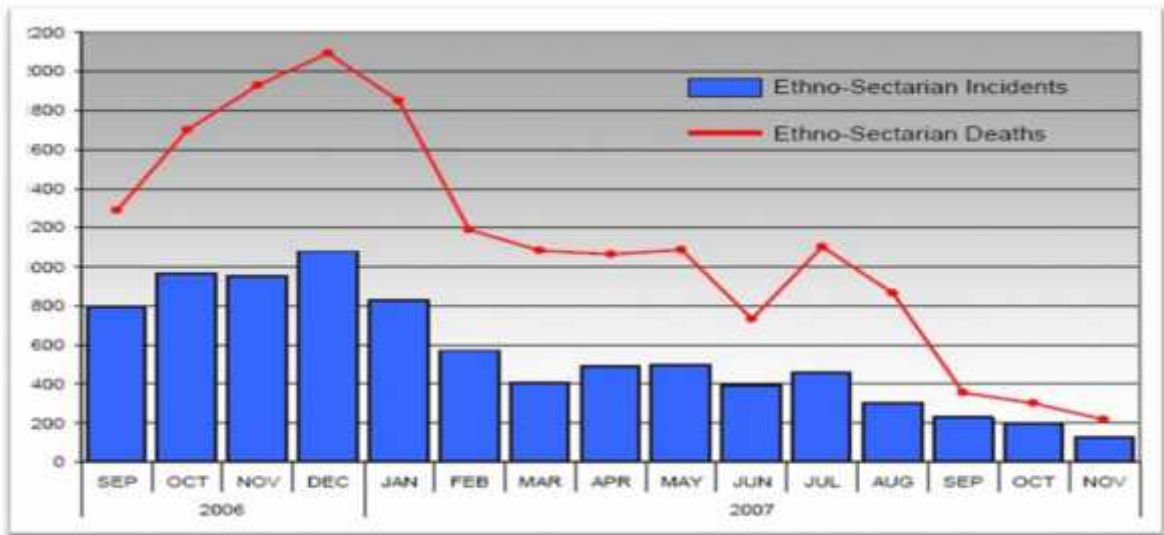
Figure (2) Reducing the level of ethno-sectarian death incidents, September 2006-November 2007

(DoD), 7 March 2008, p.18
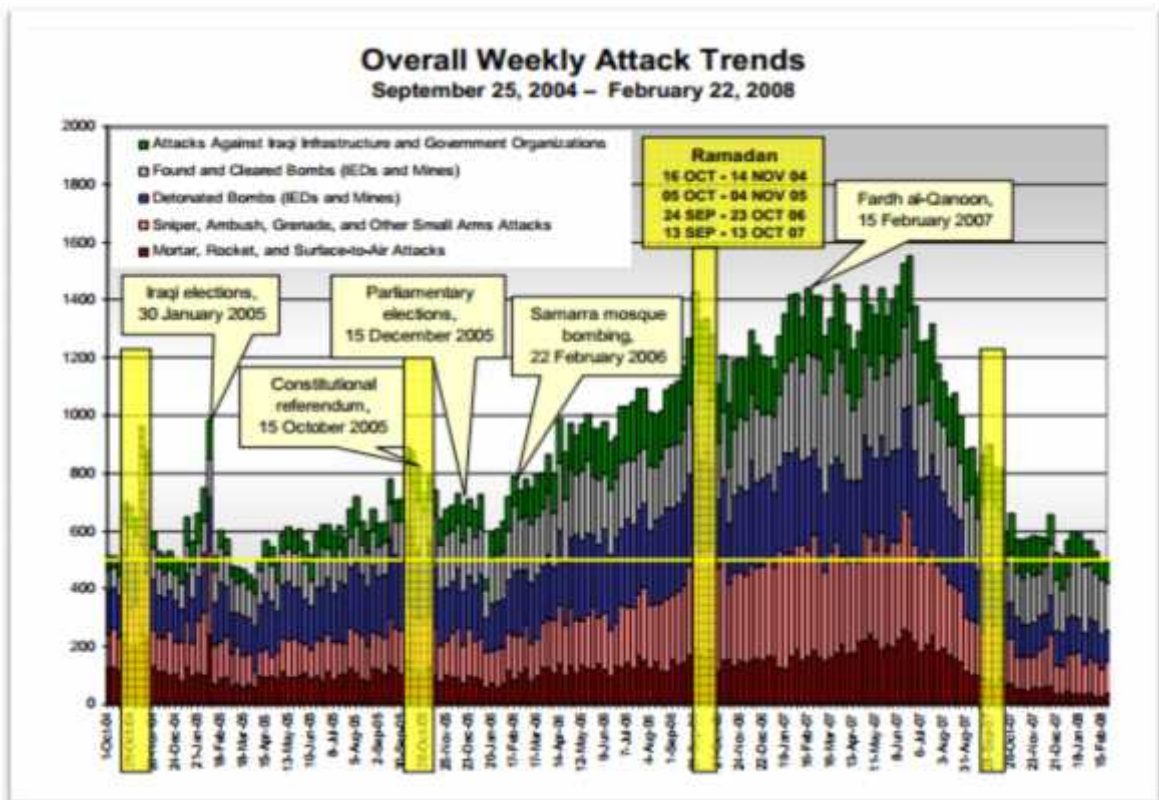
Figure (3) Overall weekly attack trends from 25 September 2004 to 22 February 2008

(CSIS, 25 February 2008, p.22)

Both the U.S. and Bremer believed that post-2003 Iraq should be a united Iraq, and most of their efforts contributed towards this goal. On the ground, however, it was much more difficult to keep the Iraqi state united based on the modern principles of the nation state. The ethnic and religious heritage had deeply cleft the structure of the new state. The main problem for the reconstruction of Iraq was that the fall of Saddam's regime led to the fall of the entire Iraqi state. Thus, after Saddam's demise there was no viable political system to replace the previous regime.

In the abovementioned situation, the CPA had followed the reality of the Iraqi society after the war, which was highly divided on an ethnic and religious basis among three main groups, Shia, Sunni and Kurd. The first and main foundation for this sectarian division reflected clearly on the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) which was the temporary government of Iraq from 13 July 2003 to 1 June 2004[35]. The IGC firmly established for the first time (officially) in Iraqi history the ethno-sectarian roots of power in the post-2003 Iraq. The U.S. believed that "Lebanonisation" of power might be the only way to keep Iraq secure and stable (see Visser, 2007, p.93). However, they did not take into consideration the possibility that the new ethno-confessional body would fail to mitigate the sectarian tensions. On the contrary, this deepened them, not just between the political elites but also between ordinary people. In the case of Iraq, there were no powerful government institutions to control the ethno-sectarian interests. Moreover, what made this process worse was that the Iraqi political elites began mobilising the street, by exacerbating the ethnic and religious divide in the country. In addition, the Iraqi political elite responded to the political agendas of the neighbouring countries in different ways. Tensions

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[35] The Iraqi Governing Council was based on the ethnic and sectarian distribution of power among Iraqi components. The Council included 13 Shi'is, five Kurds, five Sunnis, one Assyrian and one Turkman. The council immediately gained the regional recognition from the Arab League on 1st of June 2004. The council dissolved after Ghazi Ajil al-Yawar was chosen as a first president of the new Iraqi Interim Government (IIG), as well as the sovereignty had been transferred to the Interim Government on 28 June 2004; as soon as sovereignty transferred to the Iraqis the CPA was dissolved. For more about the IGC see Coalition Provisional Authority, (13 July 2003) regulation number 6. Available at:
<http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/cpa-iraq/regulations/20030903_CPAMEMO_6_Implementation_of_Regulation_on_the_Governing_Council.pdf> [accessed 20/07/2014].

between Shi'a and Sunni reached their highest point during the civil war in 2006-2007.

The political situation following the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq and the failure of the CPA's model of state-building after 2003 attracted the attention of Iraq's neighbouring countries, especially those which have been influenced and engaged by the new ethno-sectarian front in post-2003 Iraq. Taking into consideration Iraq's neighbours as middle powers in a penetrated regional system, their meddling policies in the region will very likely seek to take advantage of any volatile situation in the Iraqi state (see Ehteshami and Hinnebusch, 2002, p.5). In this way, the identity of the new Iraq has become a source of shaping security policies and thereafter the balance of power in the entire region (in accordance with this thesis's theory). Some countries, such as Turkey, Jordan and the Gulf countries, have been very concerned about the Shi'a dominance in Iraq after 2003. Countries such as Iran, and to a lesser extent Syria, exploited the new political map (Byman and Pollack, 2003, p.130).

The CPA's version of state-building in Iraq had a deep impact on the 15th December 2005 parliamentary election results and produced a government based on the ethno-sectarian division of political power, establishing new parameters for the political process in post-2003 Iraq. Five political groups were the winners of this election and have dominated the whole political process until now. The ethno-sectarian geopolitics were very clear in the election: the vast majority in the Kurdish provinces voted for Kurdish parties, and the same was true of the Shi'i and Sunni majority provinces (as has been demonstrated in table 2). The Unified Iraqi Coalition, which was composed of seventeen different Shi'a parties, came out with 128 seats, the Kurdish coalition with 53 seats, *Tawafuq* (the Iraqi Front), a Sunni coalition, with 44 seats, in addition to another 11 seats for the *Hiwar* National Front, which was also a Sunni party led by Salih al- Mutlaq; the single list that called for liberal and non-sectarian politics, called the National Iraqi List, got 25 seats (Independent High Electoral Commission - IHEC, 2005).

Slate/Party	Seats (Jan. 05)	Seats (Dec. 05)
UIA (Shiite Islamist); Sadr formally joined list for Dec. vote (Of the 128: SCIRI~30; Da'wa~28; Sadr~30; Fadila~15; others~25)	140	128
Kurdistan Alliance (PUK and KDP)	75	53
Iraqis List (secular, Allawi); added some mostly Sunni parties for Dec. vote	40	25
Iraq Concord Front (Sunni). Main Sunni bloc; not in Jan. vote	—	44
Dialogue National Iraqi Front (Sunni, Saleh al-Mutlak) Not in Jan. vote	—	11
Iraqi National Congress (Chalabi). Was part of UIA list in Jan. 05 vote	—	0
Iraqis Party (Yawar, Sunni); Part of Allawi list in Dec. vote	5	—
Iraqi Turkomen Front (Turkomen, Kirkuk-based, pro-Turkey)	3	1
National Independent and Elites (Jan)/Risalyun (Mission, Dec) pro-Sadr	3	2
People's Union (Communist, non-sectarian); on Allawi list in Dec. vote	2	—
Kurdistan Islamic Group (Islamist Kurd)	2	5
Islamic Action (Shiite Islamist, Karbala)	2	0
National Democratic Alliance (non-sectarian, secular)	1	—
Rafidain National List (Assyrian Christian)	1	1
Liberation and Reconciliation Gathering (Sunni, secular)	1	3
Ummah (Nation) Party. (Secular, Mithal al-Alusi, former INC activist)	0	1
Yazidi list (small Kurdish, heterodox religious minority in northern Iraq)	—	1

Number of polling places: January: 5,200; December: 6,200.
Eligible voters: 14 million in January election; 15 million in October referendum and December.
Turnout: January: 58% (8.5 million votes)/ October: 66% (10 million)/ December: 75% (12 million).

Table 2 the 2005 parliamentary election results

(CRS report for congress 2006, p.6)

The new structure of the state-building process produced a pure ethnic and sectarian body for the distribution of power inside the state. This process led to the growth of a new political elite highly linked with the new ethnic and religio-political structure of power, at the same time influenced by regional dimensions of the sectarian conflict. This complicated structure of power weakened the federal government, jeopardising the entire state-building project envisaged by the Bush administration.

The CPA's approach to the state-building process in Iraq showed more concern for keeping a new Iraqi state unified without laying any firm foundations for this unification. It became clear that the idea of a unified Iraq could not coexist with the reality on the ground. The Ba'ath regime, because of its dictatorial nature, did not contribute to the unification of the different components, which got the state-building process after 2003 off to a bad start. This in addition to the miscalculations of the CPA analysed in this chapter. The

process of state-building in Iraq has faced both internal and regional challenges. In this regard, there were no supporters of the U.S.'s state-building approach in Iraq apart from the Americans themselves. In my view, the division of the Iraqi state into three federal regions would have had more of a chance of success than binding three broken parts of the state together without building foundations for this unification. The CPA efforts in this stage ended up with ''dismantling the state'' and establishing the sectarian quota system, which later reflected on the entire political process in the post-2003 Iraq. The Sunni protest movement against Maliki's government from 2012 to 2014, to the IS (ISIS or ISIL) occupation of Mosul in June 2014 is the best example for this argument.

3.2 Constitution and redistribution of power: Building a basis of ethno-sectarian citizenship

After the formation of the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) on the 13th of July 2003 by the CPA, it was imperative to have an interim constitution to administrate state affairs in the transitional period. The CPA already started this process by issuing a law called the 'State Administration Law' (TAL) under Paul Bremer's leadership. This meant that the Governing Council had to approve the TAL without making any change or modification. The result was that the vast majority of the articles of the later permanent constitutionwere based on this law. The Governing Council recognised the act and assumed this law as a provisional Iraqi constitution for the transitional period. One of the main tasks of the IGC was to put in place the necessary procedures for the establishment of a permanent constitution[36] (CPA/REG/6, 13July 2003). The TAL made provision for federalism, decentralisation of power and de-Ba'athification, at the same time as establishing the basis for ethno-sectarian rule in post-2003 Iraq.

It can be argued that the CPA's plan was to hand over sovereignty to Iraqis and leave Iraq as soon as possible after drafting a temporary

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[36] According to the article 2/A of the TAL, ''The term transitional period shall refer to the period beginning on 30 June 2004 and lasting until the formation of an elected Iraqi government pursuant to a permanent constitution as set forth in this Law, which in any case shall be no later than 31 December 2005, unless the provisions of Article 61 are applied''. (See TAL, <www.cpa-iraq.org/government/TAL.html> accessed 4/7/2014).

constitutional framework, which had to pave the way to a permanent constitution, general elections and a democratic government. All this had to be achieved by 28 June 2004. However, the drafting of the constitution meant the beginning of a new, challenging political era which lasted until after the U.S. withdrawal from the country.

The Constitutional Preparatory Committee had been selected by the IGC as an ethnic and religious division of power. The CPC included 25 members: 13 were Shi'a Arabs, five Sunni Arabs, five Kurds, one Assyrian-Christian and one Turkmen. As has been mentioned earlier, the post-2003 situation in Iraq had a strong impact on the constitutional process. The drafting process of the TAL was very secretive. Zaid Al-Ali (2014 b, YouTube, 2014) points out that Iraqis were not even told that an interim constitution was being drafted; also the drafting committee consisted of some U.S. experts and academics, in addition to some Iraqi-Americans who had been in exile during Saddam's rule. The constitutional drafting board had been dominated by the Shi'a majority, and the powerful Kurdish block, with a limited contribution from the Sunnis, a reflection of Iraq's reality following the invasion. The constitutional process reflected the deep divisions between the different components with different agendas; the Sunnis were worried about what they lost in the past, the Shi'as were concerned about the future, and the Kurds were looking for guarantees of autonomy.

According to al-Istrabadi (2008, p. 1628), who was one of the main principal legal drafters of Iraq's interim constitution from 2003-2004, and a Deputy Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nations from 2004-2007, there were two main factors that led to the failure of the constitutional process in post-2003 Iraq.

First, both the UN and the U.S. put pressures on the constitutional drafters and Iraq's political elites to finish the constitutional draft in a schedule which was measured in weeks rather than months. For the U.S., the purpose for rushing the constitutional process was to enable political and national reconstruction on the one hand, and to influence the re-election of George Bush on the other hand (see Brown, 2005, p.15). Second, the distrust among Iraq's political elites created a negative atmosphere. In particular, Sunni Arabs felt that they had been excluded from the new political process; this situation directly affected the process of state-building, spreading a discontent which was seized upon by

radical terrorist groups. To a degree, the Sunni community believed that the actual purpose of the de-Ba'athification process was de-Sunnisation, by using official institutions to implement this policy (Lafoucade, 2012, p.196-197).

There is another factor that can be added to the two above-mentioned. Iraqis felt that the drafting of the constitution was not a sufficiently indigenous process, but was more dictated by U.S. interests (see al-Istrabadi 2008, p.1682). In particular, they felt that the process aimed to please American public opinion and reflected the partisan calculation between Republican and Democratic Parties. All this is in addition to the regional influences analysed previously.

There were four main points of disagreement between those involved in the drafting of the 2005 constitution.

1)   Federalism had been rejected in the earlier stages of the constitutional drafting by the Sunnis and some of the Shi'a parties, such as Muqtada al-Sadr's group and members of the Da'wa Party. The latter fully supported Sunni nationalist demands and considered federalism as a first step toward Iraq's division. For example, Salih al-Mutlag, who was head of the Iraqi Front for National Dialogue, said: "we are saying if federalism is going to be approved now, it will be the destruction of Iraq" (International Crisis Group Report, 8 Jun 2005). On the other hand, Kurds and the ISCI supported a federal Iraq with a weaker government in Baghdad (Hamoudi, 2013, pp. 64-65).

2)   There was disagreement over the future role of the Ba'ath Party (Saddamist Ba'ath). All Shi'a parties were strongly in favour of the de-Ba'athification decree. The de-Ba'athification process wasused for political calculations, especially after Ahmed Chalabi gained control on the Higher National De-Ba'athification Commission (HNDC) in 2004. It can be argued that the arbitrary implementation of the de-Ba'athification plan negatively affected the Sunni view of post-Saddam Iraq. In the interim, the Shi'a view of the Sunnis was almost akin to the view the U.S. had of the Nazis after World War II. New to power, they were fearful and insecure about the Ba'athists and the power they might have in post-2003 Iraq. For example, 10,000 Iraqi teachers lost their jobs after 2003 because of their Ba'athist past. Chalabi

said "my proposal about the teachers was as if we had allowed the Nazis back into government" (Bremer, 2006, p. 344).

3)   The role of Islam and Iraq's national identity were disputed. The 28 August constitutional draft stated that "Iraq is a part of the Islamic world…and its Arab people are part of the Arab nation" (Article 9/B from TAL). This article in the constitution raised concerns of some Arab nationalists, who were afraid of the intentions of the U.S. regarding Iraq and the possibility of the separation of Iraq from the Arab world; however, their concerns were not totally allayed, especially considering the shadow cast by Saddam's regime which constantly asserted Iraq's integral place in the Arab nation.

4)   There were also disputes over the future of Kirkuk and other disputed areas between the federal state and the Kurdistan Regional Government. The new constitution has left the status of Kirkuk and other disputed areas unresolved. Article 140 formulated three mechanisms, 'normalisation', 'census', and 'referendum', to be carried out not later than 31st of December 2007. This article was never implemented, causing long-time tension between the KRG and the federal government, and eventually became a source of future conflict, in addition to the infiltration of regional interests in the area. Since then, the issue of Kirkuk has been penetrated by regional agendas.

Governorate	Demographics	Votes	% For	% Against
1 Baghdad	Capital and surrounding area	2,120,615	77.7	22.3
2 Salah ad Din	Sunni Arab majority Claimed partly by, but not yet part of, Kurdistan Autonomous Region	510,152	18.25	81.75
3 Diyala	Sunni Arab majority Claimed partly by, but not yet part of, Kurdistan Autonomous Region	476,980	51.27	48.73
4 Wasit	Shi'a Arab majority	280,128	95.7	4.3
5 Maysan	Shi'a Arab majority	254,067	97.79	2.21
6 Al Basrah	Shi'a Arab majority	691,024	96.02	3.98
7 Dhi Qar	Shi'a Arab majority	462,710	97.15	2.85
8 Al Muthanna	Shi'a Arab majority	185,710	98.65	1.35
9 Al Qadisyah	Shi'a Arab majority	297,176	96.74	3.32
10 Babil	Shi'a Arab majority	543,779	94.56	5.44
11 Al Karbala	Shi'a Arab majority	264,674	96.58	3.42
12 An Najaf	Shi'a Arab majority	299,420	95.82	4.18
13 Al Anbar	Sunni Arab majority	259,919	3.04	96.9
14 Ninawa	Mostly Sunni Arabs Claimed partly by, but not yet part of, Kurdistan Autonomous Region	718,758	44.92	55.08
15 Dahuk	Part of Kurdistan Autonomous Region	389,198	99.13	0.87
16 Arbil	Part of Kurdistan Autonomous Region	830,570	99.36	0.64
17 At Ta'min (now Kirkuk)	Claimed by, but not yet part of, Kurdistan Autonomous Region	542,688	62.91	37.09
18 As Sulaymaniyah	Part of Kurdistan Autonomous Region	723,723	98.96	1.04
Total		9,852,291	78.59	21.41

Table (3) The demographic influnce on the constitutional referendum

(Cohen & Efrati, 2011, p. 41).

Despite the problematic constitutional issues, the Iraqi constitutional referendum was held on 25 October 2005, and approved by the wide majority of the Iraqi people; 78 percent voted "for" and 21 percent voted "against" with a turnout of 63 percent (Alwasat, 26 October 2005). According to the constitution, an absolute majority of votes would mean the constitution would be implemented, but if two-thirds of the votes in any three or more provinces were against, the whole constitution would fall. As predicted, the higher percentage of votes in favour was recorded in the Shi'i and Kurdish majority provinces[37]. However, the draft constitution was rejected by the majority in two of the main Sunni provinces, in Anbar by 96.95 percent and Salahaddin by 81.75 percent, while the Sunnis failed to gain two-thirds in at least three of Iraq's 18 provinces which they needed to defeat the constitution. The three Sunni provinces (Mosul, Anbar, and Salahaddin have Sunni majorities) did reject the constitution, but in Mosul the result did not reach the two-third majority necessary for the total

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[37] Since July 1968, Iraq had experienced five temporary constitutions; however, no one of these had been subjected to a public debate or popular mandate through a referendum. For more about Iraq's previous constitutions see al-Jidda, N., (2003) *al-tatawrat al-dsturyya fi al-Iraq* (the constitutional developments in Iraq) Dar al-Hikma, Baghdad. p. 3-4.

defeat of the constitution. A difference of percentage, 55.08 percent "against" and 44.92 percent "for", became a guarantee of success for the constitutional process (see table 4). Due to violence and boycotting, the turnout in the Sunni provinces was only 58 percent. If the same percentage of voters as in the Shi'a and Kurdish provinces had expressed their opinion, it is likely that the constitution would have been rejected by two-thirds of these three Sunni provinces (Washington Post, October 26, 2005).

So, as al-Istrabadi (2008, p. 1641) has pointed out, the referendum result led to the approval of the constitution without the support of Sunnis; a shift of 83,000, or 0.75 percent of the votes out of a total of eleven million would have caused the failure of Iraq's 2005 permanent constitution. Furthermore, both election results of January 2005 and December 2005 produced extremely ethnic and sectarian governments, highly dominated by the Shi'a, in coalition with the Kurds (See table 3). Almost all Kurds, and roughly 75 percent of Shi'a, voted for the ethno-sectarian choices. Regarding the non-sectarian and liberal parties, they did not get more than 15 percent of the votes (IHEC, 2005 constitutional referendum). These two parliamentary elections set up the main pillars of the distribution of power among Iraqi components. Neither the permanent constitution nor the elected government managed to stabilise the country. On the contrary, both processes have deepened the ethnic and sectarian polarisation[38].

One of the main problems was that the permanent constitution did not provide any practical solution for curbing the "tyranny of the majority" and the idea of power sharing adopted by TAL. This can be clearly observed through the power vested in the Prime Minister's office in the 2005-constitution. For example, almost all the executive powers were left in the hands of the Prime

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[38] The identitarian fissures of Iraqi society may push us to agree with those scholars that have stated that democracy may have negative consequence for non-homogenous societies, in particular when it is imposed immediately on post-war societies. For example, in Bosnia elections played in favour of the local leaders to legitimise their criminal actions, rather than help political stability (see Pascual and Kenneth, 2007, p.15). The above approach may also be applicable to Iraq after 2003; as Farid Zakaria (cited in Pascual and Pollack, 2007, p: 16) indicates, "elections had wondrous aspects but they also divided the country into three communities and hardened these splits, to describe the last four years a period of political progress requires a strong definition of political development".

Minster. According to article 78, the Prime Minister is the Commander in Chief of the armed forces, and also has the power to appoint the National Intelligence Service which reports directly to him. Given the dictatorial past of Iraq, it is arguable that the main political powers should be divided into three political appointments: a President of the Republic, a Prime Minister, and a speaker of the Parliament. This would limit the development of a dictatorship of the majority.

In 2009 some amendments were added to the constitutional negotiations through the formulation of two mechanisms in order to guarantee the rights of the minorities. First was through the activation of the Presidential office, by providing it with the power of veto as provided for in the TAL. Second was through the creation of a second legislative body, the Federation Council (*Majlis al-Ittihadi*), following article 65 of the Iraqi constitution, which included representatives of provinces and regions. Unfortunately, the Federation Council was not able to limit the power of the Prime Minister, and it did not function as a body which could limit the executive. This was because no provision was made over how much power the council had. In order to solve this issue, the Erbil agreement on 8th August 2010 was mostly dedicated to provide a consociational form for al-Maliki's cabinet in 2010, in which powers would be shared and rights and duties would be assigned to all of the sections of Iraq's population. The Erbil Agreement also initiated an attempt to create what is known the National Council of Strategic Policies, to re-distribute the power sharing, especially regarding the power of the majority in the executive authority and fear of the emergence of a Shi'a majority dictatorship.

From this point of view, it can be argued that the Iraqi constitution is a combination of a majoritarian system and the idea of de-centralisation, without having an active and recognisable constitutional mechanism to curb the domination of the majority, which emerged from al-Maliki's government after the U.S. withdrawal from Iraq[39].

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[39] According to article 37 of TAL and article 138 of the 2005 constitution. there was meant to be a "Presidency Council" which included the president and two other vice presidents, that was to have represented all three of Iraq's main components, and which would have a veto on the National Assembly decisions, but this council was dissolved after one parliamentary term, and had replaced by "the President of the Republic" after 2010.

It is however, important to analyse some of the problematic issues that have been raised by the contradiction between the de-centralisation of the state on one hand, and the majoritarian aspirations of the political elites reflected in Iraq's permanent constitution on the other. This constitutional contradiction can be clearly observed in sections four and five, which relate to the size of the powers of central government and provincial authorities. For example, as Nathan Brown (2006, p. 56) points out, the list of the central government's powers is extremely short. Areas such as security, foreign affairs, defence, education, economy infrastructure and health, are usually the exclusive responsibility of the central government, while according to article 114, the regions share responsibility with the federal authorities in the areas of health, education, water resources, and electricity. This de-centralisation continues to the extent that only foreign and defence issues are exclusively the responsibility of the federal government.

According to article 114, the creation of a new region is constitutionally permitted. The creation of a region proceeds through two mechanisms: one-third of the governorate's council's members have to make a formal request, or, alternately, one-tenth of the people's vote in each governorate will create a mandate.

Article 114 has provided the Iraqi political elites the chance to threaten the creation of a new region whenever their disputes reach a deadlock. Meanwhile, this constitutional right can be used as a card in political bargaining. After the U.S. withdrawal there were some calls for changing the formation of the regions, such as creating a southern region in Basra and the Sunni region in the west. Despite of the legality of these requests, they were rejected strongly by Maliki's government, on the pretext of preventing Iraq's disintegration (Hamoudi, 2013, p. 152). The constitutional right for the formation of new regions has been completely blocked by al-Maliki's government.

In the same tone, article 122/5 has provided unlimited power to the regional governments and provinces: "The Governorate Council shall not be subject to the control or supervision of any ministry or any institution not linked to a ministry. The Governorate Council shall have independent finances". This is an unusual case amongst Middle Eastern countries, in which local government is usually subjected to the control of a ministry, known as "ministry

of local governments", usually part of the central government (Brown, 2006, p. 56).

It can be said that such constitutional rules may push Iraq towards a confederative system, in terms of common responsibilities between the federal government and its regions (Brown, 2005, p.13). The same might be true of the constitutional articles related to the possession of oil and gas which do not provide any clear distribution of responsibilities between the central government and the regions. Article 111 states: "oil and gas are owned by all the people of Iraq in all the regions and governorates". The same level of ambiguity continues in the following article (112), which provides only for a difference between old and new oil fields. According to this article, the federal government can manage the oil and extract gas only from the old fields, whilst the rest are the responsibility of the regions[40].

Similarly, the federal government does not possess sufficient constitutional mechanisms to diminish the authority of the regions; such a request to a region would require the approval from the parliament of the region and the majority of the citizens from that region through a referendum. Moreover, article 126/4 makes any constitutional amendment very difficult to achieve. It states that:

Articles of the Constitution may not be amended if such amendment takes away from the powers of the regions that are not within the exclusive powers of the federal authorities, except by the approval of the legislative authority of the concerned region and the approval of the majority of its citizens in a general referendum.

This powerlessness of the federal government toward its regions has provoked disputes between provinces and regions (KRG) on one hand, and the federal government on the other, especially in cases where the parliament of the region claims that a certain amendment will lead to an increase of the power

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[40] Article 112 has been the cause of a longstanding problem between the KRG and the federal government. The KRG has claimed that their right to sell oil and gas to Turkey is legal. However, the previous Deputy Prime Minister Shahristani issued warnings to the companies that any company working in the KRG oil and gas fields would be blacklisted by the Iraqi government. The main problem is that so far there is no law for organising oil and gas in Iraq, whereas according to article 112, this issue must be organised by law. The Iraqi ministry of oil filed a lawsuit against both Turkey and KRG for exporting the oil of the Kurdistan region in 2014. KRG, Ministry of Natural Resources: <http://mnr.krg.org/index.php/ku/media-center-ku/press-release/362-2014-03-31-21-38-59> [accessed 20/07/14].

of the central government. This is due to the fact that in Iraq the regional borders have been defined by ethnic and religious divisions, a factor particularly clear especially after the 2011 Arab Uprisings.

It can be said that the constitution and its implementation have not been a solution for Iraq's major problems, in particular the problems that have existed between the three main components. Furthermore, the constitutional process has not hammered out the dilemma of power; in particular, the monopoly of power through majoritarianism has become another predicament in post-2003 Iraq. Furthermore, the permanent constitution has failed to find an acceptable mechanism for coexistence among Iraq's fractions. Especially regarding the integration of the Sunni Arabs into post-war Iraq, the U.S.'s engagement can be harshly criticised. The constitutional process was more about forming a legal cover for the political process than addressing the redistribution of power. For example, there are about 60 constitutional articles which should be organised in law, but have not. The 2005 constitution has not been fully implemented by Iraq's successive governments following 2005, and therefore has become more a part of the problem rather than a solution.

3.3. The U.S withdrawal strategy from Iraq: Unaccomplished responsibility

The U.S.'s model of state-building in Iraq cannot be understood entirely without examining the U.S. withdrawal strategy from Iraq at the end of 2011. This section will answer two main questions. First, did the U.S. fulfil their responsibilities in post-war Iraq? Second, what model of state-building did they leave behind in Iraq? In order to answer the above questions, it is important to say that the U.S.'s withdrawal from Iraq was absolutely untimely, and produced two major interrelated results which may have ramifications on the future of Iraq for a long time. First, the American pull-out from Iraq left unresolved the balance among the three main components, Shi'a, Sunni, and Kurd. This meant that after the U.S. withdrawal, the Iraqi political process became distanced from notions of power sharing, in favour of a majoritarian hegemony. This resulted in the exclusion of Sunnis from governmental institutions via various accusations. This was in addition to the enduring problems between the federal government

and the KRG[41]. Second, the depth of the internal cleavages among the components facilitated the penetration of regional powers, especially those who were seeking to fill the vacuum left by the Americans. This is especially true after Syria's turmoil, which highlighted the conflict between the Shi'a and Sunni camps.

The U.S. withdrawal from Iraq had not depended on Iraq's levels of political, economic and military abilities. Although Bremer himself admitted that Iraq was a "completely failed economy", the CPA "did not have a lot of time to kick-start this economy" (Bremer, 2006, p.113). The U.S. plan was mainly influenced, on one hand, by the U.S.'s domestic pressures, especially electoral issues and the competition between the Republican and Democratic Parties, and by regional pressures in Iraq on the other. One of the main reasons for the failure of the Republican Party in the 2008 presidential election was America's role in the war[42].

The withdrawal from Iraq took place through two strategic agreements. The first was the U.S.-Iraq Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) which provided for legal immunity for U.S. troops and established dates for a full withdrawal. The second, containing the broader Strategic Framework Agreement, was approved by Iraq's parliament in late November 2008. According to article 24/1 of the U.S.-Iraq Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA),"all the United States Forces shall withdraw from all Iraqi territory no later than December 31, 2011" (Status of Forces Agreement, 2008).

The agreements had been signed after a series of negotiations which lasted eight months and were dominated by serious objections from Iraq, Iran,

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[41] On December 19th 2012, al-Maliki issued a warrant against vice president Tariq al-Hashimi. Moreover, most of the Iraqi parties claimed that Iraq under the rule of Maliki turned into an authoritarian regime. In addition, other Shi'i parties such as the al-Sadrist group threatened to end their participation in Maliki's government, while for the first time after the Iraq war Sunnis called for a federal region.

[42] Taking a close look at Bremer's book, it can be noticed that he was under pressure to decrease the number of U.S. troops in Iraq, especially by Donald Rumsfeld. He clearly admitted so, saying "our goal should be to ramp up the Iraqi numbers, try to get some additional international forces and find ways to put less stress on our forces, enabling us to reduce the U.S. role. The faster the Iraqi forces grow, the lower the percentage will be of U.S. forces out of the total forces" (Bremer, 2006, p. 162).

and Syria. Iran demanded (through its influence on some Iraqi parties) changes to some articles in the security agreement, which had been adopted in the first draft (Nicolas, 2009). A closer look at the U.S.-Iraq Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) reveals that both sides agreed on the withdrawal schedule of the American troops without having any shared plan to ensure whether the Iraqi forces could control domestic and regional order without U.S. troops. This prompted the U.S. President Barack Obama to dedicate around 50,000 additional troops, whose tasks would be limited to the training and equipping of the Iraqi security forces. In addition, the U.S. would assist the Iraqi government in the fight against terrorism, as well as against any possible military escalation before the end of 2011 (SOFA, article 4).

Regarding the capability of Iraq's Army in protecting the country's security, both Iraqi and U.S. military experts admitted that Iraq was not in a situation to cope with internal and regional threats. For example, on December 2011, the deputy head of operations for the U.S. Army in Iraq, Lt.-Gen. Frank Helmick, emphasised that "there are still security gaps in the new Iraqi Army that Washington is leaving behind" (cited in Gold, 2012). Similarly, Babakir Zebari, a former commander of Iraq's armed forces, in 2010 stated that the "U.S. army must stay until the Iraqi army is fully ready in 2020" (Today's Zaman, 08-13-2010). The fall of Mosul into the hands of Daesh in June 2014 has been the strongest evidence for the above statements. A country with a deeply divided society, fragile institutions and a weak state identity does not have any other alternative than calling for the intervention of external forces when it is threatened[43].

The evidence from both Iraq and U.S. officials shows that the U.S. did not have a proper strategy for the post-U.S.-withdrawal Iraq. Thus, post-2003 Iraq has become a battlefield for regional conflicts, in particular after ripples of the Arab uprisings in the Persian Gulf, which has been deeply affected by ethnic

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[43] The premature U.S. withdrawal from Iraq at the end of 2011 displayed similarities to the British withdrawal from Iraq in 1932. From 1927 onward, the British policy was to unburden itself of responsibility towards Iraq as soon as possible. When Iraq granted its independence in 1932, it was not fully able to defend itself from its neighbours, nor able to impose order across its territory (Dodge, 2003, pp. 9, 41). This has clearly also been the case after the U.S. withdrawal from Iraq, with IS occupying a quarter of Iraq's territories in June 2014.

and religious policies. Even when it had 140,000 troops on the ground, America was never the only influential power on Iraqi soil[44]. It can be said that three factors accelerated the infiltration of Iraq's competitive neighbours: first, the rising of internal tensions among Iraq's three main groups, especially their sense of political deprivation from the opposing parties which pushed the three communities to look for support from external powers; secondly, the organic social, religious and tribal links between Iraq's groupings and regional countries, such as Syria, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey[45]; and thirdly, the impact of the Arab uprisings, which has reshaped the whole region on the basis of ethnic and sectarian borders. These three factors strongly spurred regional penetration into the state-building process following the U.S. withdrawal.

Furthermore, the vacuum left by the U.S. has been filled by regional powers, such as Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. That is to say, the U.S. withdrawal from Iraq distanced the U.S. from an important source of influence in the region, in favour of Iraq's neighbouring countries and non-state terrorist groups. This has led the U.S. to become a less dominating power in Iraq and in the whole region since 2011. This situation can be compared to the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam when Richard Nixon called for U.S. troops' withdrawal in 1973, a move that ended the U.S. dominance in Asia in favour of Marxists (Katz, 2012). The same occurred with the withdrawal of Soviet combatant forces in Afghanistan in 1988-1989, which ended Russian dominance in the region.

From this point of view, the ramifications of the U.S. pull-out of Iraq have extended to affect the internal balance of power among Iraq's components, and at the same time on the regional security system. Internally all three of Iraq's

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[44] Michael Rubin, who was one of the directors of the Pentagon's Office of Iran in Iraq during the U.S. invasion of Iraq, later attached to the CPA, expressed concerns during his first few weeks in Iraq about the obvious presence of Iranian agents in Iraq. Rubin said that Bremer and the civilian U.S. leadership in Iraq were aware of Iranian actions in Iraq, but Pentagon generals did not want to open another wider war by targeting Iranian Revolutionary Guards inside Iraq. In July 2003 just weeks after arriving in Baghdad, Rubin reported to his superiors in the Pentagon: "we are in very serious trouble [in Iraq]". He described the situation in Iraq as an Iranian invasion (Solomon, J., 2016. *The Iran Wars: Spy Games, Bank Battles, and the Secret Deals that Reshaped the Middle East*. Random House, 2016, p. 63-64).

[45] Iraq's tribal links with Syria will be discussed in detail in chapter five.

factions (Shi'a Arab, Sunni Arab, and Kurd) were concerned about their political future in Iraq, and they each tried to find an alternative security; Shi'as have relayed more to Iran, Sunnis have turned to the regional Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Jordan, and Kurds, despite their lack of natural state allies in the region, have improved their political and economic relations with Turkey. These concerns also were true of Iraq's neighbours, especially the U.S. allies in the region. As Katz (2012) pointed out, the U.S. withdrawal has made some of the U.S.'s allies becoming less certain of the ability and willingness of the U.S. to defend them. This has meant that they have sought for alternative security arrangements and have even struck first at some of their enemies in the region. This was exactly what happened following the U.S. withdrawal in Iraq. The entire region has polarised around ethnic and sectarian foundations, with most of Iraq's sects aligned with militias and non-state actors, such as ISIS, al-Nusra front, Ansar al-Islam, Ansar al-Sunna, Islamic Army in Iraq, Asa'ib Ahl al-Haqq, the Mahdi Army and the Badr Organisation. These militias have been used in proxy wars and regional settlements among Iraq's neighbouring countries. This has been the case during the time of the Syrian crisis from 2011 onward, in which the conflict quickly spread over Sunni-dominated areas, and led to protests against al-Maliki's government, particularly in Anbar, Nineveh, and Hawija (BBC, 23 April 2013).

The aforementioned form of sectarian polarisation in the region has added more tensions to the conflict among Iraq's components on the one hand, and the non-state actors and regional players on the other hand, a situation that can be very hard to control. This complex picture of Iraq after the U.S. withdrawal has been viewed by the neighbours of Iraq as a source of threat to their internal and regional security affairs. The lack of a strategic structure for after the withdrawal of the U.S. troops from Iraq, has inflamed the internal disputes among political powers and provided a good chance to Iraq's neighbouring countries to fill the vacuum in favour of their regional agendas. This can be better demonstrated through the thesis's theoretical framework of regional security complex.

3.4. Conclusion: Unaccomplished state-building model

It is clear that none of the U.S.'s expectations and plans materialised on the ground. Crucially, they never expected that the roots of the differences among three major fractions were so deep. The U.S.'s main plan was to build a central government in Iraq as quick as possible in order to add Iraq to the list of its allies in the region. However, a few months after the invasion they had to revise their strategy, and tried to remedy the situation by supporting a power sharing regional plan which involved the three main groups. The CPA had neither enough sources nor enough time (14 months) to establish a solid foundation for the new state in Iraq. This deeply impacted on the constitutional process and produced an ethnic and sectarian body for the distribution of power, based on a weak central government in Baghdad with a decentralisation of power in favour of regions and provinces.

The building of a state in a top-down fashion with a decentralisation of power based on an ethno-sectarian model cannot be practical in the Iraqi case, for number of reasons:

First, the downfall of the Iraqi state in 2003 produced an anarchic situation characterised by a destabilisation of security. Meanwhile, the political process following the U.S.-led invasion could not build a state which could provide law and order. Thus, in the absence of a real state that could deliver protection and stability, all factions felt threatened, and had to look for other sources of protection in the neighbouring countries, which then had the opportunity to increase their influence in Iraq's internal affairs.

Furthermore, the U.S's project of state-building, in the Iraqis' eyes, came from outside, in contrast with the process of state-building in Western Europe which was an internally-generated process. There has been no single successful state-building process in the Middle East that has been led by outsiders. Especially, as Diamond (2004, p.43) observes, the U.S. efforts have been viewed by most of the Iraqi people as an occupation by western Christians, rather than an international effort to build a new Iraq. Finally, the untimely withdrawal of the U.S. troops in Iraq ruined most of the earlier efforts of state-building. What U.S. left behind after 2011 was a government but was not a

state, because it lacked the three main functions of the state: security, welfare and representation (see Schwarz, 2005).

Therefore, it can be argued that, if the 1921 British version of state/nation building designed Iraq's external borders as a new state in the region, the U.S. version has designed Iraq's internal borders among Iraq's components on the bases of ethnic and sectarian identities. The U.S. has left behind a state-building process unaccomplished in two aspects, which later became main reason for spurring Iraq's neighbours' involvement in the state-building process after 2003. First, the U.S. left Iraq without building political foundations for power-sharing among Iraq's main groups of Shi'a, Sunni and Kurd. Second, the U.S. left Iraq without any viable strategic plan to deter Iranian hegemony in Iraq. Thus, it could be concluded that the state-building model sponsored by the U.S. in post-2003 Iraq was in itself a reason behind Iraq's neighbours' engagement in the process of state-building in Iraq, which this thesis deals with in the next chapters.

Chapter four:

4. Iraq and Iran: From enmity to amity

"The road to Jerusalem passes through Karbala" (Ayatollah Khomeini, July 1982)

Introduction

Iranian involvement in Iraq has been one of the most debated subjects since the U.S. invasion of Iraq. It would be very hard, if not impossible, to understand the regional dimensions of the ethno-sectarian conflict in post-2003 Iraq without taking into consideration Iran's role in Iraq and in the conflict. In the last chapter I argued that the form of state-building that the U.S. has left behind has been an unaccomplished process and has produced a fragile state. Considering the Persian regional security complex, in addition to the presence of number of middle powers, has been one of the factors that prompted Iraq's main neighbours to become involved in the state-building process in Iraq, especially those which have ethnic and sectarian links with Iraq. Based on this argument, this chapter examines how and why Iran engaged in the ethno-sectarian conflict in post-2003 Iraq, and why Iran's engagement in Iraq has been more effective and intensive than that of Iraq's other neighbours. What are the mechanisms that the Iranians have depended on in their intervention in post-war Iraq? Furthermore, to demonstrate the standard form of RSC this chapter will also analyse the ramifications of the Iranian involvement in Iraq through the pattern of rivalry, balance of power, and alliance patterns among the main powers within the region, in particular for the two other regional players, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. Their interferences in Iraq may partly be reaction to the intensive Iranian involvement in post-2003 Iraq, as a result of the "security complex" interconnectedness of the region in which one state cannot pragmatically be considered apart from another (Buzan, 2003, p.190).

To answer the abovementioned questions, this chapter has been divided into three sections. The first examines Iran's strategy in Iraq after 2003 (how Iran became involved in state-building and ethno-sectarian conflicts in post-2003 Iraq), and the strategy will be analysed by taking into consideration three main aspects: 1) the diminished U.S. capability in Iraq; 2) the support for a pro-Iranian Shi'i government in Iraq; and 3) the engagement with the Kurdish region. Moreover, in order to understand the interrelated regional security among Iraq's neighbours, the second section examines the impact of Iranian leverage in Iraq and the Persian Gulf, and its consequences for other regional actors, in particular Turkey and Saudi Arabia. Despite the fact that the U.S. is not a direct member of the Persian Gulf's RSC, due to its indispensable role in shaping regional security dynamics in the Persian Gulf, section three has addressed the U.S. as an influential actor of the Persian Gulf's regional security complex.

4.1. Iran's strategy in Iraq after 2003: How Iran became involved in the process of state-building in post-2003 Iraq

Before analysing Iranian strategy in post-2003 Iraq, and the ways in which the Iranians became involved in the ethno-confessional tensions, it is important firstly to understand the position of Iraq in the Iranian strategy, and what post-2003 Iraq meant for Iran as well as the motivations that drive Iran's strategy toward Iraq.

The first motivation can be found in the building of new political-security architecture in the Persian Gulf. Iranian hegemony in Iraq means that Iran has created a real soft power (the so-called Shi'a Crescent) stretching from Afghanistan through Iraq to Syria and Lebanon. However, what some researchers call "Shi'a Crescent" is no more than the product of Iranian foreign policy's influence in fragile countries in the region. Further, this is not solely based on Shi'a ideology but on the capabilities of Iran to make use of the ideology for political purposes. Iran's links with Sunni Hamas and Iraqi Kurds can be best exemplified in this context. Having Iraq as an ally provides Iran with the capability to affect the traditional security order in the Persian Gulf and

create a new regional security system. As Barzegar (2007, p.102) says, for the first time in history since the Islamic Revolution, both ideological and political interests of Iranian foreign policy have been met in post-Saddam Iraq. Iraq's political, economic and security position is much more important for Iran than for any other allies of Iran in the region, such as Syria or Lebanon.

A number of factors influenced the Iranian strategy towards post-2003 Iraq. The size of Iraq's Shi'i population is the second largest in the Middle East, after Iran. In addition, the Shi'a population has had an active political and ideological role in the political process following the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Second, there is a huge supply of natural resources present in Iraq, particularly oil, especially in the southern region where the Shi'a primarily reside. Third, the geostrategic location of Iraq can act as a security buffer for Iran in the Persian Gulf against any potential foreign invasion. In addition, from the Iranian point of view, an Iraqi Shi'i regime would guarantee Iranian security interests in the Persian Gulf. The Iranian historical, political, and ideological links with Iraq's new political elite running the Iraqi government and political process since 2003 is also a major factor in the shaping Iranian strategy toward post-2003 Iraq. These gains could turn into be a big political investment for Iran; as Nasr (2006, p.67) notes, it could provide Iran with the ability to be a regional superpower and a base for a Shi'a zone of influence stretching from Mesopotamia to Central Asia.

Second, Iraq's ethnic and religious identities have had a direct influence on the national, ethnic, and religious identities in Iran, since both Iraqi Kurds and Arabs have strong ties with their Iranian counterparts. In the Kurdish case this relationship was clear, in the collaboration between Kurdish liberation movements based in both countries. That had occurred when Iraqi Kurdish leader Mustafa Barzani participated with several thousand fighters in establishing the Republic of Mahabad (also called the State of the Republic of Kurdistan) in eastern Kurdistan, north-west Iran, on 22 January 1946. That ethnic solidarity was repeated in 2014 during Iraqi Kurds' battles with Islamic State. The Kurdistan Democratic Party-Iran (KDP-I), Kurdistan Freedom Party and Kurdistan Struggle Agency, had engaged alongside with the Iraqi Kurds into the battlefield against IS (see Rudaw, 2014). After 2003 these ties (ethnic, religious, social, economic and political) have deepened due to the new political

alliance between Iran and the new ruling elite in Iraq. Iran may consider these ethno-religious connections (or in the words of this thesis's theory, the domestic level of Iran's security complex dynamics) with the Iraqi Kurds a threat to its internal stability, especially in the possible future event of Iraq's division.

Third, Iranian hegemony in Iraq could provide Iran the power to hinder the interference of the U.S. and its allies in the region, and to be in a stronger position in its negotiations with the West[46]. Baker III, and Hamilton's report (2006) provides an example, when they clearly recommended to the U.S, that, ''given the ability of Iran and Syria to influence events within Iraq and their interest in avoiding chaos in Iraq, the United States should try to engage them constructively''. U.S. and Iranian coordination could also be seen in the international coalition against Islamic State in Iraq, when Iran showed its cooperation with the West. Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said "If we agree to do something in Iraq, the other side of the negotiations should do something in return". (Reuters, Aug 21, 2014). Iran's influence on Iraq, coupled with its sometime cooperation with the West, has allowed Iran to exert its influence in other contexts, such as Syria, Lebanon and Palestine.

Fourth, Iran wishes to build a 'sphere of influence' in southern Iraq, relying on its soft power with Iraqi Shi'a groups (Milani, 2011, p.74). This is mainly achievable by increasing its political ties with the Iraqi political elites, such as Da'wa, Sadrist, and the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) Parties. In addition, Iran has a high interest in increasing its economic, religious, financial, and political presence in Iraq in order to avoid any possible division of the country. However, even in the case of Iraq's division, Iran would still maintain

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[46] According to current and former American and Iraqi government officials and experts on the Iraqi banking sector, Iraq has provided Iran with a vital flow of dollars to bypass the nuclear sanctions. President Obama made clear in his statement on the announcement of additional sanctions over Iran that:

The Department of the Treasury imposed sanctions on Bank of Kunlun in China and Elaf Islamic Bank in Iraq under the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2010 (CISADA). Bank of Kunlun and Elaf Islamic Bank have facilitated transactions worth millions of dollars on behalf of Iranian banks that are subject to sanctions for their links to Iran's illicit proliferation activities. (The White House, 31 July 2012).

great influence over Iraq's southern Shi'a region, also the most rich in resources. Furthermore, regionalism has been demanded by the ISCI and other Iraqi politicians many times in since 2006, their aim to have a semi-autonomous region with similar rights to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. In such a case, Basra would most likely fall under the Iranian influence in the region.

According to the aforementioned factors regarding Iran's strategy towards Iraq, it can be said that Iran's involvement in the state-building process in post-2003 Iraq cannot be explained only through the ideological ambitions of the Iranian regime. In particular, due to the securitization of the Persian Gulf region, especially since the 1980s, for Iran and other Arab Gulf countries, security and foreign policies are hardly detachable (Kamrava, 2011, p.186).Therefore to understand Iranian strategy in Iraq and the wider region it is important firstly to address the factors that are driving Iranian foreign policy in the region. As Ramazani (2013, p.148) argued, although both factors of ideology and pragmatism have long existed throughout Iranian history, the balance of influence has been shifted away from religious ideology toward pragmatic calculation of the national interest in the making of foreign policy decisions, due to the dynamic processes of cultural developments in Iran. This is especially true after Ayatollah Khomeini's era in the late 1990s, when a domestic political reform movement paid attention to national interests more than religious ideology (Maloney, 2008, p.21). The same is true of Iranian national security policies in the region, also more influenced by pragmatic balance of power than by religious ideology (see Kamrava, p.2011, p.184). There are few major disagreements between Iran's conservatives and reformists on this issue.

At the centre of Iran's pragmatic approach, the geopolitical factor constitutes an important driver of Iran's regional policy, in particular towards its immediate neighbours (Byman et al, 2001, pp. 7-8). Of course there are other factors, such as "revolutionary Islam" and Persian nationalism, in addition to the ethnic and sectarian factors. However, the influence of the mentioned factors has, overall, declined in Iran's foreign policy (Byman et al, 2001, p.8). To an extent, even the principle of the rejection of diplomatic negotiations with the old adversary the U.S. has been abandoned in Iranian foreign policy. In March 2006 Ayatollah Khamenei proclaimed that "there are no objections to talk with Washington if the Iranian officials think they can make the Americans clearly

understand the issue pertaining to Iraq" (cited in Maloney, 2008, p.19). Negotiations between U.S. and Iran (even sometimes cooperation) over Iraq have occurred many times before and after the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 (Gordon, 2016)[47].

Despite the complexity of the Iranian engagement in the process of state-building through ethno-sectarian conflict in post-2003 Iraq, it is possible to divide it into different stages, as outlined below.

- **Iran's policy toward Iraq 2003-2005: Considerable caution**

From 2003 to 2005, Iran was anxious about the U.S. presence next door. At that time the main concern of Iran was that it could become a second target for American invasion[48]. Throughout this stage, Iran was concerned about the new political situation in Iraq, the form of state that the U.S. would set up in the country, and which Iraqi factions would dominate the new government. As Kamrava argued (2011, p.202), Iranian short-term strategy during that period can be attributed to Iran's fear of any direct confrontation with the U.S. troops in Iraq. This period witnessed Iranian involvement through its former opposition allies against the Ba'ath regime, in particularly the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) and the Badr forces. Ali Allawi, a former Iraqi defence minister and author of *The Occupation of Iraq*, said: ''about 10,000 trained and disciplined Badr fighters entered Iraq, either unarmed or armed only with light weapons, and reassembled in various towns and cities as the fighting arm of SCIRI"

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[47] A former American ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad, said that the U.S. had talked with Iran regarding Iraq's future in advance of the U.S.-led invasion to topple the Ba'ath regime, Iran agreed that they would not fire at U.S. warplanes that strayed into Iranian airspace. "We wanted a commitment that Iran would not fire on U.S. aircraft if they accidentally flew over Iranian territory". Gordon, M.R., 2016. US Conferred With Iran Before Iraq Invasion, Book Says. *New York Times, 6.*

[48] According to a U.S. classified document dated 2005, leaked to Wikileaks, "the U.S. military forces in Iraq were authorized to pursue former members of Saddam Hussein's government and terrorists across Iraq's borders into Iran and Syria" (Wikileaks, February 4, 2008). In response Tehran warned American forces in Iraq via its Foreign Ministry Spokesman Seyed Mohammad Ali Hosseini that "Any entrance to the Iranian soil by any U.S. military force to trail suspects would be against international laws and could be pursued legally". (Wikileaks, February 12, 2008).

(Allawi, 2007, p.139). Although, during this period, Tehran demonstrated its willingness to negotiate with Washington about its nuclear program (Gordon, 2016), there is no evidence to show that Iranian posture toward Iraq was related to their nuclear talks with the U.S. In contrast to U.S. accusations, there is no clear evidence to prove that at that time Iran was supporting insurgent groups' activities in Iraq. On the contrary, Iran, as mentioned earlier, played an important role in deterring any possible American attack against their interests, including the emergence of an anti-Iranian regime, as well as a civil war in post-2003 Iraq.

It is evident, after all these years, that most of the violent attacks in 2003-2005 came from Sunni and Ba'athist groups traditionally hostile to Iran. However, in this period Muqtada al-Sadr's Shi'a group Jaish al-Mahdi (JAM) was responsible for some attacks[49]. At that time, al-Sadr was not an Iranian ally. In general, he has had a fluctuating relationship with Iran, and has been more an Iraqi nationalist following his father's belief that Iraq's Shi'a Arabs are the rightful leaders of the Hawza[50] (see Krohley, 2014). It may be argued that the Iranian fear of an aggressive U.S. reaction prevented Iran from carrying out attacks against the U.S. troops in Iraq at that period.

With a closer look at the Iranian policy towards Iraq at this period, it can be concluded that Iran might have not been against the idea of a Shi'a southern federal region when the idea was first suggested by Abdul Aziz al-Hakim in August 2005. Although there is not any evidence to prove that Iran was behind this suggestion, due to the close ideological ties between Iran and the ISCI the southern federalism might not have been suggested without Iranian prior awareness. However, the idea of southern federalism has been strongly rejected by most of the Shi'a and Sunni parties, which have claimed that this model of federalism aims to divide Iraq into ethnic and sectarian areas.

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[49] The U.S.-Iraq intelligence in al-Hillah, dated June 8, 2005 which was classified at the SECRET level, illustrated that Gawad (Al-Hassnawi) and Hamid (Kanosh), who were members of the Karbala city council, were at the same time members of the Mahdi Militia in Karbala and associated with known Mahdi Militia members Ali Abd (Taan) and Mohamed (Kadhim). Both of them were confirmed members of a Mahdi Militia cell operating in Karbala. Taan and Kadhim occasionally worked as bodyguards for Al-Hassnawi and Kanosh (Wikileaks, May 16, 2008).

[50] Hawza is a type of seminary centre which provides training to Shi'a Muslim clerics, such as the preeminent Hawza of Najaf in Iraq and the Qom Hawza in Iran.

- **Iran's policy toward Iraq 2005-2008: Shifting to an active player**

There are two main reasons for the shifting of Iran's policy from a passive player into an active player in this period (see Cohen, 2011). First, Iran reached the conclusion that America would not be able to control Iraq, and that it failed in the state-building process to create what they claimed was a democratic regime. As a middle power in a penetrated regional state system (according to the thesis's theory), Iran found that as an opportunity to involve itself, especially given that Iran had long experience in interfering in volatile regimes, such as Lebanon, Palestine and Syria. Second, after 2006 it became obvious that Iraq was descending into a civil war with disastrous consequences for Iranian internal and external security. Also, the conservatives' coming into power in Iran under the presidency of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in August 2005 supported this change. As Takeyh (2009, p.237) revealed, the rise of the "new right" made a significant shift in Iranian foreign policy toward a mixture of ultra-nationalism and Islamist ideology, stressing Iran's right to become a regional superpower. Iranian foreign policy faced many tensions during this period, whether on the international level (e.g. with the U.S. and Israel) or on the regional level (e.g. with GCC countries) (Ehteshami and Zweiri, 2008, p.132). This period witnessed the building of extensive intelligence networks with Shi'a, Sunni and Kurdish militia groups. Iran's ties with the Badr Organisation and other Shi'a groups like Fadila and Jaysh al-Mahdi bloomed. This is particularly noteworthy with the high-ranking members of the Iraqi exile political groups, such as Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis and Abu Mustafa al-Sheibani, as well as radical figures from Muqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army militia, such as Qais al-Khazali and Ismail al-Lami, who formed secret armed groups in coordination with Iran (Moaveni, 2003).

- **Iran's policy toward Iraq 2008-2011: Keeping Shi'a groups united**

Early March 2008 witnessed a diminution of the Iranian influence in Iraq. This was due to the constructive efforts that had been made by al-Maliki's government to curb the role of the armed militias that seized the city of Basra

and Sadr city in Baghdad, led by the Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM) under the influence of the Iraqi Shi'a cleric Muqtada al-Sadr. Al-Mahdi militia was the strongest ally of Iran at that time. Arguably there were a number of reasons contributing to the curtailing of Iran's power at that moment. Firstly, the changing of the U.S. policy toward Iraq in 2007, through sending 30,000 additional troops to the country, had a drastic impact on the security situation in favour of the U.S.. Secondly, the U.S. strategy of participating in the *Sahawat,* "Sunni Awakening", which turned many of the Sunnis against al-Qaeda in late 2006, had a significant effect of reducing the surge against the government and restoring security (Mardini,2010, p. 52). Thirdly, the "Charge of the Knight" operation against the Shi'a militias was another blow to the Iranian hegemony in post-Saddam Iraq. That government campaign, supported by a remarkable percentage of the Iraqi people, in particular secularists, has been seen as a step toward the enforcement of the rule of law and bringing back order to the state[51].

This transformation became more obvious in the 2009 provincial elections, when the majority of the Iraqi people voted for the parties least tied to Iran and least involved with the militia groups, such as Prime Minister Maliki's State of Law coalition, and Ayad Allawi's al-Iraqiyya list (al-Iraqiyya gained 91 seats and State of Law 89 out of 325 in total). However, the Iranian decline did not last for long, because al-Maliki's coalition did not let al-Iraqiyya form a new government; this occurred primarily due to the Iranian efforts of re-building the Shi'a alliance that had been impacted by political differences. Iran also put more pressure upon the Sadrist Movement and the two main Kurdish parties, the PUK and the KDP, to support Maliki's government. Maliki paid back his debts to the Iranians, and during the second term of his government, Iranian hegemony in Iraq reached its highest extent. The 7 March 2010 parliamentary elections witnessed high engagement by Iran. The competition between the Iraqi National Movement, led by Ayad Allawi, which won a total of 91 seats, and the State of Law Coalition, led by former Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki, with 89 seats, reached its peak (Isakhan, 2015, p.72). Muwafaq al-Rubai'i, who was Iraqi

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[51] The Charge of the Knights was an attempt which could transform al-Maliki from a sectarian character to a national leader following the U.S. invasion, especially after his election list of State of Law marked a great success in the elections of governorate councils in January 2009. However, the limited character of al-Maliki, and the conflict inside the Shi'i house, especially with Shi'a paramilitary groups, hindered this attempt.

national security advisor, made explicit reference to regional and international interference with Iraqi affairs, particularly in the formation of the new Iraqi government. According to Sharq al-Awsat newspaper (29 July 2010) one of the INA leaders admitted that "Iran has informed us that we should accept al-Maliki even though he hit us on our heads". Iranian funds to the ISCI were reduced by 50 percent in order to pressure them into accepting al-Maliki as the new Prime Minister.

- **Iran's policy toward Iraq after 2011: Toward a strategic partner**

The Arab uprising has intensely affected regional policies among Arab and Islamic countries, and deepened ethnic and religious tensions in the Middle East. The Syrian conflict was a major turning point for all three of Iraq's components, Shi'as, Sunnis and Kurds. Each of these groups has joined the ethnic and sectarian combat in Syria. Since then Iraq has allied itself with the Iran, Syria, and Hezbollah front. It can be argued that the Islamic State (also Daesh or ISIS) attack on Mosul and other Sunni territories in central and northern Iraq has linked even more strongly Iraq's Shi'as to Iran. If there was no ISIS, it may have taken a decade for the same relationship to form. After Daesh took over the most of the Sunni-majority territories with the help of some Sunni tribes and insurgents, the Iraqi Shi'a found themselves with no friends in the region except Iran (Al-Jazeera, 4 Jun 2015).

After 2014, there has been increasing amount of evidence that shows the presence of Iranian military advisors in Iraq. The top Popular Mobilization Units commander, Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, underlined to the press that "the presence of experts and advisers from Iran gave us a major boost. They provided us with (military) guidelines, and even prevented the fall of the capital of Iraqi Kurdistan, Erbil. Major General Soleimani went to Erbil to prevent its fall." (Pars Today, 1 Jun 2016). The existence of IS has strongly linked Iraqi Shi'ism with Iran, regardless of the political differences between them.

It is important to note that what differentiates Iranian engagement in Iraq from the engagement of other neighbouring countries is Iran's focus on building links with Iraq's official political, military, economic and religious institutions. On

the political level, Iran has built durable relations with a number of Shi'a political parties, such as the Islamic Da wa Party (izb Al-Da wa Al-Isl miyya) and the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq. Most of the political elite that has dominated the political process in Iraq since 2003 had spent part of their political life in Iran. For instance, the Badr Organisation (previously known as the Badr Brigade) was founded in Iran in 1982 by Shi'a exiles that were trained, financed and armed by Iran and fought alongside Revolutionary Guard Corps during the Iran-Iraq war against Saddam's Ba'ath regime. Badr was the armed wing of the largest Shi'a political party in Iraq, the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) (Mumford, 2012, p.140).

However, when the ISCI attempted to disassociate itself from Iranian tutelage in 2012, the Badr group broke away in order to keep its solid ties with Iran. Badr has strong ideological links with the Iranian Islamic regime and is a strong supporter of Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Since 2012, Badr has played an important role in both its political and military wings in the Iraqi arena. The group has controlled many official positions in the Iraqi governments. In the former Iraqi Prime Minister al-Maliki's government, al-Amiri, the head of the organisation, served as the Minister of Transportation. Also in October 2014, Mohammed Ghabban, a member of the Badr Organisation, was appointed Iraq's Interior Minister. In 2004, when the official Iraqi Security Forces were formed, most of the Badr Organisation was incorporated into these forces (Stanford University Report, 2016). Iran's infiltration into political and military institutions in Iraq become even deeper after the Iraqi Parliament passed a law in November 2016 recognising over 50 militias under an umbrella organization of the Popular Mobilisation Units (PMU) as an independent military formation. (Al Arabiya, 27 November 2016).

Regarding the Iranian strategy in post-Saddam Iraq and its engagement in the state-building process, it can be argued that Iran has acted on three main levels:

4.1.1. Limiting U.S. capability in Iraq

After Iran realised that Iraq was on the verge of collapse and could not be controlled by the U.S., Iran began to pursue its strategic aims in post-2003 Iraq. Iran was very concerned about its geopolitical position after September 11, due

to the influence of global terrorist groups in both Afghanistan and Iraq. After 2003, the Iranians found that they had very strong links with the new political elite in Iraq, due to the fact that most of the Iraqi political parties in power in post-2003 Iraq had spent most of their life in opposition in Iran. The ISCI and Da'wa Parties, as well as both of the main Kurdish parties, the KDP and the PUK, had a history of opposition to the Ba'ath regime, and they had played a role in the Iranian opposition to Saddam's regime during the Iran-Iraq War[52]. The Shi'a and Kurds now dominated the post-2003 political process. By working with Shi'as and Kurdish parties, Iran became most dominant country in Iraq amongst Iraq's other neighbours.

It can be said that the most powerful mechanism which was in Iran's hands for curbing the U.S. plans in post 2003 Iraq was the use of Shi'i proxy militants. Some of these groups, funded by Iran, were recruited in Iran in order to provide logistic information about American troops and supply weapons to carry out attacks on the coalition forces in 2005[53] (al-Khoei , 2010). . Although, all these claims cannot be regarded as reliable evidence, this has been insisted

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[52] The main Iraqi political figures that spent a part of their opposition life in Iran and constituted the post-2003 Iraqi government, and who meanwhile have kept their ties to Iran, are Ibrahim al-Jaafari, Ammar al-Hakim, Humam Hamoudi, Adil Abd al-Mahdi, Bayan Jabr, Nuri al-Malaki, Masoud Barzani, Muqtada al-Sadr and Jalal Talabani. Other members of the Iraqi new elite, such as Ahmad Chalabi, were not in exile in Iran but did maintain good relations with Iran; Chalabi was accused by the U.S. in 2004 of sharing secret information with Tehran about American intelligence gathering against Iran. The above-mentioned political elite have been a key factor of Iranian power in the post-2003 Iraq. For more about Iraq's political elite after 2003, see Kemp, 2005, Iran and Iraq: The Shi'a Connection, Soft Power, and the Nuclear Factor, *United States Institute of Peace.*

[53] According to some regional intelligence reports, 4,000 Iraqi fighters in Iraq were trained and armed in Iran in order to provoke an Islamic revolution in Iraq. Most of these fighters were former Iraqi prisoners in Iran during the Iran-Iraq War. Other reports also revealed that many young Iraqis were also recruited by Shi'a clerics to go to Iran for religious and political indoctrination and militia training in 2004 and 2005. Many members of the Badr Corps have been incorporated into the Iraqi Security Forces, suggesting an increase of Iranian hold over the very basic structural elements of post-war Iraq. Muhammad, who was the uncle of a young man who went to Iran, said ''the young man and a number of others were recruited from Husseiniya mosque, a large Shi'a mosque in Baghdad. The young man told his father he was going to visit a religious site in Iran. But, Muhammad said, "They took them to a camp and gave them a briefing on what is happening in Iraq, and what Iran is trying to do: Support the Shi'as and help them retain power'' (The Washington Times, January 9, 2006).

many times by the U.S. former Ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad, who has frequently warned about Iranian interference in Iraq's affairs. In 2005, he stated: "we do not want weapons to come across from Iran into Iraq, or training of Iraqis to take place." (The Washington Times, January 9, 2006).

According to Congressional Research Service (CRS) reports (Kenneth, 2010, p. 2), the support for Shi'a militias by Iran, such as Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq, the Badr Brigades, Kata'ib Hezbollah, Saraya al-Salam and the Mahdi Army, reached a peak in 2006-2008 and 2014-2016. Shi'a militias and insurgent groups were supported with the provision of weapons and troops, most of which were provided by the Quds Force (the Special Forces of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, IRGC) who are responsible for extraterritorial operations. The question that remains open is, was Iranian support of these paramilitary Shi'a militias only for the sake of curbing U.S. capabilities in Iraq? The formation of Iraqi Shi'a militias derives from Tehran's experience in Lebanon in the 1980s. The Iranian Support for these militias is multiuse and multipurpose. One of the aims may be as Takeyh (2009, p.254) argues, that Iran wants the Shi'a to have control deriving from their demographic advantage, but if the political process fails, they must be properly armed to win the civil war. Second, these paramilitary militias can provide Iran with an upper hand not only against the U.S. but also against the Iraqi government, the KRG and even Iraq's neighbours if necessary. They have acted many times opposition to the Iraqi government, whether during al-Maliki's government (in Basra) or during Abadi's government (in Tuz Khurmatu and Tal Afar). This is in addition to their disputes with the KRG in disputed areas, such as Kirkuk, Jalawla, and Tuz Khurmatu, or their participation in Syria's crisis after 2011. Having a huge number (140,000 men registered in 60-70 groups) armed in Shi'a militias can curb and direct the political process in Iraq, given that many of these militias have been involved in the political process (Al Jazeera, 26 November 2016).

Iranian efforts to curb the U.S. process of statebuilding in Iraq have been confirmed by both U.S. and British officials. James Jeffery (Reuters, 26 Aug 2010) the U.S. ambassador in Iraq in 2010-2012, stated:

My own estimate, based just upon a gut feeling, is that up to a quarter of the American casualties and some of the more horrific incidents in which Americans were kidnapped ... can be traced without doubt to these Iranian groups.

Despite the intensive Iranian engagement in Iraq, it can be argued that Iran until the U.S. withdrawal did not have a comprehensive plan of state building to apply in Iraq. Most of the Iranian efforts focused on hindering the U.S. from applying their own form of state-building in Iraq. What Iran was concerned with was that the Americans wished to build an Iraq with close links to the Sunni Arab countries, such as the GCC countries and Jordan, or an Iraq influenced by the dictates of pan-Arab nationalists, as had been left by the British in 1921, which might turn Iraq again to a hostile regime towards Iran. This was according to the wishes of a number of Arab countries, particularly Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Egypt. They expressed their concerns and preferences about what the new Iraq should look like. Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Egypt put pressure on the U.S. not to allow post-2003 Iraq to be dominated by the Shi'a and form part of the Shi'a soft power in the region. So, the Iranian strategy of countering the U.S. task in Iraq was mainly relevant to Iran's security policies rather than to the sectarian agendas in post-war Iraq. As Haddad (2011, p.10) reveals, the external influence is not a direct factor of sectarian relations in Iraq; alternatively, it is a major factor to understand the sectarian relations in post-2003 Iraq. What can be concluded here is, what has driven Tehran to counter the U.S. presence in Iraq was the regional security complex dynamics of Iran with Iraq, and not a pure ideological agenda of exporting Islamic revolution in post-2003 Iraq. Iran's regional security policy is largely determined by the role and position of the U.S. in the Persian Gulf (Kamrava, 2011, p.185). So, if we apply Gause's concept of "perceived threats" (see Gaues, 2010, p.9), it can be said that Iran has perceived the U.S. presence in Iraq as a threat in its regional and domestic security issues.

Another key factor for Iranian hegemony in Iraq dates back to Iran's penetration of the Iraqi security forces (ISF) after 2003; this happened through Iranian agents making contacts within the Iraqi security institutions, as well as infiltrating large numbers of Iranian proxies into Iraqi security. All this made Iranian intervention more effective than the intervention of Iraq's other neighbours. Some of these groups even operated as distinct parts of the official Iraqi military forces. Between 2003 and 2005, 90 percent of the 35,000 of north-east Baghdad's police officers were affiliated with the Mahdi Army, and 60,000 of Baghdad's police force was shared between the Badr Organisation and Mahdi Army. These militia members, who lacked any professional military

training, had infiltrated the Iraqi Security Forces (Allawi, 2007, p. 423). It is clear that both the Iraqi security forces and Iraqi military forces have played active roles in the ethnic and religious tensions after 2003. This was clear with the intervention of the security forces during the Sunni demonstrations against Prime Minister Nuri al-Malki in Falluja, and Ramadi; in the northern city of Hawijah alone, more than 40 anti-government protesters were killed by Iraqi security forces (Reuters, 23 April 2013). This enflamed a new sectarian conflict, and constituted one of the reasons for ISIS's invasion of Sunni territories in the western and northern cities of Iraq in 2014.

Iran's support for Shi'i militias was part of a calculated strategy. In June 2007 the U.S.'s military forces estimated the equipment and funding provided by Iranian Quds Forces for these militias in Iraq to be approximately three million dollars per month[54] (Kagan, Kagan, and Pletka, 2008, p.17-18). This evidence showing the Iranian involvement in supporting the violence in Iraq should be assessed in the context of Iran's hindering the U.S. presence in Iraq.

Some researchers pointed out that the U.S. and Iran have had somewhat similar goals in post-2003 Iraq, since the instability of Iraq and a civil war would not have favoured Iranian national interests (see Takeyh, 2009, p.250). In reality, it is fairer to say that any civil war in Iraq would not have favoured any of Iraq's neighbours. However, Iran has long-term experience of taking advantage of the destabilised and moderate states in the region, such as Lebanon, Palestine, and most lately Syria and Yemen. It is not, therefore, only a matter of stability; Iran and U.S. in fact have different aims and agendas toward post-2003 Iraq, and the model of state the U.S. had in mind to build was very different from the Iranian model. The U.S. former ambassador to Iraq, Khalilzad, said "the Americans and Iranians had major differences over how to form a new Iraqi government and deal with Tehran's support for terrorism" (cited in Gordan, 2016). The U.S. wanted to build an Iraqi government faithful to them, which could guarantee the alliance of other countries in the region, such as the Gulf States, Jordan, Egypt, Turkey and even Israel, all of which are rivals to Iran.

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[54] Also in spring 2007, through a joint special operation between the U.S. army and Iraqi security forces against militia leaders funded by Iran, a number of suspects were arrested with documents and evidence which linked them with Iran (Kagan and Pletka, 2008, p.17-18).

On the other hand, Iran wanted a weak, federal and elected but unified government in Baghdad for a number of reasons. First, the elections would keep the Shi'a in power, as long as they stayed united. Second, a weak federal government would give Iran a chance to expand its soft power in Shi'a territory in order to impose its influence. Third, Iran wanted a weak Iraqi state that could not be a threat to Iran, as it had been during the Iran-Iraq War. Fourth, since a Shi'i regime in Iraq would not have been tolerated by all of Iraq's other neighbours, it would be in constant need of Iranian support and therefore would owe a great political debt to Iran.

Iran, through the military training and logistic aid to Shi'a militia groups in Iraq, intended to transform them from unorganised and unprofessional militia groups into professional ones on the model of the Lebanese Hezbollah and uncontrollable by the government. Both Lebanese Hezbollah and Iranian Quds Forces have worked together in Iraq since 2003[55] (see Ostovarp, 2016, p.173) to this aim. This was clearly noted by General David Petraeus, the commander of the Multi-National Force in Iraq in 2007:

[i]t is increasingly apparent to both coalition and Iraqi leaders that Iran, through the use of the Iranian Republican Guard Corps Quds Force, seeks to turn the Shi'a militia extremists into a Hezbollah-like force to serve its interests and fight a proxy war against the Iraqi state and coalition forces in Iraq (Congressional Record, October 2007, p. 25033).

In the meantime, it is evident that Iran has used its influence on Iraqi politicians with links to Iran in order to put pressure on the Iraqi government to support the withdrawal of U.S. troops from the country. Furthermore, Iran also used its leverage on number of Shi'a militias to help force the American forces out of Iraq. For example, Muqtada al-Sadr warned the U.S. many times that if they stayed longer than December 2011, the deadline for American withdrawal agreed in the Strategic of Forces Agreement between Iraq and the U.S.

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[55] When the conflict between the Shi'as and Sunnis reached its peak in 2007 and 2008, the U.S. military forces claimed that there were 150 members of al-Quds forces in Iraq, and a small number of them had been arrested. The evidence showed that Iran had supplied them with advanced weapons and "destructive technology". The evidence has been confirmed again when a member of Lebanese Hezbollah, Ali Mussa Daqduq, was arrested in the company of an extremist Shi'a militia leader, Qais al-Khazali, in Basra in March 2007 (Dodge, 2012, p. 187).

(SOFA), U.S. troops in Iraq would be targeted by his followers (Smith, 2012, p. 424).

Map 2 The Saudi-Iran Proxy Wars in the Middle East

(Foreign Policy, JANUARY 6, 2016)

It can be argued that proxy forces have been one of the most effective tools of the Iranian foreign policy since the Islamic revolution in 1979. This can be clearly seen in Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq and Syria (see map 2). In Iraq they tried to foment local mistrust towards American and other coalition forces, not only within Iraq but also in the Gulf State regimes which host American bases on their territory. The former U.S. ambassador James Jeffry (Reuters August, 26, 2010) said that, "Iran has sought to use Iraqi proxies to destabilise its neighbours and make it inhospitable for foreign forces". However, Jeffry's statement may be questionable, since there has been little evidence about Iraqi proxy militias' engagement with destabilising the security situation in countries hosting American troops, for instance in the Gulf countries. If there was such an intention, it would not only have affected the political and security situation in the Gulf countries, but also it would have served terrorist groups such as al-

Qaida and Daesh, helping them become powerful inter-state forces in the region, as has been the case in Syria and Iraq after the Syrian conflict.

The Iranian strategy to curb U.S. capability in Iraq after 2003 can be judged successful for three main reasons. First, the U.S. has not achieved its goals in Iraq, and the process of state-building of Iraq has been judged a failure also by American officials. Second, the U.S. failed to build an Iraqi state allied with them and with its own allies in the Persian region. On the contrary, Iraq became a close ally of the Iranian regime alongside Syria and Lebanon's Hezbollah, and joined the "resistance club" under the Iranian leadership. Third, Iran has not only become a hegemonic power in Iraq, but has also dragged Iraq into the regional sectarian conflict in the Persian Gulf. Iran has used Iraq as a key player towards shaping regional and international politics in both the Persian Gulf and the Middle East.

The regional alignment between the Syrian regime and al-Maliki's government after the Arab uprising is evidence of that sectarian alignment. This is proved by the presence of Iraqi Shi'a militias fighting alongside the Syrian regime. According to the study carried out by the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) (Gilbert, 2013, p12), the number of Iraqi Shi'a militia fighters fighting in Syria is between 2000 and 3000[56]. These militias mainly came from three Iraqi groups: Asaib Ahl al-Haqq, which fractured from Muqtada al-Sadr's movement in 2006 with support from the IRGC, Quds Force and Lebanese Hezbollah; Kataib Hezbollah (KH); and Kataib Sayyid al-Shuhada (KSS), led by Abu Mustafa al-Sheibani (a.k.a. Hamid al-Sheibani), an Iraqi Shi'a who has worked under the Quds Force since the late 1980s. These are in addition to the Badr Organization and Muqtada al-Sadr's *Liwa al-Youm al-Mawud* (Promised Day Brigades) and *Liwa Abi al-Fadl al-Abbas* (The Abu al-

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[56] It can be said that the number of the Iraqi Shi'a fighters in Syria may have been overestimated. Many Shi'a fighters are volunteers, but others are Iranian-trained militiamen who honed their skills against the U.S.-led forces following the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Iraq's Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari told Reuters in an interview that: "There has been an exaggeration of Iraqi brigades or units fighting in Syria. Really there has been a limited number of volunteers, these volunteers have gone there without any sanction or approval or support from the government or the Iraqi regime or the political leaders" (Reuters, Jun, 19 2013).

Fadl al-Abbas Brigade). The latter has played a prominent role in Syria[57] (see Anzalone, 2013; Al-Salhy, 2013; Mahmood and Chulov, 2013).

Thus it can be concluded that Iran played a significant role in limiting the U.S. effort in Iraq, which has meant hindering the state-building process in post-2003 Iraq. Moreover, the Iranian attitude does not originate exclusively from the ideological views of Shi'ism in Iraq, or from the traditional hostility (since 1979) between Iran and the U.S., but is driven by a wider foreign policy strategy which is mainly directed by Iran's regional security dynamics in the Persian Gulf and the Middle East, based, as Kamrava (2011, p. 186) observes, on the securitisation of Iran's foreign policy. The Iranian alignment with these militia proxy forces in Syria, Lebanon and Iraq after 2003 has become a part of the Iranian regional foreign policy.

It is important to note however, despite the rising of Iranian power in Iraq after the U.S. troops' withdrawal at the end of 2011, the U.S. role still cannot be overlooked. As Gause (2010, p. 5, 6) points out, it is difficult to understand the Persian Gulf regional security complex without including the U.S. as a member, despite the changing of its intensity of involvement after the troop withdrawal at the end of 2011. Iran's position in Iraq and the Persian Gulf, as well as Iran's regional security policy, are highly determined by the presence and position of Washington in the region (Kamrava, 2011, p.185).

Since the end of 2011, and until the advent of the Islamic state in June 2014, the influence of the U.S. has declined in Iraq. However, the IS aggression in Iraq brought back the U.S. heavily to Iraq as part of the U.S.-led coalition against IS. After troop withdrawal from Iraq, the U.S. plan to shape Iraq's policies faced some changes, and shifted to the CIA and State Department (Dodge, 2012, p.185). From 2012 until the advent of IS, the U.S. has mainly focused on counter-terrorism and civilian plans, especially through its embassy in Baghdad and its consulates in Erbil and Basra. However, since the advent of the IS attack on Iraq in June 2014, U.S. involvement has been more focused on military issues, especially counter-terrorism through carrying out air strikes

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[57] After 2012, the Iraqi Shi'a fighters have become more open about joining Syria's war. Their involvement had been publicly declared by prominent Shi'a militia Asaib Ahl al-Haqq in July 2013, when they declared that a sub-unit called *Liwa Kaffel Zeinab* (Supporter of Zeinab Brigade) had been established to defend Shi'a holy shrines in Syria (see Blanford, 2013).

against IS and providing training to Iraqi forces. This has been in contrast to the Iranian approach which has been more effective since U.S departure and possessed more means and been more feasible to engage in both military and political issues in Iraq. This has been confirmed by Sami al-Askari, a senior Shi'i politician, who said: "They [the Iranians] have many means. Frankly, the Americans can't do anything" (Arango, 2017). Although al-Askari's statement might be highly exaggerated, Iran is more powerful than the U.S. in Iraq on many levels. On the political level, Iran has a large number of allies in the Iraqi Parliament, who can protect Iranian goals. Likewise, on a military level, Iran has great influence on Iraq's government institutions. For instance, Iraqi interior minister, Qasim al-Araji, was a PMU leader, and a previous commander of the Quds Force installed in the Iraqi Ninth Badr Corps (Associated Press, 8 May 2017). In November 2016 the Iraqi Parliament recognised the tens of different Shi'i paramilitary forces known as *Hashd al-Shaabi* as a new security force alongside the Iraqi army.

Although the US-Iran nuclear deal might have provided Iran with more confidence towards the American presence in the region, and lead to a sort of coordination with the U.S. on the war against IS, it has not made any obvious change in their policies towards Iraq. As Indyk (2015) argued, Iran might have been keen to use Iraq and other regional issues as a bargaining card with Washington in their nuclear talks, especially regional cooperation in Iraq and Syria. However, America has been very careful about this. The Arab U.S. allies' in the Gulf also feared that their interests might be exploited in favour of the US-Iranian nuclear deal. Therefore, they have pushed Washington not to make other regional deals with their strategic rival, particularly when they were not part of the negotiations (see Indyk, 2015). Therefore, the U.S. factor has been active even after withdrawal as part of the Persian Gulf security complex. Theoretically, this has contributed to the interplay between the global and regional security structure and confirmed what Buzan discovers, that "the security interdependence within the regional level is more pronounced than the global level" (2003, p.188). However, the U.S. and other international factors have not much altered the intensity of Iranian involvement in the state-building process since the US departure in Iraq. The role of the international community also has changed after 2011, particularly through the Security Council resolution of 2249, which unequivocally condemned the terrorist attacks perpetrated by IS

around the world (Security Council, 20 November 2015). The resolution provided a guarantee that there would be an effective fight against transnational terrorist organisations, through the collective action of the UN members based on Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. However, the international community's role, mostly represented by the UN, has been more of a humanitarian role in Iraq. The marginal role of the UN might be traced back to early U.S. policy towards Iraq, particularly during the CPA period, which actually left a very limited role for the UN to play in Iraq, as has been discussed in chapter three.

4.1.2. Supporting Pro-Iranian government in Iraq

Iran was the first country in the region that recognised officially the Iraqi Governing Council in 2003 and formally sent its delegations to Baghdad. There has been evidence that even before 2003, Iran had already made plans regarding post-Saddam Iraq, especially after Iran realised that the Ba'ath regime was on the verge of collapse. Iran's historical relations with the groups which would become the Iraqi Shi'a political elite, and the Shi'a majority population of the Iraqi state, helped the Iranian regime to find an easy path towards its hegemony in post-Saddam Iraq (see Bongers, 2012, p. 148) . The main reason behind this strategy is that Iran wanted to build a new regional security system to shape the regional policy in the Persian Gulf and extend its influence through Iraq to the Arab and Islamic world.

It can also be argued that both security and economic factors have contributed to Iran's strategy in support of a pro-Iranian government in post-Saddam Iraq.

Iran's political-military support for the Iraqi government after 2003

Although the insistence on instituting an elected government directly after the U.S. invasion was not an Iranian demand, Iran has supported the idea of holding elections in Iraq from the beginning of the creation of the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) in June 2003. Having an elected government after the U.S. invasion was one of the most serious demands that Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani presented in October 2004 to the head of the CPA, Paul Bremer, during

the constitutional process, since an election was the best way to guarantee Shi'a dominancy in post-Saddam Iraq. The Iranian support might also echo the consensus made among Iranian officials after the eight-year war against Iraq that the main cause of Iraq's aggression was the Sunni domination of the state (Takeyh, 2007, p.177). Although this belief may be simplistic, it has cast a long shadow over recent Iraq-Iran relations, also leading to strong Syrian and Iranian alignment since the 1980s.

The instability caused by the Iraqi security situation and the regional proxy wars in Iraq offered Iran a golden opportunity to interfere in the internal decisions of the Iraqi government, such as election issues, Iraq-U.S. agreements, candidates' disputes, and political consensus. The more the ethno-sectarian conflict persists, the greater is the probability of regional intervention in Iraq. This is especially true for Iran, as Barzgar (cited in Visser, 2010, p.4) argued; considering the demographic realities of Iraq, it will be to Iran's benefit to have a Shi'a, Sunni and Kurdish conflict on the top of the agenda. Iran deeply influenced the trajectory of the state-building process in Iraq after 2003 by forging a political and military alliance with Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, the al-Da'wa Party and the Sadrist group. These allies played a key role in the constitutional process. Furthermore, Iran frequently influenced the Iraqi parliamentary elections in 2005 and 2010, as well as provincial elections in 2009, through funding and supporting its preferred candidates. For example, some U.S. government officials estimated the Iranian support for the Shi'a parties at between $100 million to $200 million in 2009, in addition to the $70 million which had been donated to the ISCI (Dodge, 2012, p. 187). According to the United States military commanders, there was intelligence evidence that Iran tried to influence the Iraqi elections results through military and financial support via their political links inside and outside the government (Guzansky, 2011, p. 90).

The Iranian engagement in Iraq's political and governmental issues has created the political, governmental and military elite in power in the official institutions and in charge of the whole political process since 2003. Moreover, this impact has been even stronger due to the sectarian tensions among Iraqi factions. This is emphasised in a telegram released by WikiLeaks sent from the U.S. embassy in Baghdad:

What diplomats believed were the close ties between the commander of the Quds Force of the Islamic Revolution Guards and Iran's point man on Iraq, B. G. Qassim Sulaimani and Iraq's top government officials since at least 2003(Cohen, 2011, p.226).

Furthermore, Iran's strategy has not only been based on 'leading from behind' but also engaging on the ground, working with the Iraqi political elite and at the same time paying close attention to the movements within Iraqi politics at different moments, to the extent that it would be impossible for anyone to become Iraqi prime minster or president without Iranian support[58]. For instance, during the March 2010 parliamentary elections, al-Iraqiya List, a nationalist and secular formation supported by the majority of Sunnis, won the national election with 91 seats out of 325, two more seats than State of Law list (89 seats) headed by the former Prime Minster, al-Maliki. Iran interfered directly, by inviting most of the Shi'a groups to Tehran to form a single coalition in order to prevent al-Iraqiya list from forming a government (Sharq al-Awsat, 29 July 2010). This effort led to the formation of the Shi'a-dominated government under al-Maliki's presidency. However, in 2014 Iran cancelled its support for al-Maliki, because of the political opposition inside Shi'i parties over his third mandate. The fragility of the state structure that has been built since the 2003 U.S. invasion has been a pivotal part of this involvement. The post-2003 political elite in Iraq have deeply influenced by ethno-religious polarisation, which has been sponsored by regional powers. Any of Iraq's three main components, whether Kurd or Sunni or Shi'a, need to depend on the regional powers' support, because of the political and constitutional structure of the state that has been fashioned by the U.S.-led coalition after 2003, in which is hard to protect Iraq from regional involvement.

The same role had been played by Iran when al-Maliki's second presidency was rejected by both of Iran's close allies, the Sadrists and the ISCI. In this case, fearful of losing a Shi'a-dominated government in Iraq, Iran forced the Sadrist group and the Kurdish former Iraqi president Jalal Talabani to accept the second term of al-Maliki's presidency, by encouraging Talabani to

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[58] The spokesperson of the Iraqi government Sa'ad Hadithi clearly admitted in a TV interview with Rudaw TV that the commander of Iran's Quds Force Qassem Soleimani is a "military advisor" to the Hashd al-Shaabi forces in Iraq (Rudaw, 16 October 2017).

derail a no-confidence vote against al-Maliki in April 2012 (see Knights, 2014)[59]. From the 2005 to the 2014 parliamentary elections and the replacement of Maliki with Haider Al-Abadi after tough negotiations inside the Shi'a parties, Iran has played a huge role in Iraq's political arena. This strategy has had the purpose of keeping a Shi'a-centric government in power, guaranteeing Iran a political and military presence in Iraq. This has been a presence very visible in the fight against the Sunni insurgents, and other terrorist groups such as Islamic State (ISIS), that took control of the most Sunni territories in the northwester of Iraq. On one hand, Iran has officially and secretly helped Iraq against ISIS. President Rohani of Iran said that Iran would help al-Maliki if asked by Iraq (Milani, 2014). According to a number of media reports (see Reuters, 2014), Gen. Qassim Suleimani, the head of the Quds Force (IRGC), fought against ISIS with the Iraqi Army in the town of Amerli, where they successfully defeated ISIS. During the ISIS attack on Iraq, Iran has helped in all the direct operations on the battlefields in the Jalawla and Sadia sub-districts on the border between the two countries[60].

It is, however, important to note that Iran's engagement in the state-building process post-2003 has been framed in a non-sectarian form, with Iran presenting it as part of a war against terrorism. Iran depicted the conflict in these terms as it feared losing Arab and Islamic support, which would have seriously limited Iran's role in the wider Middle East. These developments show that Iranian foreign policy lost its positive image in the Arab world (Sunni world) post-2003. Instead of being viewed as a force confronting the West and Israel, and the defender of the oppressed, Iran is now largely considered only as a defender of the interests of Shi'as, wherever they are.

Iran's economic support for the Iraqi government after 2003

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[59] The second term of al-Maliki's premiership was also supported by the U.S. in 2006. The U.S. ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad played an essential role in selecting and boosting Maliki as the Shi'a bloc's candidate (see Chulov, 2010).

[60] According to American officials, with the advent of IS in June 2014, Iran directed surveillance drones over Iraq from an airfield in Baghdad and provided Iraqi forces with additional military equipment (The New York Times, 25 Jun 2014).

Iranian engagement in Iraq has not solely been limited to the political and military aspects, but has also involved the economic sphere. Iran's economic support included the political and military support to the post-2003 governments in Iraq. In July 2005 former Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Ja'fari, during his Shi'i-led interim government, visited Tehran in order to build political and economic relationships. He announced that Iran would support Iraq with one billion dollars to rebuild Iraq's infrastructure, such as schools, libraries and hospitals (Cohen, 2011, p. 225).

In the Maliki period, the economic and trade relations, alongside the political ties, reached their peak. From 2006 to 2009 Maliki visited Iran four times as a Prime Minister, and each of these visits led to an economic agreement. However, it is important to note that Iranian economic support has mainly focused on Iraq's southern territories, especially Basra and the two main Shi'a shrine cites of Najaf and Karbala, thus strengthening the religious and cultural links between Iran and Iraq. The Iranian companies that have invested in house construction in southern Iraq will in the foreseeable future control a $16 billion market in Basra alone (see the Iraqi National Investment Commission, 2013). Territories such as Basra, Najaf, and Karbala, have effectively become Iranian economic zones. In August 2007 there was an agreement between Iraq and Iran to build pipelines between Iraq and the Iranian city of Abadan, to transfer crude and other oil products. Furthermore, Iran won a contract of $1.5 billion to reconstruct the city of Basra in February 2009. In addition, in July 2009 both countries reached an agreement to remove governmental barriers of trade, in addition to another contract between the Basra Investment Commission and Iran with the purpose of creating a free trade zone between them (Fulton, Wellman & Frasco, 2011; al-Ansary, Reuters, 2011). "We have a number of agreements with Iran on energy, on trade, on oil, on visitors — that is, pilgrims — which is very important to them," said Hoshyar Zebari, the former Iraqi foreign minister, in 2007 (Wong, 2007).

This can be attributed to the Iranian long-term vision, the exercising of its political, economic and soft power that Iran has with the Shi'a community in the south of Iraq. This can be seen in the size of the trade between the two countries, which stood in 2013 at $12 billion and is expected to reach $20 billion in 2018 (Alsabaah, 26/10/2014). Iranian economic hegemony will most likely

continue in many economic sectors, as long as Iraq cannot meet more of its domestic demands independently.

Worth considering is that the American invasion of Iraq in 2003 created new political and religious ties among almost all Shi'i communities throughout the Middle East. Since 2003 the holy Shi'a city of Najaf in Iraq, home to the Imam Ali Shrine, has become a major destination for millions of Shi'a pilgrims from all over the world. Furthermore, Iraqi Shi'a holy places have become a major destination for 40,000 Iranian religious tourists that visit the area every month, in addition to the estimated three to four million tourists who attend the Shi'a festival of the Ashura commemoration each year (see Wong, 2007). In the meantime, Najaf pilgrims provide $20 million a year and Karbala $3 million a year to the Iraqi economy from Iran, for the construction and improvement of tourist facilities. Also, each Iranian pilgrim spends up to $1,000 on hotels, food and souvenirs during their visit to Iraq. In 2010, the Iraqi provincial tourism officials stated that the number of Iranian pilgrim visitors to Iraq is between 5,000-7,000 visitors a day, and during religious events the number increases to 10,000 visitors a day (Alshirazi, 2010)[61]. It should be noted that Tehran has not only interfered in the post-2003 Iraq, but has also built deep links with the political, economic, religious and military institutions in Iraq. This can be clearly seen in the case of Iraq and Iran's institutional ties on the levels of the economic, the military and the religious.

The U.S. and a number of western analysts (e.g. Wurmser, 1999, p.79) expected that unleashing Shi'ism in Iraq by empowering the Najaf Marjayya (clerical Shi'a authority) would challenge the legitimacy of Iran's Islamic Revolution and *Velayat-e Faqih*. One of these Middle East strategists named Wurmser wrote a few months before George W. Bush's election in 2000:

The survival of Ba'thism in Iraq is integrally connected with the survival of the Khomeiniist Shi'ite revolution in Iran—even though the two nations hate each other. Ridding Iraq of Ba'thism can sabotage the Islamic revolution and its regional allies. But we will not defeat Ba'thism by assisting some feckless Iraqi-based underground movement such as the Mujaheddin al-Khalq, which is

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[61] In November 2015, more than 500,000 Iranian religious visitors crossed the Iraqi borders without visas heading for the holy city of Karbala to commemorate the martyrdom of Imam Hussein. Official sources expected that the number of Iranian visitors who commemorate this event would reach three million people (Iraq trade link news, 30 Nov 2015).

actually an arm of Saddam's regime. Iran must be severed from its Shi'ite foundations (Wurmser, 1999, pp. 73-74).

Conversely, the breakdown of Saddam's regime has strengthened Shi'a identity not only in Iraq but in most countries that have Shi'a populations, particularly in the Levant and Gulf States. However, the religious importance of Najaf does not grant Iraq a leadership role among the Shi'i communities in the Middle East; on the contrary, Iran is taking the leadership of the Shi'a communities in the Middle East. Iran has become a centre of the Shi'a communities in the entire Middle East, from Pakistan to Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Kuwait. After the U.S. war in Iraq, Shi'a people in all of these countries see (to some extent) Iran as a point of reference for Shi'a identity in the world. Despite the significance of Iraq's place in Iran's religious narrative, there is no evidence that Iran has pushed the Iraqi political elite to adopt the Iranian model of *Velayat-e Faqih* (Governance of the Jurists). The Iranian former foreign minister stressed in 2003, "No Iranian official has suggested the formation of an Iranian-style government in Iraq" (Takeyh, 2009, p. 252).This could be due to the lack of consensus between the Iranian and Iraqi Shi'a scholars on the relationship between religion and politics.

Alongside the political, military, religious and economic ties between Iran and Iraq, Iran has also left its cultural impact on Iraq through exercising its soft power over Iraq. In the 1980s and also after the Shi'a massacres in 1991, about 100,000 Iraqi Arab Shi'as immigrated to Iran and became refugees there. These Iraqi Shi'a communities were educated in the Persian language, and a generation grew up in the Iranian culture. Following the U.S. invasion of Iraq, an estimated 100,000 of them have returned to Iraq and became workers, businessman, teachers and policemen, most of them have finding employment in governmental institutions (Nasr, 2006, p. 62). These former Iraqi refugees now became an active elite, and spread their influence over most of the political, economic and military institutions in Iraq.

4.1.3. Iran's engagement with Iraqi Kurds

Iran had its foreign relations offices and intelligence agencies in Iraqi Kurdistan even before the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, and it was also the first

country to open its consulate general in Iraqi Kurdistan in 2007. Iran's involvement in Iraqi Kurdistan dates back after the Kurdish uprising in 1991, when Kurdish army forces took over three main Iraqi governorates, Sulaimanya, Erbil and Duhok[62]. Since then Iran has been involved in both politics and intelligence issues in Iraqi Kurdistan[63]. Iran's engagement with Iraqi Kurds makes the argument clearer that the sectarian factor has not been a leading driver of the Iranian involvement in Iraq in the post-2003. The argument will be made in this section that sectarianism and ethnicity are not the main source of Iran's penetration in Iraq, but instead it is the regional security complex dynamics. It can be argued that Iranian strategy toward the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) after 2003 can be summarised in three main points. First, Iran has been carefully monitoring political, economic and military activities of the Iraqi Kurds, to assess whether they pose a threat to Iranian interests in the region. Second, Iran has sought to use Iraqi Kurds as a 'game players' in the regional equations, whether against Turkey or even against Iraq's central government in order to alter the balance of power in the region. For example, during the Syrian crisis the PUK, which is calculated to be on Iran's side, has supported the PYD and officially recognised a Kurdish-majority region in Syria. However, the KDP, which is aligned with Turkey, refused to recognise Kurdish autonomy (Rojava) in Syria (see Wilgenburg, 2014). Third, Iran has been pressuring the Kurds to stay inside the circle of Iraq's federalism and support the Shi'a dominated government in Baghdad. Arguably, Iran has been successful in using all of these mentioned mechanisms with the Iraqi Kurds with the complicity of Kurdish authorities. However, all this does not mean that Iran has total control over Iraqi Kurdistan since the KRG is still split between the PUK and KDP, on the one hand, and Iranian and Turkish leverage on the other. The KRG has played a strategic role in the Iranian and Turkish rivalry in the region. On one hand, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), which had a

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[62] Since the Kurdish civil war started in 1994, Iran involved itself in Iraqi Kurdistan and occasionally backed the PUK against the PDK. During the Kurdish civil war in Iraq, Iran's main policy was alternately backing both parties (PUK and KDP) and seeking to limit the influence of the U.S. and its Gulf War allies in the region (see Cockburn, 2007).

[63] According to some Kurdish media sources, Iran had its official Intelligence Agency in Iraqi Kurdistan under the name of *'Qarargay Ramazan*' or Ramadan Headquarters. Iran's intelligence has killed about 300 members of the Iranian Kurdish opposition parties in Iraqi Kurdistan (Moradi, 30 November 2014, YouTube).

prominent position in the KRG, has been close to Turkey politically and economically, and have considered themselves part of the Turkish and Sunni front in the region for the last five years. On the other hand, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), led by the former Iraqi republic President Jalal Talabani, has been supportive of Iran's role in post-2003 Iraq, and had a constructive role in keeping a Shi'a-dominated government in Baghdad.

Since Iran has limited or no ideological soft power to exert in Iraqi Kurdistan, Iran has always paid close attention to the security, political and economic issues of Iraqi Kurdistan, because of its geopolitical position; the KRG's longest border is with Iran. Moreover, Iraqi Kurds have greater political, economic and social ties with Iranian Kurds than with Turkish and Syrian Kurds, because of the historic link which began in 1946 with the establishment of the Mahabad Kurdish republic in Iran which many Iraqi Kurds were involved in, and continuing during the repression of the Saddam years when Iraqi Kurds sought support from their counterparts in Iran and from the Iranian government itself. This is in addition to the presence in Iraqi Kurdistan of most of the Iranian Kurdish oppositions parties, such as the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (DPIK or KDPI), Komala (Organisation of Revolutionary Toilers of Iranian Kurdistan) and Iran-Party for a Free Life in Kurdistan (PJAK). These realities constitute two major concerns for Iran.

First, Iran has realised that the KRG has set up most of the prerequisites and features of a state in Iraq. Also, the President of the KRG, Massud Barzani, and other Kurdish officials, have not hidden the Kurdish agenda for independence, and this has seriously alarmed the Iranian side since these claims could directly influence Iran's Kurds and heterogeneous communities to follow the same path. Second, in the last few years the KRG has attempted to build positive relations with western countries, especially the U.S., to the extent that more than 30 diplomatic missions and most of the 26 representations present in Iraqi Kurdistan are from western countries. Furthermore, according to a survey led by the KRG Department of Company Registration (KRG official website, 1 Oct 2014), the number of foreign companies registered to operate in the Kurdistan Region reached 2,955 in 2014, including the names of some of the biggest oil companies in the world, such as Exxon Mobil, Chevron, Total, Genel Energy, DNO, Gulf Keystone Petroleum LTD, OMV, HESS, Oryx

Petroleum, Repsol and Dana Gas. Therefore, in the near future, the KRG could become an economic and political centre for the western countries in the region, along with the Gulf States. The international role of the KRG became evident after 2014 with the international war against ISIS in which Iraqi Kurds played a main role, providing logistic and military support. The presence of a strong Kurdish region in Iraq undermines Iran's interests in the area. For this reason Iran does not view these new developments favourably.

Iran has dealt with these challenges in different ways. It has worked extensively to build political linkages with high ranking Kurdish politicians in order to exercise its influence on the KRG's ambitions. This political coordination was clear with the PUK and its leader, former Iraqi republic President Jalal Talabani. Talabani has played a major role in the Kurdish-Shi'a alliance and made notable efforts to deliver al-Maliki to power twice, in 2005 and 2010. Therefore, the Iranian policy toward Iraqi Kurds has very little to do with ethnic and sectarian ambitions, but rather is purely directed by a pragmatic policy which is mainly dominated by Iran's regional security complex dynamics with Iraqi Kurds. For instance, when ISIS took over of the north-west of Iraq, the KRG's President Massud Barzani officially rejected the possibility of the KRG's involvement in the conflict if ISIS did not target Kurdish territories, while the PUK had officially announced that the KRG must fight ISIS. The PUK unofficially facilitated the Iranian Quds Forces and Iraqi Shi'a militia groups, such as the Badr group, when they entered the cities of Sadia, Jalawla, and Kirkuk[64] (Awena News, 16 Nov 2014), a move strongly criticised by the KRG's and KDP's officials.

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[64] A number of Kurdish media sources state that about 200 of the Iranian elite military forces arrived in the Sulaymaniyah International Airport in Iraqi Kurdistan in October 2014. These forces have been transferred to Kirkuk city, in a coordinated military collaboration between Iranian military forces and the PUK's administration in Kirkuk. Also Nazm Dabakh, the representative of Kurdistan Regional Government in Tehran, told a Kurdish newspaper Awene (25 October 2014): "whenever Kurdish political parties faced a problem and wanted to arrange a meeting with a minister or the President of Iran, they do so only through Qasim Sulaimani. With his contact they can swiftly meet their target". He says that "Qasim Sulaimani heads Iranian affairs in Iraq to the extent that Qasim Sulaimani denotes the Islamic Republic of Iran, or Iran in Iraq signifies Qasim Sulaimani". This is due to his dominant role in Iraq and Kurdistan; the Kurdish Political leaders have sent many letters to Iranian officials to thank Sulaimani. He also

The second approach of Iran's involvement in Iraqi Kurdistan can be observed through Iran's supporting of insurgent, terrorist, and militia groups. For example, Iran had used Ansar al-Islam many times against Iraqi Kurdish parties. Although Iran has denied any links with the group, Iran openly allowed the group to operate along its borders. In July 2005 Kurdish officials alleged that Iran provided logistical support for the group by tolerating the flow of goods and weapons and providing a safe area beyond the border (Schanzer, 2004).

The effective implementation of Iran's strategy has depended on both Iraqi Kurds and central government in Baghdad preserving a balance between both powers (Rafferty, 2011, p. 137). Iran has exploited Iraqi Kurdistan when they found that Iraq became unmanageable and compromised Iranian interests in the region; Iran supported the central government when they suspected that the Kurds exceeded their power more than necessary. Iranian officials have many times showed their concerns about the KRG's attitudes. According to the Kurdish daily newspaper Rudaw (2 Jun 2014), Iran had transmitted two main messages to the Iraqi Kurdish leaders through its powerful man in Iraq Qassim Sulaimani; during his visit to Iraqi Kurdistan he warned the KRG that Iran would be against Kurdish independence. Rudaw (2 Jun 2014) reported that Sulaimani told Kurdish leaders "you [KRG] should not think about the division of Iraq and harming Kurdish-Shi'a relations". The second message that Sulaimani transmitted to the Kurdish leaders, was that Iran is worried about Turkey's deep involvement in Iraqi Kurdistan. The report pointed out that Sulaimani asked the KRG's leaders to distance themselves from Turkey, and not to be a part of the campaign aimed at removing the Syrian regime of Bashar Al-Assad from power.

It can be said that after the Syrian crisis, Iran had put more pressure on the Iraqi Kurds to avoid acting against the Iranian interests in the region. Reports pointed out that Iran, via its 'shadow commander' Qassim Sulaimani, had bullied KRG leaders to allow them an open supply route across Iraqi Kurdistan to Syria. Although relations between the KRG and Iran have sometimes been cordial, the relationship has always been an unequal one favouring the power of Iran. A senior Kurdish official said:

declared that "Qasim Sulaimani plays a key and significant role not only in Kurdistan or Iraq but the whole Middle East".

It is very difficult for us to say no to Sulaimani, when we say no, he makes trouble for us. Bombings. Shootings. The Iranians are our neighbours. They've always been there, and they always will be. We have to deal with them. (Filking, 2013).

However, it is important to emphasise that the Iran's involvement in the KRG has not always been initiated by Iran. Kurdish parties, especially the PUK and PDK, have used Iranian leverage in Iraq in their internal disputes. This was the case at the expiration of Barzani's presidential mandate in August 2015, which ended up with the prevention of the parliament's speaker from entering Erbil, as well as during the conflict in the PUK leadership between two opposing factions within the PUK, which motivated Iran to send a six-member delegation, which included Tehran's ambassador to Iraq Hassan Danaeifar, immediately to Sulaymaniyah to mediate between the rival factions in September 2016 (Rudaw, 2/9/2016).

Despite Iranian leverage in Iraqi Kurdistan, the KRG especially in the last six years has been politically and economically closer to Turkey than to Iran. The size of Turkish trade between Turkey and the KRG is larger than the Iranian trade. In 2013 the size of trade between Iraq and Turkey reached $12 billion, of which about 70 per cent was with the KRG (Todays Zaman, August 25, 2013). However, Iranian leverage in Iraqi Kurdistan will rival Turkish political and economic domination for a long time. Correspondingly, the KRG officials, including those of the KDP who promoted the KRG's political ties with Turkey, seriously intend to keep friendly relationships with Iran. The KRG has understood the significant role of Iran and its hegemony in the entire Middle East. Iran can easily destabilise the domestic security situation in the KRG, due to their political links with other significant Kurdish parties in the KRG, such as the Talabni Party (PUK), and with the Gorran movement which has gained significant influence on the KRG's political process, especially after the March 2010 elections. Iran also has close political ties with the Kurdistan Islamic Group.

It is clear therefore that Iran views Iraqi Kurdistan as part of its regional security and sphere of influence; however, Iran does not simply control the KRG, especially what is called the Yellow Zone, which is dominated by the KDP. For Instance, Iran exerted all its efforts to change the KRG decision to have an independence referendum supposed to be run on 25 September 2017,

through Iraqi government, Shi'a militias and even their pressure on the PUK which shares strong and longstanding ties with Tehran, but they could not prevent it. Nazim Dabagh, the KRG representative in Iran, made clear that the Iranians said, "we are for the territorial integrity of Iraq and we will do everything to preserve it. However, if you go ahead with the referendum, we will do whatever necessary to stop it — things that you cannot even imagine" (Al-Monito, August 7, 2017).

Despite the occasionally disagreements between KRG and Iran, both the KRG's president Massud Barzani, and the KRG's Prime Minster Nechirvan Barzani, have visited Iran many times. The bilateral economic relationship between the KRG and Iran is strengthening day by day, reaching four billion dollars in 2013. Taking into account these factors, it is realistic to say that Iran will not abandon its interests in Iraqi Kurdistan even if the KRG gets its independence from Iraq, Iran's security complex dynamics with the KRG will still remain viable. Apart from having Kurdish minority in Iran, the KRG can facilitate Iranian control in the region and enable them to monitor the activities of other regional players, such as Turkey and the U.S., and even the Arab Gulf states. All this is to say that the Kurdish factor has been a durable feature of the Iranian engagement in the state-building process following the fall of the Ba'ath regime.

4.2. Hegemonic Iran in Iraq: the view from Saudi Arabia and Turkey

As Gause (2010, p. 9) argued, the most salient factor of the Persian Gulf security is that the states act more against "perceived threats", and they choose their allies according to how their own domestic regime security could be affected by the consequence of regional conflicts. This means that both regional security and domestic security are highly linked in the Persian Gulf, because of three interrelated factors. First, the geopolitical construction of the Persian Gulf and Levant has ensured that the security of each state cannot be separated from other countries in the region (according to RSCT), due to ethnic and socio-political links among these countries. Second, the powerful role of domestic factors in shaping external factors has made the regional state system very permeable; for example, the Shi'a factor in Iraq could have a cross-border impact on Shi'a communities in Saudi Arabia, and the same is true of Sunni and

Kurdish factors. Third are the interventionist intentions of Iraq's middle power neighbours, wishing to engage in Iraq's volatile situation that has been shaped by the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Based on this theoretical framework, all three factors can make Iran's engagement a source of concern for other regional actors.

The U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 was a turning point in the regional balance of power among Iraq's neighbours, and has changed the nature of the political, security and alliance systems in the Persian Gulf and the Levant. In this context, a part of the regional ethno-sectarian tensions in Iraq can be blamed on the rising of Iranian hegemony in Iraq. This regional escalation has provoked other countries' concerns. The regionalisation of Iraq's ethnic and sectarian conflict after 2003 has highly affected the domestic dynamics of the Iraqi conflict, and thereafter the state-building process. In order to see the whole picture of Iran's engagement in the process of state-building in post-2003 Iraq, this section will analyse the Iranian hegemony in Iraq from the view of two key regional players, Saudi Arabia and Turkey, both countries which have serious concerns about the implications of the Iranian hegemony in post-2003 Iraq.

4.2.1. Ethno-Sectarianism as security dynamics: What would Iran's hegemony in Iraq mean for Saudi Arabia?

It can be argued that Saudi Arabia has many reasons to be concerned about Iranian influence in Iraq, since Iraq is the only state in the region that borders with both Iran and Saudi Arabia. Throughout the Iran-Iraq War, Iraq acted like a protector of the eastern gate of the Arab world from Iranian hegemony[65]. After the U.S. invasion of Iraq, Baghdad has become a part of the Iranian hegemony, as well as a sphere of influence for both Saudi Arabia and Iran. For Saudi Arabia, the Levant and Iraq is a geo-strategic area in its conflict

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[65] Iraq's political situation has directly affected Saudi-Iranian relations in the last two decades. The official relations between both countries have witnessed oscillatory stages. In 1991, Saudi Arabia broke its relations with Iran on the eve of the Operation Desert Storm, while in 2004 the relations between both countries were re-established. In 2005 their relations deteriorated again due to the coming of conservatives into power in Iran, and the countries' sharp differences regarding Iraq and Syria in 2013 and 2014.

with Iran. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia's conflict with Iran in both Iraq and Syria could be an opportunity for Riyadh to succeed or fail in clipping Iran's wings in the Arab world and restore the regional balance of power in favour of Saudi Arabia (Wehrey & Sadjadpour, 2014). Iraq and Syria constitute the only corridor for Iran to access the Arab world, and influence Arab Shi'a communities in the Persian Gulf. Furthermore, for Saudi Arabia the rivalry with Iran in Iraq is not only about who controls Baghdad, but it also a security issue which represents a geopolitical and ideological struggle against a wider range of Iranian allies in the region, such as Syria, and in Lebanon, Palestine and Yemen (Houthis).

It is important to know, however, that Iranian leverage in Iraq is not solely driven by Iran's religious links with the Iraqi Shi'a. After the U.S. invasion of Iraq the sectarianism has become a prominent part of the regional security dynamics, and especially after the Arab Uprising, and namely following the Syrian crisis, these dynamics have been further highlighted in the region. However, Iranian domination in post-2003 Iraq is primarily related to Iranian strategic hegemony in the region, through the creation of a sphere of influence stretching from central Asia to the Persian Gulf. That intention has been clearly mirrored by Tehran's city delegate in Iran's Parliament, Ali Raza Zakani (Al-hayat, 27 Nov, 2014) when he stated that there are three Arab capitals today fully under the Iranian rule of *velayat-e faqih*, and the Iranian Islamic Revolution: Baghdad, through the Shi'a-led government there; Damascus, through the Alawite regime of Bashar al-Assad; and Beirut, through Hezbollah. Sana'a, Yemen's capital, is the fourth Arab capital, which finally joined the three other Arab capitals controlled by Iran after it was won by the Houthis. By the same token a former adviser to Iranian President Mohammad Khatami, Mohammad Sadeq al-Hosseini on the TV interview on September 24, 2014 said:

Iran and its allies in the axis of resistance are the new sultans of the Mediterranean and the Gulf. [They] will shape the map of the region. We are the new sultans of the Red Sea as well…Saudi Arabia was a tribe on the verge of extinction.[66] (The New York Times, 11 Nov. 2014).

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[66] Despite the existance of regional rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia, the fiery rhetoric especially from the Iranian side does not reflect the real political power of Iran. Iran's regional influence is sometimes portrayad highly exaggerated, and in some cases must be assessed through political propagandas.

The ideological statements may not reflect the real intentions of Iran in the region; however, it has been a real source of concern for other regional powers, especially Saudi Arabia, and has been a source of tension between Riyadh and Tehran. Furthermore, the Iranian regional engagement in the domestic conflict in 2012 between the government of Yemen, the southern neighbour of Saudi Arabia, and the Houthi militia groups, has seriously provoked Saudi Arabia's concerns in the region. The main reason for that, as Ramazani (2013, 247-248) argues, is that the Arab Gulf countries in general and Saudi Arabia in particular have concerns about Iranian Shi'a ideology on two related levels. First, they think the hostility of Iranian Shi'ism has been backed by the power of the Iranian state. From this point of view, the Gulf Sheikhdom regimes' are illegitimate and extremely compliant to alien powers, and should be removed by a revolutionary Islamic government. Second, the Iranian revolutionary ideology could have an influence on the Shi'i communities in their own states. From this perspective the Saudis might believe that Iran wants to contain Saudi Arabia. Thus, the Iranian involvement from the northeast through the Iraqi Shi'as, and in the meantime from the southern border through the control of the Houthis in Yemen can be assessed in this context.

However, unlike Iran, Saudi Arabia might not have effective strategies for dominance in the region. The majority of Saudi priorities are security and defensive strategies related to the accomplishment of a Gulf security system which can be assessed mostly as a reaction to the perceived Iranian threat in the region. Saudi mechanisms of influence on the neighbouring countries are usually limited to the provision of financial funding and the use of diplomacy. However, Iran is more dependent on radical militias and paramilitary anti-state forces in countries with a weak central government and large Shi'a populations (Taylor & Boons, 2012, p. 41). Meanwhile, both countries have avoided falling into direct confrontation with each other. Another part of Riyadh's concern might be attributed to Saudi Arabia's lack of the political, security and military capabilities to balance the Iranian power in the region, or build an effective coalition of power to control the Iranian leverage in the Persian Gulf (see Barzegar, 2010, p. 5). Saudi Arabia prefers to use backstage options to

exercise its leverage, rather than publicly involve itself with the conflict with Iran[67].

It is also important to recognise that Iraq is not far from being a potential source of military threat for the regional security system in the Persian Gulf. Although the U.S. occupation of Iraq demolished all of its prior military power, Gulf States such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait still see Iraq as an imminent threat. The military expenditure of these countries has significantly increased after the fall of Saddam's regime, to deter any new Iraqi attempt at domination. Certain data, e.g. the size of Iraqi forces, indicate that Iraq could indeed be a source of military threat, and could debilitate the Gulf security system, especially after Iraq's recovery post-occupation (Rajab, 2010, p. 275). The uncertainty of the size of Iraq's military force after the stabilisation of the Iraqi state could be a sign, in addition to Iraq's demands from the U.S. administration to purchase sophisticated arming systems. Moreover, the new ideological alignment between Iraq and Iran has turned Iraq into an active part of the Shi'a front side, along with Syria and Hezbollah. All these indications are flashing warning lights for Saudi Arabia's concern about the Iranian presence in Iraq.

It is important to know that the Saudi-Iranian conflict in Iraq is not only relevant to Iraq, but is also related to their wider rivalry in the region, which is not solely driven by ideological aims (Gause, 2010, p. 181). Both powers are involved in the volatile domestic politics of fragile states, such as Palestine, Lebanon, and Yemen, as well as Iraq. They both backed their local allies in Iraq to gain power: Iran backed al-Maliki and Riyadh backed Allawi, who is also a

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[67] Barzegar's view might have been true until the Saudi-led Sunni coalition of military intervention in Yemen on 25 March 2015, which has marked a new shift in Saudi Arabia's foreign policy in the Persian Gulf. It can be argued that Iran's regional power sometimes has been overestimated. A closer look at Iran's political and economic problems reveals that Iran has been hindered in its rivalry with the GCC countries. For example, the GCC countries have spent 7.5 times more on their defence system than Iran spent in the ten-year period 1997-2007; and 15.6 times as much on arms as Iran spent during the period of 1988-2007 (Rahigh-Aghsan and Jakobsen, 2010, p. 560). The difference is even more dramatic when it comes to Saudi Arabia's gross domestic product (GDP), which is more than 60% larger than Iran's one. With these data in mind, we can claim that the rising of Iran is not that durable and might even not be sustained for a long time. The rise of Iranian hegemony after 2003 might stem more from religious and ideological factors. As Rahigh-Aghsan and Jakobsen (2010, p. 561) have observed, it is a matter of shift of the ideological balance of power rather than the military one.

Shi'a but is opposed to Iranian intervention in Iraq. On the other hand, Iran has also worked with non-Shi'a allies, such as Kurds in Iraq, or Hamas in Palestine. The same is true of Saudi Arabia, which has made approaches to Muqtada al-Sadr many times considering his Iraqi nationalist intentions. Although Saudi-Iranian rivalry in Iraq has not been totally separated from sectarian tensions, given the sectarian identity of these proxy forces it seems sectarianism is a tactical tool rather than a main driver of their involvement in Iraq.

4.2.2. What does Iranian leverage in Iraq mean for Turkey?

Turkey and Iran have a history of rivalry in the Persian Gulf and the Middle East. However, until now Iraq has not become a central zone of conflict between Iran and Turkey, as has been the case in Syria, despite both countries sharing a number of common issues in Iraq, such as the integrity of Iraq and Iraq's stability in the region; both countries also support different models of state in the new Iraq. As Guzanskey (2011, p. 98) states, Turkey prefers an Iraqi state which rules via a broad-based alliance as much as possible, including most of the Iraqi ethnic and religious fractions, without representing a single religious or ethnic identity. In contrast, Iran wants to have a Shi'a dominated Iraq isolated from the U.S. and western countries. Iran does not want a strong Iraqi state with a strong Arab national identity in the region. Alternatively, a weak Shi'a-dominated government in Iraq will always look to Iran to preserve its political and security interests from other Sunni-dominated countries in the Persian Gulf.

Furthermore, due to Turkey's lack of ties with Shi'a political actors such as the ISCI and the Da'wa Party which have dominated the presidency of the council of ministers since 2005, Turkey has supported opposite sides to the pro-Iranian Shi'a government in Iraq. It can be argued that the political rivalry between Iran and Turkey has intensified primarily after the preparation of the U.S. withdrawal from Iraq. This especially dates to when Turkey found out that American departure would have left the new Iraq under the Iranian domination. Therefore, since Iraq's March 2010 parliamentary election, Turkey's focus has been primarily on the secular and Sunnis parties, especially al-Iraqiyya coalition. Moreover, Turkish uneasiness with Iran's policy toward Iraq is also

reflected in the tense bilateral relations between Turkey and Iraq. These tensions reached a high level, with Maliki's government in particular, when al-Maliki issued an arrest warrant against the former Vice President Tariq Al-Hashimi in December 2011. Ankara's reaction transpired from the words of the former Turkish Prime Minster Erdogan in January 2012, in a speech for the AKP Party, when he said that "Mr Maliki should know this, If you engage in a violent process amid a sectarian conflict in Iraq, it will not be possible for us to keep silent about that" (cited in Ayman, 2012, p. 18). These words show that Turkey is seriously worried about the Iranian influence in Iraq, due to the fact that Turkey has understood that what Iranian leverage means is the creation of new regional system in the Persian Gulf which helps Iran to strengthen its crescent hegemony passing through the Turkish border with the Arab world, starting from Iran through Iraq, Syria and Lebanon, compromising the Neo-Ottoman strategy towards the Arab and Muslim world favoured by Turkey. Furthermore, Iraq has deep political and economic links with Turkey. In economic terms, Iraq could be an alternative to Russia and Iran for supplying Turkish energy needs for oil and natural gas. Also, in 2011 and 2012 Iraq was the second largest export partner for Turkey, which reaching $12 billion of exports in 2012, even more lucrative than Germany[68]. Also Turkey has its political and security interests inside Iraq which may be affected by the Iranian leverage in Iraq.

Since the beginning of the Islamic revolution in Iran, paramilitary and non-state actors, such as Hamas, Hezbollah, Shi'a militias and terrorist groups have been actively used by Iran as instruments of pressure on regional and international policies. According to some Turkish media sources, Iranian intelligence and the Quds Forces have built good relations with the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) in Qandil, by providing all kinds of help to persuade their Syrian branch, the Democratic Union Party (also known as PYD), to avoid

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[68] Despite the Iranian hegemony in Iraq, which has prompted the majority of scholars to say that Iran is the only winner in the war on Iraq, it can be said that, from an economic point of view, Turkey is a real winner of the U.S. invasion of Iraq after 2003. Iraq has become the most lucrative market of Turkish products in the world, above Germany. In 2013 Turkish exports to Germany were $13.3 billion, while to Iraq they were $11.9 billion. However, if we examine imports, Turkey imported $24.1 billion in goods from Germany, about twice the volume of its exports. Turkey's imports from Iraq amounted to only $200 million, which means that Iraq had been more important for Turkey than Germany (See Cetingulec, 2014).

fighting with the Syrian regime (The Daily Star,12 May 2014). It can be argued that Iran has been successful in this plan, and has extended the longevity of the Syrian regime.

The implication of the Iranian influence in Iraq for Turkey cannot be fully understood without taking into account the Turkish-Iranian struggle regarding the Syrian regime. Turkey is very aware that Iranian domination in Iraq will give Iran a better chance to create a new regional security order, curbing the ambitions of the new Turkish foreign policy of extending its influence to the Arab world. Therefore, Turkey wishes to rebalance the new regional reality that has been created by Iran after 2003 by eliminating the Syrian regime, and in this way limit Iranian influence in Syria. This could stop an Iranian leverage in the region, as well as cutting Iranian support to both Lebanese Hezbollah and Hamas and Islamic Jihad in Palestine. Turkish concerns over the Iranian leverage in Iraq have driven Turkey to involve itself with the Kurdish region (KRG), despite their disagreements with many of the elements present in the KRG. In December 2015, Turkish concern over Iraq's conflict reached the level of Turkish military intervention in northern Iraq near Mosul, despite the strong objections of Iran and the Iraqi government in Baghdad. All this is to say that the Turkish involvement in Iraq cannot be decoupled from its regional security complex dynamics with Iraq on the one hand, and Iran's powerful engagement in Iraq, which on the other hand demonstrates the interconnectedness of the state-building process in Iraq with Iraq's neighbours.

4.3. Conclusion: security shaping ideological alignment

Analysing Iran's engagement in post-2003 Iraq yields the conclusion that Iranian involvement has occurred on three levels. Firstly was hindering American capabilities in Iraq, in order to prevent them achieving what they had planned. This made serious troubles for the U.S. and the CPA for building the form of Iraqi state that they wanted. Instead of that, Iran put political and security pressures on the CPA in order to constrain the U.S. to follow Iraq's new political elite, formed of the Shi'a and the Kurds that had close political ties with Iran. The second level of the Iranian engagement in Iraq was through

supporting the Shi'i-led government and building institutional links with the new Iraq on the political, economy, military and religious levels, through Shi'a militia proxies and political parties, such as the Islamic Da wa Party and the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq. Third, Iran was also actively engaged with Iraqi Kurds, because of their prominent role in the post-2003 Iraq on the one hand, and to ensure a guarantee for the Shi'a-led government in Baghdad on the other.

The abovementioned Iranian engagement in Iraq has been done through both Iran's hard and soft power. Insurgent groups and Shi'a militia proxy forces are present, such as Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq, Mahdi Army, the Badr Organisation, Kata'ib Hezbollah, and Saraya al-Salam. These non-state actors played a significant role in achieving the Iranian strategy post-2003. The second mechanism of applying Iranian strategy in Iraq was Iraq's new political elite, due to their political, ideological and cultural ties with Iran. Iran's soft power (ideological and economic) influences constituted the third instrument of the Iranian involvement post-2003 invasion. Iraq's Shi'a majority population which had been discriminated against and excluded since the beginning of the establishment of the Iraqi state has been another factor of Iran's soft power for shaping the trajectory of state-building in the post-2003 Iraq. Furthermore, Iraq's fragile economy following the U.S.-led invasion was another cause, which Iran wisely seized to improve its political leverage by adding an economic dimension, to create a complete sphere of influence in the south of Iraq.

In all the aforementioned levels of Iran's involvement in post-2003 Iraq, the pragmatist approach of the Iranian geopolitical position in the region and its regional security complex with Iraq has been a leading factor driving Iranian involvement in Iraq. However, the ethno-sectarian factor has been an effective tool, which facilitated Tehran to achieve its aims in Iraq.

The efficiency of the Iranian influence in Iraq depends on the security situation on Iraq on one side, and the extent of disagreement among Iraq's three main components, Shi'as, Sunnis and Kurds on the other. Iran's influence on Iraq's political arena will increase as long as sectarianism dominates the political arena in Iraq. For instance, the advent of ISIS has highly boosted Iraqi Shi'as' connections with Iran. This incident has made an important turning point in the relationship between the Iraqi Shi'a and the Iranian regime, which transformed it from a political alignment into an ideological partnership in the

region. Therefore, Baghdad has become a strategic asset to Tehran, and at the same time part of Iran's regional security complex (in agreement with this thesis's theory). This can be clearly noticed from the statement of Iran's Foreign Minister Zarif during his visit to Iraq in August 2014, when he said that ''Iran regards Iraq's security as its own'' (IRNA, 24 Aug. 2014).

The theoretical contribution in this chapter can be observed on a wide scale. All three RSC levels of local, regional, and global have been active regarding Iranian engagement in the state-building process; however the regional level has been more dominant than two other levels. The global factor which is demonstrated in Iran's nuclear agreement with the West has not made any obvious change regarding Iranian and U.S. polices towards Iraq.

Thus, it could be concluded that Iran's engagement in the state-building process in Iraq shows the extent that ethnic and sectarian dimensions have been a form of Iran's penetration in the state-building process after 2003. In contrast to Iraq's other neighbours, especially Riyadh and Damascus, which could not engage in the building of political and military institutions in post-2003 Iraq that could have provided them with a large influence to direct the political process in Iraq, Tehran has developed considerable influence within most of the political, military and religious institutions in post-2003 Iraq. This has raised other regional actors' concerns and led them too to engage in the post-2003 Iraq, which will be addressed in the upcoming chapters.

Chapter Five:

5. Iraq and Syria: Ideological enmity and sectarian amity

"Everyone who wants to bring peace to Iraq has to work closely together with Syria" Syria's Deputy Prime Minister (Spiegel, 21 February 2007).

"It's the same situation as it used to be in Iraq… Everyone is afraid of one another" Iraqi refugee fleeing Syria, (The New York Times, 24, September 20142012).

Introduction:

Syria has been and will continue to be a significant factor in directing the state-building process and ethno-sectarian conflict in Iraq, as a result of Syria's long-shared geopolitical, ideological and social structure links with Iraq, whether after the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq or after the Syrian civil war since 2011. The stages have played parallel roles in term of interrupting the state-building process and escalating inter-communal enmity in post-2003 Iraq. The central concern of this chapter is to explore how and why Syria has engaged in the process of state-building in Iraq after the 2003 U.S-led invasion, as well as how the process of state-building became part of the ethnic and religious conflict among Iraq's neighbours.

In order to answer the abovementioned question, this chapter has been structured into three sections. First, I will discuss how the Syrian strategy towards Iraq has been shaped following the U.S.-led invasion in 2003. Also addressed is how Syria has been involved in the state-building and ethno-sectarian strife in Iraq. Two key factors which have been essential pillars of Syria's involvement in Iraq have been addressed. The first is Syria's sponsorship of Iraq's Sunni insurgent groups (Islamic nationalists, Jihadi Salafis) and former Ba'athists, putting pressures and making difficulties for the U.S. troops in Iraq especially between 2003 and 2005. The second is a

ramification of the Kurdish issue in Iraq; links with Syrian Kurdistan cannot be overlooked when regarding Syria's engagement in post-war Iraq. The second section goes on to analyse the impact of the Syrian crisis, and its implications for Iraq, from 2011 onward. This shows another side of the Syrian impact on Iraq's conflict on the one hand, and also how the state-building process in post-2003 Iraq became part of the cross-border inter-communal conflict between Syria and Iraq on the other hand. The third section shows how Daesh (IS or ISIS) challenged both state-building and the state system, not only for Iraq but also for Syria, as evidence of how Syria's regional security complex is linked strongly with Iraq (based on thesis theory of RSC).

5.1. Syria's strategy towards post-2003 Iraq: how Syria became involved in the state-building process in Iraq

Since 2003, Iraqi-Syrian relations have gone through several political and diplomatic fluctuations which can be difficult to categorise into accurate phases. For the sake of this study, these relations are categorised into pre- and post-2011. It can be argued that Syria's engagement in the process of state-building in Iraq from the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq until the Syrian crisis in 2011, has not been driven by sectarian calculations. Syria's primary fear in this stage was mostly over the deployment of U.S. troops in Iraq and what were they planning for in the region, rather than what the new form of the Iraqi state should look like. Damascus was seeking to understand whether the new Iraq would be another American ally in the region, or part of the resistance bloc against Israel. Syria's active support for former Ba'athist and Jihadist groups, and turning a blind eye to their crossing its border to fight U.S forces, can be considered evidence for that. The second stage starts from the onset of the Syrian upheaval in 2011, which shifted Syria's position from the centre to the periphery, from a regional player to a battleground fractured along ethnic and sectarian lines. At this stage Syria and Iraq's relations were re-established on the basis of sectarian calculations in the region.

However, the transformation of Syria-Iraq relations after 2011 has not happened through diplomatic phases. What made these relations transform

from long enmity into the new amity was rather the new regional polarisation that has been driven by sectarian calculations as a regional security complex. There is no evidence to prove of an Iranian role or mediation between the two countries, since Maliki's government (at least from 2003 until 2011) was not as supportive of Assad's regime as Iran and Hezbollah have been. At the onset of Syrian uprising, Maliki met with members of the Syrian opposition and accepted the need for constitutional change in Syria. However, the concern of Maliki and the Iraqi Shi'a was that any Sunni-dominated government in Syria would strengthen the Sunnis in Iraq's western provinces, which is exactly happened in the Syrian crisis (see Salem, 2012). Furthermore, any possible change in the regional security order can directly affect the regional security complex in the entire region (according to the thesis theory of RSC).

In order to understand Syria's strategy in Iraq following the U.S.-led invasion, it is necessary to engage with a number of factors that have shaped Syria's involvement in post-2003 Iraq as key drivers of the Syrian policy towards Iraq.

First, in order to strengthen its regional power, Syria continued to use its traditional policy by playing the Arab nationalist card to enhance its internal and external legitimacy against its rivals in the region (see Mufti, 1996, p. 47). A close look at Syria's political legacy in the region can conclude that Syria has always regarded itself as the "cradle of pan-Arabism" in the Middle East (Drysdale, 1992, p. 348). This view has been based on the Ba'ath's wider ideology on which Syria has actively depended since 1960, through interfering in almost all Arab issues throughout the Arab world. What had made this policy possible was the existence of a penetrated regional system that has experienced instability in both the Levant and the Persian Gulf (see Ehteshami & Hinnebusch, 1997, p.3). The ideology of pan-Arabism has played a predominant role in the making of Syria's foreign policy and has supplied the Assad regime with legitimacy inside and outside the country (Hinnebusch, 2012, p. 103). Therefore, the fall of Saddam's regime and a new unstable Iraq was a great opportunity for Assad to capitalise on the demands of Iraq's opposition against the U.S. occupation, in order to boost its regional penetration role.

Second, the main driver of Syria's involvement in post-Saddam Iraq has been Syria's desire to create a space within which the U.S. will be forced to see

Syria as an important player and partner for negotiations (see Hirschfeld, 2005). Despite Assad's disputes with the Ba'ath regime in Iraq, Damascus stood against the U.S. occupation of Iraq (Sassoon, 2012, p. 160)[69]. Damascus was highly worried about the U.S. military presence on its border, especially when there were growing noises that Damascus could be America's next target[70]. It could be therefore argued that Damascus was keen to prove its regional importance for the U.S. in Iraq, and to drag them into the diplomatic process, for two reasons (Pollock, 2007, p. 10). First, if western states were in negotiation with Syria the U.S. most likely would not have attacked it; and second, the Syria-U.S. negotiation could send a message to Syria's people that the U.S. needs Syria's help in the region, which at the same time shows the durability and importance of the Syrian regime in the eyes of Syrian citizens.

Although U.S.-Syrian relations have not been without cooperation, their relations never reached the level of amity (see Scheller, 2013, p. 50). For example, after the 9/11 attacks, Syria cooperated with the U.S. authorities against Al-Qaeda-affiliated groups. In June 2002, the U.S. Assistant Secretary

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[69] Both pan-Arab branches of the Ba'ath party of Syria and Iraq have had long historical rivalry; they were at odd about almost all political issues in the Arab world, for more details about Iraqi Ba'ath Party, see Sassoon, J., 2012, *Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath party: inside an authoritarian regime*, Cambridge University Press.

[70] According to one of the top-secret State Department cables that were published by WikiLeaks in 2010, it can be argued that undermining Assad's regime since 2006 has been part of the U.S. agenda. A close analysis of this document can lead to a conclusion that the main goal of U.S. policy toward Syria in 2006 was destabilising the Syrian government by any means. William Roebuck, who was a Political Counselor at the U.S. Embassy in Damascus, suggested to the State Department that, "the Kurdish question, and the potential threat to the regime from the increasing presence of transiting Islamist extremists" is an "opportunity" that the U.S. should take action on. To do so, Roebuck suggested that the U.S. should work closely with Egypt and Saudi Arabia to speed the development of sectarian tensions between Sunni and Shi'a in Syria. As he proposed, this could be through the "exaggerating" of the Shi'a revival in Syria, and "play[ing] on Sunni fears of Iranian influence" in Syria (WikiLeaks, 13 December 2006). It can be concluded that Syrian fears of the U.S.'s regime change policy after the U.S invasion of Iraq had been reasonable. It can also be said that this plan actually worked in 2007, when Syrian opposition groups and number of Sunni clerics (Ulama) accused the Iranian ambassador Hassan Ikhtari of spreading Shi'ism in Syria. The Syrian regime for the first time yielded to such demands and replaced the Iranian ambassador (see Pierret, T., 2013. *Religion and state in Syria*: The Sunni Ulama from coup to revolution, Cambridge University Press).

of State William Burns (Congressional Research Service, 2006) told a congressional committee that "the cooperation the Syrians have provided in their own self-interest on Al Qaeda has saved American lives." Also in 2004 the 'State Department's Country Reports on Terrorism' revealed that Syria cooperated with U.S and other countries against terrorist organisations and Al-Qaeda groups (Washington Post, 16 Nov 2005). To a degree, Syria was ready to coordinate with the U.S. and Iraq regarding the control of the border between Syria and Iraq in 2005. In addition, Syria handed over Saddam's half-brother Sabawi Ibrahim and around 30 Iraqi Ba'athists to the Iraq authorities; Damascus also called for the signing of a security agreement with the Iraqi Interim Government (Shueibi, 2005). All these attempts by Syria have been one-sided efforts, which can be assessed in the context of Syria's aspiration to build a diplomatic sphere for negotiation with the U.S. after the Iraq war.

However, the Bush administration did not want to engage Syria on Iraq, at least until 2006[71]. On the contrary, Washington put more pressure on Syria through both the U.S. Congress Syrian Accountability Act and the UN Security Council resolution 1559 in September 2004, which imposed on Syria a withdrawal from Lebanon in the spring of 2005, especially because of its suspected role in the assassination of Rafic Hariri, the previous Prime Minister of Lebanon in February of that year (Eyal, 2005, p.126). This incident struck the backbone of the Syrian regime, cutting the arteries connecting the Syrian

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[71] In 2006 the Iraqi Study Group (ISG) in a report suggested to the Bush administration to have direct talks with both Syria and Iran, due to their great influence on Iraq's stability. The report was an attempt to reconsider the U.S. policy in Iraq and the region, especially towards Iraq's neighbours. The report had a positive reception in the Syrian press; also the Syrian ambassador in Washington, Imad Mustapha, repeatedly welcomed the Baker-Hamilton recommendations of direct talks between the United States and Syria, stressing the constructive role of Syria in stabilising Iraq. According to The Economist, in November 2006 Bashar al-Assad suggested to the British envoy Nigel Sheinwald four conditions for greater regional cooperation: " (1) an end to the UN investigation into Syria's role in the Hariri assassination; (2) a guarantee that Washington will not try to undermine the Syrian regime; (3) a return of Syria's influence in Lebanon; and (4) the return of the Golan Heights". Although none of these conditions were implemented by the U.S, in the late November of that year Walid al-Muallem visited Baghdad and re-established Syrian-Iraqi diplomatic relations. (See Baker III, J.A., Hamilton, L.H. and Iraq Study Group, 2006, *The Iraq study group report*; Wikas, J., December 5, 2006, Syria's Response to the Baker-Hamilton Report).

regime with its long-term ally Hezbollah. Thereby the U.S. wanted to isolate Syria from its middling role in the Israel-Palestinian struggle in the region, which has been one of the main pillars of the domestic and foreign legitimacy of the Syrian Ba'athist regime since the 1960s. Thus, the Bush's administration closed all the doors on the Assad regime. This can be taken as a major reason for Syria's engagement in the state-building process in post-2003 Iraq, via resorting to its strategic approach of state sponsorship of non-governmental armed actors in the form of using foreign fighters and terrorist groups in Iraq (see Scheller, 2013, p. 11)[72].

After the fall of Saddam's regime, Syria started to exert influence in Iraq in an attempt to demonstrate the extent of her strategic importance in the region. Damascus's major goal behind this policy was to prove to the U.S that Washington cannot achieve stability in Iraq without Damascus. The geopolitical, demographical and ideological influence of Syria on Iraq, in addition to Syria's long experience as a middle power in a penetrated regional system, has made Syria confident in playing that role. Syria's strategy in post-2003 Iraq was to put pressure on the U.S. in order to deter America from seeking regime change in Syria. The only way to do so was through an alignment with Iraqi insurgent groups, which mostly were Sunni at that time. Shi'a and Kurd were in favour of the new Iraq, and were major parts of Iraq's state-building efforts guided by the U.S. Also the Syrian position as a base of pan-Arabism would be damaged by a Syrian alliance on a sectarian basis or support for the pro-U.S. forces in Iraq. This is to say that Syria had limited options to engage in the state-building process in post-2003 Iraq, apart from becoming involved with Sunni insurgent groups, hosting former Ba'athists, and turning a blind eye to Jihadist groups fighting the U.S. occupation forces in Iraq.

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[72] The Syrian regime has a long history of supporting non-state actors and terrorist groups. Damascus has been listed as a state sponsor of terrorism since 1979, through supporting groups like Hamas, Hezbollah and the PKK against neighbouring countries. There are several forms of state sponsorship of terrorism, such as: 1) hosting terrorist groups actively, 2) explicit support, 3) financial and logistic support, and 4) military support. For more about Syria's sponsorship of terrorist groups see: Scheller, B., 2013. *The Wisdom of Syria's Waiting Game: Foreign Policy Under the Assads*; Harnisch, S., & Kirchner, M. (2011) *Neoclassical Realism and State Sponsorship of Terrorism*. Institute for Political Science, Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg.

In February 2007, Iraqi government officials accused Syria of being a cause of destabilisation of Iraq's security (European Council on Foreign relations, 2013). After a month the U.S. State Department advisor to Iraq, David Satterfield (Reuters, 28 March 2007), stated that "at least 80 per cent of suicide bombers in Iraq had transited through Syria". Damascus had overreacted to the American policy in the region, to the extent that Syrian Foreign Minister Faruk al-Shara' stated "Syria's interest is to see the invaders defeated in Iraq. The resistance of the Iraqis is extremely important. It is a heroic resistance to the U.S.-British occupation of their country" (BBC News, 1 April, 2003). It can be argued that, if Syria's reaction could not be assessed as acknowledgement of Iraqi and U.S. accusations towards Damascus, it can be assessed as a Syrian attempt to be dealt with as a regional power in Iraq's post-2003 transition process.

Washington continued to attempt to contain Damascus's regional policy not only in Iraq, but also in Lebanon and Palestine. It can be said that Syrian-U.S. cooperation in Iraq could have improved the trajectory of the state-building process in Iraq and the regional security order in the entire region to be much better than has in fact been reached[73]. Since the U.S. invasion, Syria has been a destabilising factor for political transition in Iraq. This has occurred through affecting main foundation of state-building in Iraq, which has been the security factor. That is not to say Syria is the only player which must be held responsible for Iraq's security situation post-Saddam. According to most Iraqi and U.S. intelligence reports (especially what are called the Sinjar documents[74]), Syria,

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[73] In May 2003, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell arrived in Syria to discuss a number of crucial issues with Syrian President Bashar Assad. His visit included a list of demands, such as the dismantling of Hezbollah, withdrawal from Lebanon and cooperation with U.S. troops in Iraq. These demands struck at Syria's most important interests in the region, because they impacted issues such as Syrian hegemony over the Golan, Syria's zone of influence in the Levant, and Syria's Arab nationalist position in the Arab world. The U.S. presented all these demands without offering any guarantees to Syria. Powell told the U.S. press "we are not coming bringing any carrots". This led the Syrian foreign ministry spokesman to say that Syria was willing to participate in the regional solution, but could not accept to be dictated to by the U.S; he said the "cooperation required real engagement on a parity of dignity" (Hinnebusch, 2005, p.7).

[74] In September 2007, in the northern Iraqi town of Sinjar just twelve miles from the Syrian border, the U.S. forces discovered computers and found a number of documents that included the records of more than 600 foreign fighters. The fighters had infiltrated into Iraq between 2006

due to its local and regional connections with Iraq, has been Iraq's main insurgent gateway for former Ba'athist and other foreign fighters transiting to Iraq (Fishman, 2008, pp.5-32).

Third is Syria's struggle for regime survival. Syria's involvement in post-2003 Iraq can be better understood through Syria's approach of managing external crisis at home. Bashar's policy to deal with Iraq can be seen as a connection between domestic and foreign policy. Following Ayoob's (1995, p.9) argument, this means that the Syrian regime's security has been rooted in both the internal and external vulnerability of the regime's legitimacy. The Iraq War pushed Assad's regime to choose either cooperation with the international community, or to take into consideration its domestic public opinion (Scheller, 2013, p. 25). Giving Syria's position as a defender of Arab nationalism, Syria tried to not damage its reputation in the eyes of Arabs. As a result, Syria's official position was not only against the invasion, but was also a hostile attitude to the U.S. occupation of Iraq. In opposition to some Arab countries, Syria chose to stand with the Arab street. This might become clearer when we view the statement Bassam Barbandi, a former Syrian diplomat in Washington, DC, when he said, "Assad understood that part of Bush's strategy in Iraq was to end minority rule of Sunni ruling over majority Shiite. He feared that he would be next. From then on, he started work with mujahidin" (Weiss, and Hassan, 2015 p.103). Bashar wished to deliver a message to the Bush administration that his regime was not a minority-based rule, but supported by the majority of Arabs. In addition, he had the ability to mobilize both Arab nationalists and Islamists against the U.S. if it thought of attacking the Syrian regime.

In early April 2003, Bashar told the Lebanese newspaper al-Safir that 'popular resistance' would prevent America from controlling Iraq (Kabalan,

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and 2007. What was surprising was that the documents revealed Syrian behaviour at odds with the regime's public statements and diplomatic status. The Sinjar documents well revealed Iraq's neighbours' links with and financial support for Iraqi insurgent groups, al-Qaeda fighters and other terrorist groups that were involved with destabilising the security situation in Iraq. For more details about Sinjar records see Fishman, ed. (2008) Bombers, Bank Accounts & Bleedout, *Combating terrorism center at West Point.*

2010, p. 30). A similar argument has been made by a Syrian former foreign minister Farouk al-Shara' at the Syrian parliament, that Damascus has chosen to stand with "the Iraqi people and international legitimacy" (Kabalan, 2010, p.30). So, Syrian engagement in post-2003 Iraq has been driven by domestic, regional and international factors which are directly linked with its regional security complex on the one hand and the U.S. presence as a super power in the region on the other.

After the fall of Saddam's regime, Syria found a suitable ground to create a comparable zone of influence among Iraqi Sunnis, especially through the Sunni provinces which historically have a sense of kinship and homology toward Syria. This was helped by the fact that the Iraqi Sunnis were predisposed to hold some Arab nationalist principles, against the Shi'a political elite who were close to Iran, and against also the U.S. occupation. Both Pan-Arabism and anti-American sentiments were part of the Syria's regional policy toward Iraq. The ideological convergence between the Syrian Ba'ath and Iraqi Ba'ath could have been a point of connection in this regard. In order to achieve both abovementioned factors – protecting the Syrian regime and winning regional prestige – Damascus attempted to ally with Sunni insurgent groups, Jihadists and former Ba'athists following the U.S. invasion of Iraq (see Hafez, 2007, p. 47). The Syrian involvement in Lebanon, Palestine and Iraq through support and alignment with non-state actors and proxy groups is exemplified in the case of Iraq after 2003.

However, the above argument should not lead us to ignore the fact that the flow of insurgents from Syria to Iraq may not have always been under the control of the Syrian authorities. This is because of demographic and geo-economic links between Syria and Iraq (see map 3). For example, as Levitt (2009, p.18) points out, the tribes of the Iraqi-Syrian desert between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers traditionally have paid little attention to the border. This can be attributed to the significant role of the tribes in the state formation in both Iraq and Syria (See Khoury and Kostiner, 1990). There has been evidence that in early 2005 Syrian intelligence started arresting Al-Qaeda-linked groups in Damascus, Aleppo and Deir al-Zour, as a result of intense diplomatic pressure that both Iraq and the U.S. put on Syria to stop recruiting terrorist groups on its

soil (al- Shishani, 2009, Lister, 2015, p.38)[75]. The June 2006 Jihadist suicide attack which targeted the Syrian state TV and radio headquarters in Damascus might have been a reaction to the Syria's 2005 arrest campaigns against radical Islamists in Syria. According to many reports, including that produced by the U.S. embassy in Damascus, the attack was most likely instigated by Abu-Qaqaa's followers, who were targeted by the arrest campaigns in 2005 (Lefevre, 2013 p.152). Despite Syrian cooperation regarding the monitoring of the flow of foreign fighters to Iraq, the violence, explosions and attacks on U.S. troops and Iraqis who were working with the government remained as before, and even increased between 2006 and 2007. This could be evidence that the flow of Iraq's former Ba'athists and foreign fighters from Syria to Iraq may not have been fully under Syrian control.
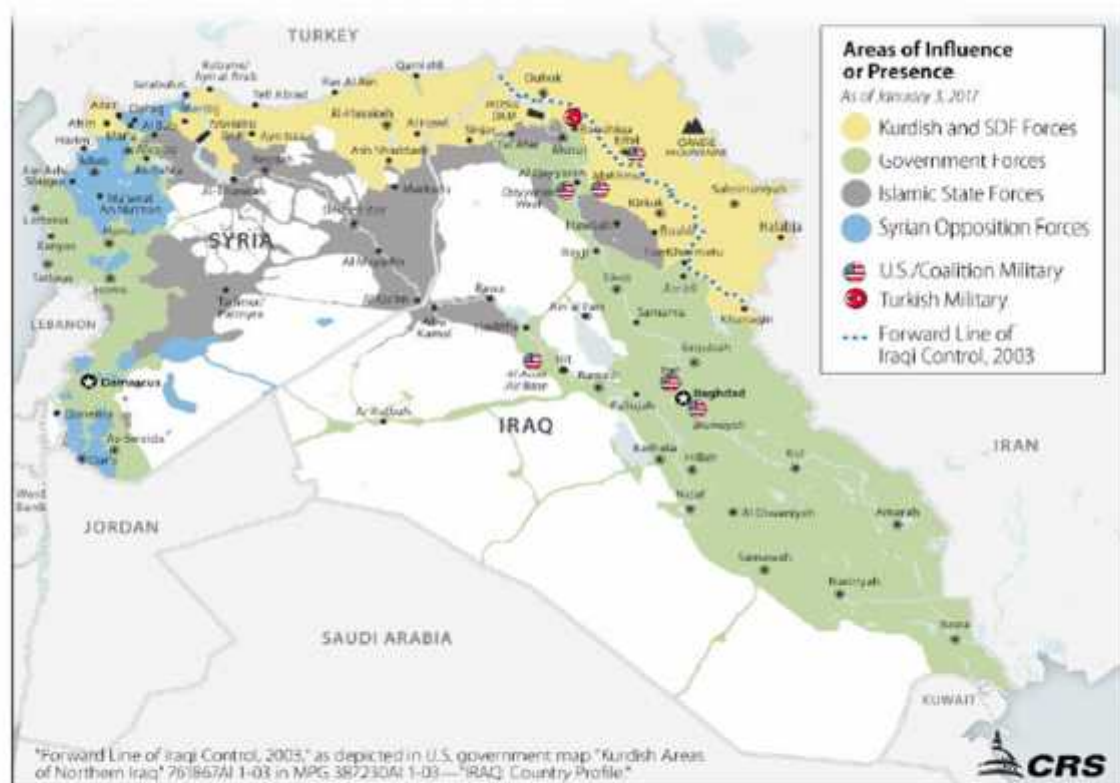
Sources: All areas approximate. Areas of influence subject to change. Areas of influence based on data from IHS Conflict Monitor, adapted by CRS. Boundary and basemap sources include UN OCHA, U.S. State Department, and Esri.

Map (3) Syria and Iraq: areas of influence

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[75] The U.S. deputy Secretary of State, Richard L. Armitage, visited Syria in 2005 and met with Assad. He stated that, "Syria has made real improvements in recent months on border security, but we all need to do more, particularly on the question of foreign regime elements participating in activities in Iraq, going back and forth from Syria" (Lister, p.38).

The conditions of the Iraqi-Syrian border are very different compared to the metropolitan centres as a result of tribal control on the social and political reality of the border. Cross-border trafficking and illegal smuggling have often been a fruitful business on both sides of the border (Fishman, 2008, p. 85). For instance, the Sinjar documents made clear that the Deir al-Zour section had been an easy gateway to cross, due to the tribal links between both sides of the border of Syria and Iraq (Fishman, 2008, p. 50)[76]. The same can be said about the Iraqi-Syrian Kurds in term of trans-border engagements, such as ethnic, cultural, cross-border social, economic and familial ties. The Kurdish tribes, like Hasinan and Miran (also known as Kochar), were separated by the Syria-Iraq border, which divided Syrian Upper Jizerah from Bahdinan in Iraq (Tejel, 2009, p. 73). In the 1980s, Damascus turned a blind eye to the recruitment of hundreds of Syrian Kurds to the ranks of the *peshmargas* (combatants), mainly into Barzani's KDP, in order to put pressure on Saddam's regime (see Tejel, 2009, p. 73). These demographic links were a double-edged sword for Syria's engagement in the state-building process in Iraq. Syria exploited these ties in favour of its involvement in Iraq. However, tribal links have played a major role in the trans-state spill-over effects on the Syrian crisis. The U.S. concerns over Syria's engagement after 2005 came from that source, when they paid much attention to tightening Syria's border with Iraq and restraining cross-border penetration, aiming to limit the impact of Syria's political policies and traditional social ties with the border regions of Iraq.

The role of economic factors also cannot be underestimated in the Syrian policy-making towards Iraq. When Iraq was under the U.N economic sanctions, especially between 2000 and 2003, a number of reports indicated that Iraq was shipping about 150,000 to 200,000 barrels of oil per day through the Syrian Mediterranean port of Banias (Lesch, 2005, p. 181). The Banias pipeline produced $1 billion per year in revenue for Syria, which equalled five percent of

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[76] According to the Sinjar records, most foreign fighters that crossed from Syria to Iraq benefited from the smuggling economy that existed between the Syrian-Iraqi borders. Indeed, 53 of the 93 Syrian coordinators, identified by name, were paid by the fighters they transported into Iraq. Syrian smugglers earned more than $3000 each year in this business. For more details about foreign fighters and their economic impact see Levitt, 2009, p.18

Syria's GDP (Hinnebusch, 2014, p. 200). Syria was purchasing Iraqi oil at a discount price of about $10-$15 per barrel for domestic use (Lesch, 2005, 2003, p. 181). This is in addition to the building of a new pipeline for gas fields near the border on the Iraqi side. The invasion of Iraq hit Syrian economic interests hard, especially the gains from the illegal oil supply. This point has not been underestimated by the Iraqi government after 2003, as they realised that Syria must be linked by economic interests with Iraq to provide Damascus some economic guarantees in order to show that the new Iraq could be beneficial to Syria.

In 2006, Iraq attempted to resume its relations with Syria through an economic doorway. On this basis, the previous Iraqi Prime Minister al-Maliki visited Syria in August 2006 for the first time for any Iraqi president since the 1980s, in particular to discuss security issues and building economic relations. The visit led to the reactivation of the Banias pipeline that was closed during the U.S. occupation of Iraq. A year after, in 2007, Syrian exports to Iraq recorded $641 million (Banes-Dacey, 2009). By the same token the Syrian Prime Minister Mohammad Naji al-Otri made a visit to Iraq in April 2009 and signed over 20 trade deals during this visit (Banes-Dacey, 2009). However, the economic calculations have not been an effective point in shaping Syria-Iraq relations.

The abovementioned factors may explain why Syria became engaged in the state-building process in Iraq. Now it may be worth considering the ways in which they interfered, and the mechanisms of the Syrian engagement in state-building in post-2003 Iraq.

5.1.1 Pressurise the U.S.: Supporting Iraqi insurgency

There have been several arguments made that the destabilised, separated, fragile and sectarian Iraq following the U.S.-led invasion has not been beneficial for Syria (e.g. Yacoubian 2011, p. 153) or other secular regimes which do not support radical Islamist groups. However, this view is general and simplistic; for example, Egypt has long turned a blind eye to the supply of Hamas, through tunnels from its territory; Libya too was involved in supporting Islamist group of Abu Sayyaf. Despite Assad's enmity toward Islamist groups,

after 2003 Damascus's record has shown Assad's tolerance and support for Islamist and terrorist groups against the U.S. in Iraq (Rubin, 2010). Thus, Syria's longstanding regional policy that has been built on destabilising vulnerable regimes in the region and Syria's regional policy in Lebanon and Palestine can be assessed in this context. It is, however, important to note that these mentioned concerns had not been part of Syria's priorities in post-2003 Iraq. The form of the new Iraqi state has been a secondary priority for Damascus following the U.S.-led invasion. Damascus's top priority in her involvement in Iraq was averting the threat of permanent American military presence in the region and the possibility of an American attack on Syria after Iraq. The latter priority relates directly to the survival of the Assad regime on the one hand and its regional middle power role on the other. Syria, in contrast to other regional actors, such as Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey, did not engage with the dominant political parties of Shi'as, Sunnis and Kurds, which were the main political actors after the U.S. invasion, or try to build any institutional bases with Iraq's main factions, in order to use these contacts in the future. Meanwhile, Syria did not become involved in supporting Iraq's political groups in the elections, as has been the case with other regional players in post-2003 Iraq. This meant in fact that Syria did not have a clear vision towards the form of post-2003 Iraq that they would prefer to be built. This is a focal point to understand Assad's strategy toward the state-building process in post-2003 Iraq.

From this point of view, Syria wanted to draw the attention of the U.S. to the fact that Syria cannot be ignored in the new political process in Iraq, in order to deliver a message to the U.S. to not think about regime change in Syria[77]. A strong indication in that sense came from Syrian Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah al-Dardari when he said "Everyone who wants to bring peace to Iraq has to work closely together with Syria" (Spiegel, 21 February 2007). To do so, Syria looked for opposition voices against the U.S. occupation of Iraq, whether

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[77] After the U.S. invasion of Iraq, Syria has been accused many times by the U.S. officials of being a security threat in the region. For instance, the Undersecretary of State for Arms Control, John Bolton, made it clear "that Syria remains a security threat in two major areas: weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and support for terrorism". Bolton listed Syria alongside Iran, Libya and North Korea "rogue states" that pose threats to the U.S. national security (The Washington Times, 29 September 2003).

they were local oppositions, such as former Ba'athists and other Sunni insurgent groups, or foreign fighters, such as Jihadist and al-Qaeda-linked groups. Hafez (2007, pp. 55, 56) has divided Iraq's insurgent groups after 2003 into two groups, the Islamic nationalists and ideological Ba'athists. The first group was aiming to oust coalition forces from Iraq and reintegrate Sunnis and nominal Ba'athists to the political system. The second group is divided between Salafis and ideological Ba'athists, who were aiming to defeat the political system of the Shi'a dominated government and the Kurdish autonomous region. However, Hafez's classification has been limited in regard to al-Qaeda foreign fighters in Iraq as has been revealed by the Sinjar Report in December 2007 (Felter & Fishman, 2007, p. 3). The dynamics of AQI's logistics networks in Syria, and the percentage of suicide attacks in Iraq committed by foreign fighters, are revealed in the Sinjar documents.

In public, Assad claimed to be a neutral player, stating to French television on 21 March 2007, "what we are doing is to start dialogue with all parties, whether they are supporting the political process or opposing it" (Quoted in Pollock, 2007, p. 6). Arguably, there is no evidence that the Syrian regime made distinctions between these insurgent groups on the basis of sectarian identities prior to 2011. Apart from the above mentioned groups, there were also radical Shi'a followers of Muqtada al-Sadr (see Combating Terrorism Center report, 2008). It can therefore be said that from 2003 until 2011, Damascus did not seek directly to stoke sectarian tensions in Iraq, even if their largely passive support for Islamist groups to pressure the U.S. did have that effect. Syria's support for some sectarian groups in Iraq may later have threatened the Assad regime at home.

Syria has been accused many times by both Iraq and U.S. officials for not doing enough to stop the flow of foreign fighters and Sunni insurgent groups to Iraq. In February 2007 Iraq's spokesman Ali Dabbagh asserted that "Fifty per cent of murders and bombings are by extremists coming from Syria… and we have evidence to prove it" (BBC, 4 February, 2007). By the same token in March 2007 the State Department coordinator David Satterfield stated that "at least 80 per cent of suicide bombers in Iraq had transited through Syria" (Reuters, 27 March 2007). The issue of insurgent and terrorist groups that came from Syria had been a major problem between Baghdad and Damascus on the

one hand, and the U.S. and the Syrian regime on the other hand. According to Iraqi bank records, before the invasion, the former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein had withdrawn and transferred over a billion U.S. dollars to Syria in cash. This has also been addressed by some press reports in 2006, claiming that Saddam's half-brother Sabawi Ibrahim, the former head of Iraq's General Security, had been a chief financial and facilitator of the Iraqi insurgency in Syria (Levitt, 2009).

Following the 2003 invasion of Iraq, there was a belief that Saddam's regime had planned for the post-war insurgency against the U.S. troops in Iraq (Allawi, 2007, p. 173). This seems to be rather unlikely, because even in the last weeks of the regime, Saddam did not believe that the U.S. was seriously intending to invade and overthrow the Ba'ath regime. It is, therefore, implausible to involve Ba'ath party strategists for any role in the post-conflict insurgency in Iraq. As Ali Allawi (2007, pp. 173,174) has pointed out, Saddam was expecting an internal uprising and not a military invasion of Iraq.

All these insights should not lead to the assumption that Syria alone was responsible for the entire insurgency after 2003. Syria can be blamed for not doing enough to prevent the flow of insurgents from Syria to Iraq[78]. However, the engagement of Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries is not to be underestimated, even regarding the insurgents who crossed into Iraq from Syria. In June 2015 WikiLeaks published more than half a million cables, some of these confirming that a number of Iraqi politicians and tribal leaders from Nineveh and Anbar had been encouraged politically and financially by Saudi Arabia to join the insurgents against the Shi'a dominated government in Iraq

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[78] In an interview in late 2003 with one of those who worked to transport young Arab men from Syria into Iraq, he describes how they did not face arrest from the Syrian regime. The smuggler said, "Jihad was being allowed into the open, Syrian security officials and presidential advisers attended festivals, one of which was called the People of Sham Will Now Defeat the Jews and Kill Them All." He said "money poured in from Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries". When asked why they were not arrested, he replied "it was because we were not saying anything against the government, that we were focusing on the common enemy, America and Israel, that beards and epaulets were in one trench together." However, it is important to note that Syria's role in supporting Iraq's insurgency has fluctuated over time, especially in late 2004 after a number of official accusations by both the Iraq government and the Bush administration; Syria's involvement with insurgents was rolled back. (Abdul-Ahad 8 June 2005).

(WikiLeaks, 19 June 2015b). According to the Sinjar documents, foreign fighters of Saudi origin have made more of a financial contribution to al-Qaeda in Iraq than have any other nationalities. The document showed that the highest number of foreign fighters to fight with al-Qaeda in Iraq between August 2006 and August 2007 were Saudis, followed by Libyans (Fishman, 2008, p.5). Among the total 576 fighters whose nationalities were mentioned in the Sinjar records, 41 per cent (237) were Saudis, and 19.2 per cent (111) were Libyan.

However, the number of foreign fighters in Iraq in the Sinjar records has contradicted an earlier study of Obaid and Cordesman (2005, p.5). Obaid's report, based on intelligence service reports of Saudi and other intelligence agencies, particularly on the questioning of hundreds of captured militants, includes a comprehensive analysis of militant activities in addition to personal interviews with Saudi and non-Saudi fighters in Iraq. The report claims that the largest number of foreign fighters in Iraq were not Saudis, but Algerians, at 20 per cent, followed by Syrians (18 percent) and Yemenis (17 percent). The percentage of Saudi foreign fighters in Iraq is 12 percent, or approximately 350 fighters. The Obaid and Cordesman report may not be entirely neutral, however, because of Obaid's official link with the Saudi state, aside from the report's dependency on Saudi intelligence data and its difference from the Sinjar reports. However, both reports confirm that Saudi foreign fighters had been actively engaged in the ethno-sectarian conflict in post-2003 Iraq.

Syria's involvement in post-2003 Iraq has reflected negatively on the process of state-building, given Syria's role as a transit point for radical fighters and arms to Iraq. Based on the Sinjar records, the U.S. military officials stated that approximately 90 percent of the fighters that arrived in Iraq between 2006 and 2007 travelled via Syria, and 90 percent of these were "suicide bombers" (DeYoung, 2008). At the end of 2004, the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency officials concluded that Syria played a major role in directing the insurgency in Iraq (Mauro, 2009). The Assad regime has used its alignment with and tolerance for Iraqi insurgent groups, such as Islamic nationalists, former Ba'athists, and al-Qaeda-linked groups, as a diplomatic tool against the U.S. in Iraq. On this basis, the Iraqi Study Group Report in 2006 (Baker III, and Hamilton, 2006, p. xv) advised the U.S. to engage with Syria in Iraq more constructively. In May 2007, the Bush administration took some significant steps

in this direction through a bilateral meeting with Syria (Costel, 2008, p.101). To a degree, it can be argued that after 2006 the relationship between Syria and Iraq reached a new stage. Iraqi former Prime Minister al-Maliki visited Syria twice, and the Syrian Prime Minister also visited Iraq reciprocally in 2009. Discussed on the visit was the prevention of militants from operating from either country, which led to a restoration of diplomatic relations between both sides. In early 2009, the countries exchanged ambassadors for the first time since 1979. However, until 2011 there were numerous fluctuations in the bilateral relations, and a normal and stable relationship could not emerge between the sides. In the post-2011 period, the new sectarian polarisation in the region brought about a new era in relations between both regimes, which cannot be evaluated by the standards of the preceding years.

It can be seen from the above analysis that, unlike Iran, Syria did not benefit from its strong relationships with the former Iraqi opposition groups that had been in Syria during Saddam's years and their opposition life. Kurdish leaders, such as Jalal Talabani who later became a President of Iraq for two terms, and most Shi'a leaders, including Nuri al-Maliki who became an important figure in the political process following the invasion, and Ibrahim al-Jafari who was interim Prime Minster for the Iraqi government in 2004, had all been in exile in Syria. However, Assad made little effort to exploit this factor and boost Syria's influence on the political process in post-2003 Iraq. This might be as Ayman Abdel Nour has argued, because Syria's relationship with Iraqi opposition groups in Syria was more about power and partnership. They were not more than a tool of pressure against Saddam's regime, and their contacts were only with the intelligence and not with the foreign ministry[79] (cited in Scheller, 2013, pp. 178-179). Unlike Iran, Syria's involvement was mostly through Sunni insurgent groups and former Ba'athists, which both the Shi'a and the Kurds considered as serious threats to the state-building process.

Syria's disengagement with both the Shi'as and the Kurds can be attributed to several factors. First, both Shi'a and Kurds were main pillars of the new Iraq state, and their leaders were working closely with the U.S.. Second,

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[79] A Syrian Foreign Minister, Walid al-Muallem, acknowledged on al-Arabiyya TV that "in the Syrian intelligence there was a branch for Palestine, a branch for Lebanon, and a branch for Iraq" (cited in Scheller, 2013, pp. 178-179).

Syria's rapprochement with Iraqi Shi'a could have been a very risky move to make for the Syrian regime, which rules a Sunni majority that is deeply connected with the Iraqi Sunni across the border. Third, Assad's regime had already been accused as a Shia-Alawi regime by Syrian opposition groups; therefore, Assad has been very cautious of any spill-over of ethnic and sectarian tensions from Iraq's conflict. Fourth, Syria's involvement in Iraq prior to 2011 was based on Syria's nationalist ideology as a tool for the destabilisation of vulnerable states in the region.

On this basis, it may be inferred that Syria's engagement with the Sunni insurgent groups and other foreign fighters has been a challenge for the state-building process in post-2003 Iraq because of two main reasons. First, like Saudi Arabia's engagement with Iraqi Sunnis, the Syrian engagement with Sunni Arabs in Iraq contributed to the Sunni alienation from the new political process in post-2003 Iraq. Sunni opposition to the new political process has been a factor for the Shi'a and Kurdish domination of the political, constitutional, and economic institutions after 2003. For example, the Sunni boycott of the 2005 parliamentary election affected Sunni integration to the new political system of the Iraqi state. This has pushed the Sunnis to look for regional support rather than seeking for internal solutions within the Shi'a-dominated government in post-2003 Iraq. Second, the Syrian strategy for managing the chaos in post-2003 Iraq challenged U.S. efforts to build a new political body for the Iraqi state. The Iraqi and U.S officials' accusation to Syria is a strong indication in this regard.

5.1.2. The Kurdish factor

The invasion of Iraq has raised two main issues in the regional arena, the Kurdish question and the rise of the Shi'a. However, Syria, unlike Iran and Turkey, could not benefit from either factor. This can be ascribed to two main reasons. First, following the US-led invasion, Syria regarded itself as the historic guardian of Arab nationalism. Therefore, supporting any Shi'a groups in Iraq would refute this traditional claim of the Assad regime. Second, notwithstanding the point just made, Syria has a history of sponsorship of non-state actors in the region. Because of their support for former Ba'athists and Sunni Iraqi insurgent

groups, Syria lost its chance to make use of the Kurdish factor in Iraq. Regardless of Jalal Talabani's special relationship with Hafiz Assad during his exile from Saddam's regime, there were not to be any lucrative relations with the Iraqi Kurds.

Syria proved incapable of utilising the Kurdish card in Iraq. However, the equation was not one-sided, as Iraqi Kurds similarly failed in gaining Syria's support in their relations with Baghdad. The Iraqi Kurds' aspiration to become loyal American allies in post-2003 Iraq on one hand, and their distrust of Iraq's neighbours, especially those which have Kurdish minorities, such as Iran, Syria and Turkey, on the other, were responsible for this failure. Those have been the main reasons behind Iraqi Kurds' caution to approach to Syria since 2003. The vulnerability of the Syrian state structure along ethnic and sectarian lines could be another factor explaining why Syria did not use the Shi'a and Kurdish factors regardless of their significant role in the post-2003 Iraq. Syria has the same heterogeneous composition that Iraq suffered from particularly after 2003. This means that internal factors have played a significant role in shaping Syrian foreign policy towards Iraq after 2003. As Tejel (2015, p.79) points out, Syria's relations faced a severe blow following the fall of the Ba'ath regime in Iraq, due to the Iraqi Kurds' alignment with the U.S. which strengthened not only Syria's concerns but those of most of Iraq's neighbours that have Kurdish minorities.

Until 2011, Damascus avoided Sunni-Shi'i sectarian solidarity or playing on the sectarian mobilization in Iraq, because of the potential consequences for the Syrian regime at home[80]. In addition, Syria has sought to maintain the durability of its regional security complex, with Iraq on the one hand and the nature of the Iraqi state-building process which has become part of the regional security dynamics on the other hand (based on the thesis theory of RSC). Furthermore, Masoud Barzani's domination of the KRG's main political pillars after 2003 has been another factor which has made it difficult for Syria to

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[80] Alawis were not mobilized around sectarian identities in Syria in the 1950s; however as a result of the regime's internal power struggle in the 1960s, the regime's sectarian solidarity has been reactivated as a tool to access Hafez Assad's "neo-patrimonial" state. Although Alawis became class-diffrensiated under Hafez's rule, the Islamic uprising in the 1980s pushed Assad's regime to rely on Alawi *assabiyya* which actually damaged the Ba'ath's legitimacy amongst the Sunni community in Syria. See Hinnebusch, 2015, p.124, Alawis and the Ba'ath party in Kerr and Larkin, 2015, *The Alawis of Syria: War, faith and politics in Levant.*

engage with the Iraqi Kurds. Barzani's alignment with Turkey since 2007 cannot be underestimated in this regard.

Directly after the U.S. invasion of Iraq, Syria attempted to work with Turkey and Iran to respond to the Kurdish challenge that stemmed from the new Kurdish position in Iraq, and the possible influence of this on other countries in the region (Shifrinson, 2006, p. 4). These efforts led to regional coordination in the form of ministerial meetings between Iran, Turkey and Syria, in the sharing of intelligence reports, and security sweeps of Kurdish parties to undermine Kurdish military and political activities. However, the regional disagreement between these states regarding regional issues and their engagements with Kurdish parties has not produced any unified approach. Less than a week after the signing of the Transitional Administration Law (TAL) in March 2004, the example of what Iraqi Kurds had achieved in Iraq encouraged Syrian Kurds and lead to an uprising in the north-eastern city of Qamishli against the Assad regime (BBC, 17 March 2012). The Kurdish demonstrators toppled a statue of the Hafez al-Assad which angered the regime and led to the arrest of several thousand Syrian Kurds and the deaths of about 30 Kurdish demonstrators[81]. The incident alarmed the Syrian regime, which realised that that any independent Kurdistan or even the KRG could mobilise Syrian Kurds against the regime. In January 2010 Barzani made clear in his discussion with Brookings Institute that "the official position of the KRG is that we are against any inhuman conduct or behaviour with the Kurds, wherever they might be" (The Brookings Institution, 27 January 2010). It can therefore be argued that Syria from 2003 until 2011 was against any single sect-dominated government and Kurdish separatist aspirations in Iraq. The importance of the Kurdish factor for both Syria and Iraq became even deeper after the Syrian uprising of 2011.

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[81] In March 2004, during a chaotic soccer match between the Kurdish soccer team al-Jihad and the Arab team al-Fatwa, a fight broke out between the fans of both teams. This was exacerbated when some fans of the Arab guest team raised the picture of former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, in order to anger the fans of the Kurdish team. The fight quickly escalated from stone throwing into a political conflict, when the Kurdish fans raised the Flag of Kurdistan. The reaction by the Syrian Army forces was very swift; they deployed thousands of troops backed by tanks and helicopters. At least 30 Kurds were killed and thousands more fled to Iraqi Kurdistan. For more, see, Tejel, J., 2009. *Syria's Kurds: history, politics and society*. Routledge, p.115.

It is important to note that Syrian involvement in Iraq has been mostly through supporting insurgent groups. Despite the interference of a number of regional neighbours in the Iraqi elections, particularly in the 2005 and 2010 parliamentary elections, because of Syria's fear that it may be the next target for invasion after Iraq and its lack of relations with Iraq's political parties within the political process in Iraq and the Shi'as, Sunnis or Kurds, Syria has not been an influential player in this regard. However, other regional players, such as Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia, engaged in the Iraqi elections through providing financial, political and media support for certain parties or election lists. A former national security adviser Mowaffak al-Rubaie (Wakalat Nun al-Khabaryya, 15-07-2009) confirmed this involvement in 2009 and stated: "we have seen several indications from regional and neighbouring countries which attempt to interfere in the upcoming general elections in order to support certain Iraqi parties at the expense of others". So as has been explained earlier, the Syrian engagement in post-conflict Iraq has been driven by fear of the U.S. intentions in the region and by Syria's internal challenges more than having a specific plan for the new state-formation in post-war Iraq. However, in the wake of the outbreak of the Syrian crisis in 2011, Syria's relations with Iraq took on a new dimension; the next section will address this shift.

5.2. Reversing the impact: The ramifications of the Syrian crisis on Iraq after 2011

The Syrian impact on Iraq after 2011 is an interesting case, not only for understanding Syria's regional security complex status with Iraq, but also for understanding how Syria became involved in both the state-building process and ethno-religious conflict in post-war Iraq. It can be argued that the Syrian conflict has affected Iraq on two main levels. First, it has intensified ethnic and sectarian relations through the polarization of both intra-state and inter-state sectarianisation in the region. To an extent, all three of Iraq's main groups, Sunni, Shi'a and Kurd, expanded their conflict from Iraq to Syria and vice versa. Second, Syria's war has led to the significant rise of Kurdish nationalism and the KRG's role across the region.

Iraq's regional policy towards Syria from 2003 until the Syrian crisis in 2011 is a good example for explaining the interaction of the conflicts in both Syria and Iraq. The former Iraqi Prime Minister al-Maliki accused Syria several times of hosting former Ba'athists and terrorist groups that were responsible for Iraq's destabilisation. In August 2009, both countries withdrew their ambassadors as a result of bombing attacks in Baghdad which claimed more than 100 lives (Al Arabiya, 25 August 2009). However, two years later, when the Syrian crisis started, Baghdad made a 180-degree turn in its policy towards Damascus, from long ideological enmity, and Syria's former position of harbouring of Iraqi Ba'athists and being the insurgents' gateway to undermine the Shi'a and Kurd-dominated government in Baghdad, to Iraq discovering a new sectarian amity with Assad's regime. Iraq's Shi'a militias openly involved themselves in the Syrian crisis to support Assad's regime, even more actively than Syria had engaged in Iraq after 2003 (see Kaufman and Shiloach, 2015; Al-Tamimi, 2015; Hinnebusch, 2014; Smyth, 2015b).

In this context, the reversing impact from Syria's conflict into Iraq could be seen through the spillover of ethno-sectarian conflict in the region. As al-Khoei (2016, p.7) argues, both Iraqi groups of Shi'a and Sunni viewed the Syrian conflict through their different lenses. Iraqi Shi'a saw the conflict as an extension of their own conflict with Iraqi Sunni insurgent groups. For example, a Shi'a Iraqi politician Sheikh Jalal al-Din al-Sagheer, who is also a commander of Saraya Ansar al-Aqeeda (a militia which rose to prominence after the call for 'popular mobilisation' in 2014), said that:

> Syria for Iraq is a crucial security concern. Syria provides Iraq with access to the Mediterranean Sea, which is of immense strategic concern for us. For the Shia, Syria is also unique because it is a nexus between Iran, Iraq and Lebanon, Turkey. We don't just have to protect our home by fighting on our own door step; it is in our interest to fight them away from our home in Syria too (al-Khoei, 2016, p. 7).

On the other hand, the ramifications of the Syrian uprising have been deeper on the Iraqi Sunnis. They viewed the Syrian crisis as an opportunity to undermine al-Maliki and Shi'a power in Iraq. The tribes and mosques in Deir al-Zour backed Sunni insurgent groups in Anbar. Similarly, Iraqi tribes provided their Sunni cousins from the Syrian side with money, weapons and thousands of fighters to support them (Hinnebusch, 2014, p. 22). When the Syrian uprising began, thousands of Iraqis from the border city of al-Qaim demonstrated

against the Iraqi government procedures which prevented them from hosting their Syrian relatives if they wished to stay with them (Ruhayem, 2012). Iraqi Sunnis view the Syrian conflict as an opportunity to overthrow the Shi'i-dominated state in Baghdad. Former Iraqi intelligence officer Mohamed al-Bajara confidently said that the rebel victory of the Syrian Sunnis would strengthen Sunni power in Iraq. "When Iran loses Syria, that means they'll lose influence here... the new regime in Syria will be Sunni. So in these provinces, our backs will be protected by a Sunni regime" (Hauslohner, 2013). Thus the Syrian conflict provided a broader view for both Shi'a and Sunnis in Iraq which exceeded the borders of Syria and Iraq into a regional conflict.

In 2011 Syria-Iraq relations entered a new phase: Assad's regime ceased to be a threat to Iraq's national interests, as it had been viewed by Iraq prior to 2011. However, several months after the Syrian uprising started, Syria became an extension of Iraq's internal and external security affairs in Iraq's strategic calculations. From the first day of the outbreak of the demonstrations in the Syrian city of Deraa, Baghdad has taken a cautious stance towards the ongoing developments in Syria. That prompted one of the leaders of the Iraqi National Alliance (Shi'a), Bayan Baqir Solagh, to state that "should the current Syrian Revolution succeed, fighting will move to the doorsteps of Baghdad" (al-Shaizmi, 2014). The main concern of Iraq (the Shi'a-dominated government) was that the Syrian events would spill over Iraq's borders and ignite sectarian and ethnic wars in the region; or, more precisely, that having a new Sunni-dominated government in Syria would provide the Iraqi Sunni provinces of Anbar and Mosul a chance to challenge the Iraqi Shi'a-dominated government in Baghdad. Al-Maliki's statement in 2014 well explained the seriousness of this issue when he said that:

> The rise in terrorism in Iraq is rooted in the rise of regional sectarianism and directly related to the developments in the Syrian crisis and its repercussions on the Iraqi arena. We are very worried about the Syrian arena transforming into a field that attracts extremists, terrorists and sectarians from various parts of the world, gathering them in our neighbourhood (al-Kadhimi, 2013).

It is important to know that the Syrian conflict pushed Baghdad to move even closer to Tehran (Saouli, 2014, p.125). Despite the U.S. sanctions on Iran, the Iraqi government was part of the Iranian assistance to Assad's regime after 2011. Although the U.S. warned Baghdad to prevent the transport of arms and

close its airspace to Syria, Tehran used Baghdad as a corridor to transfer weapons to Shiʻi militant groups in Syria. Baghdad provided fuel oil to Syria with a 50 percent discount of the international market prices, which even the Iraqi foreign ministry was not aware of (al-Khoei, 2016, p.8). Al-Maliki, who played a significant role in the Sunni exclusion from political power, saw the conflict in Syria as a regional proxy war managed and supported by Gulf countries to spread Wahhabism in the region. He accused Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey of planning to create a Sunni sectarian state in order to hasten the downfall of the Iraqi government (Gordon, 2012).

The militarization of Iraq's sectarian conflict and political process was another consequence of the Syrian crisis in Iraq. In late 2013, the number of Iraqi Shi'a militia members that had gone to Syria was estimated at about 5000 (Levitt, 2014), most of whom were mobilised for the protection of the Shi'a holy shrine of Sayyidah Zainab in southern Damascus. In particular, after the IS occupation of Sunni majority territories has significantly threatened Iraqi Shi'a. As a reaction, on 13 June 2014, Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani called all Iraqi able-bodied men to join the Iraqi security services and defends Iraq from IS.

Like Iraqi Sunnis, the Iraqi Kurds found the Syrian uprising as an opportunity to strengthen their position, namely their western flank. The Syrian upheaval has had a significant impact on the rise of Kurdish nationalism across the region. This can be seen in the PYD military support for the Iraqi Kurds (KRG) when IS attacked Yazidi Kurds in Sinjar (Shingal). The war against IS has increased Kurdish nationalism among all Kurds in neighbouring parts of the region. Kurds from Turkey, Iran and Syria have fought alongside Iraqi Kurds in Iraq (see Gunes and Lowe, 2016, p.10). at the end of October 2014, Ankara agreed to let Iraqi Kurdish Peshmarga fighters from the KRG to cross the Turkish border. There was a remarkable shift in Kurdish regional relations when the Iraqi Kurdish Peshmarga supplied Syrian Kurds with heavy weapons and Peshmarga military forces in their fight against IS in Kobane. After the IS attack on Mosul in June 2014, Kurdish armed forces immediately took control of lands vacated by the Iraqi Army, and they expanded the KRG's border by 40 percent (Cordell and Wolff, 2016, p. 319). This has strengthened the KRG's power, as a result of which the KRG president Barzani announced that they would not

negotiate the status of these territories with the Iraqi government and would prepare for a referendum on the Kurdistan region's independence.

In comparison of the impact of Iraq after 2003 and Syria after 2011, two conclusions can be drawn. If the Syrian involvement in Iraq after 2003 had a less sectarian character, then Iraq's solidarity with Assad's regime after 2011 has been highly sectarian and at the same time cannot be separated from Iraq's security concerns. In several aspects, Syria after 2011 has been in a similar situation to Iraq after 2003 (see Starr, 2012). This has been particularly notable since Syria became a state highly penetrated by regional players on one hand, and divided along ethnic and sectarian lines on the other. What can be concluded from the complex case of Syria and Iraq is the changing roles of enmity and amity between two long-rival regimes. This raises a debatable question, as to whether the state-building process in a situation of a sub-regional security complex (such as in the case of Syria and Iraq) can be part of the ethnic and religious conflict among regional actors or not. That has happened in Iraq, and may be possible in Syria. Or does state-building mean shaping a new regional security order in the region? In the case of post-2003 Iraq, it could be argued that both cases have been part of the state-building process.

As has been discussed throughout this chapter, the influence of the international environment has been very important regarding Syria's involvement in Iraq. The factor of the U.S. as a global power (or as an existing power in the region) played a significant role in Syria's engagement in Iraq, whether from 2003 until the U.S. withdrawal in 2011, or after the Syrian conflict from 2011 onwards. Although since the Syrian revolt began Syria's role as an penetrating power in the Iraq's state-building process ceased, but Damascus remained very relevant to Iraq even after 2011; in particular the spillover effects of ethnic and sectarian conflict have converted Syria into a major threat to Iraq. Obama's policy of avoiding interfering in Syria has made the conflict open for a wide range of state and non-state actors. The IS attack on Iraq in June 2014 could have been one of the consequences. As Helfont (2015, 542) argued, the US's new approach of "the importance of working closely with friends and allies'' has created more strategic opportunities for the U.S.. However, this strategy has not been effective in controlling the Syrian crisis and limiting its spillover

into Iraq. This collaborative approach has borne no fruit; rather it has provided a chance for other regional neighbours to become involved in the conflict and added more fuel to the ethno-sectarian conflict in Iraq.

The role of Russia also cannot be overlooked regarding Syria's effect on Iraq after 2011. Moscow arrived on the Syrian scene through the Syrian conflict, especially after Syria became internationally isolated. Russia protected Assad against UN Security Council resolutions many times (Scheller, 2011, p.202). To an extent, from 2011 onwards Russia has become associated with the so called resistance block, alongside Iran, Syria, Hezbollah and even Iraq. The extension of the Assad regime's life attracted both Iraqi Shi'a and Jihadist groups to join the Syrian conflict. This has affected Iraq's security tremendously, especially in June 2014 when IS destroyed the Iraq-Syria border and seized large territories in Iraq, which will be discussed in the next section.

5.3. Islamic State[82] as a reaction against state-building

One of the key issues that has been addressed in this chapter, in order to understand Syria's engagement in Iraq, is Syria's long-standing experience of flirting with non-state actors as a tool to destabilise weak regimes in the region (see Ehteshami and Hinnebusch, 1997). Following the U.S.-led coalition invasion of Iraq, both former Iraqi Ba'athists and Jihadist groups had been part of the Syrian involvement in Iraq as a strategy to put pressure on the U.S. to change their policy toward Syria. However, Syria's association with Iraqi Sunni insurgent groups or the Syrian Sunni Ulama has not been the main factor of

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[82] In order to understand the roots of Islamic State or Daesh (also ISIS or ISIL), we have to turn back to the beginnings of the emergence of the al-Qaeda-linked ideological groups which emerged after the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003. One of the most active groups was a group who worked for a period without any specific name under the leadership of a Jordanian named Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, then took the name of the Party of Monotheism and Jihad (Jama'at al-Tawhid w'al-Jihad - JTWJ) which was made up mostly from foreign Jihadi fighters who wished to fight against the U.S. occupation in Iraq (see, Abdul Hussein, 2015, p. 220; Ibrahim, 2015, p.184). In September 2004 Zarqawi pledged allegiance to Osama bin Laden, Emir of al-Qaeda, and then the name of the group finally changed to "al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia" (Tan m Q idat al-Jih d f Bil d al-R fidayn), or al-Qaeda in Iraq (see Lister, 2015, p.37).

Daesh's emergence in Syria and Iraq, as Lister points out (2015). The emergence of Daesh can be said to have been part of a wider process which is mainly rooted in two factors. First is the U.S. invasion of Iraq after 2003, and the form of the state that the U.S. left behind. Especially relevant are the dissolution of the Iraqi army and the "de-Ba'athification" decree, in addition to Maliki's policies from 2006 to 2014, which have contributed to the Sunni mobilisation, not only in Iraq but also in Syria. Second, as Gerges (2016) points out, the Syrian uprising after 2011 offered a fertile ground to the Iraqi and Syrian Sunnis against the Shi'a-dominated government in Iraq, and the Syrian regime. In addition, the regional interference in Iraq and Syria accelerated the birth of Daesh. That is to say, the regional dimension of ethno-sectarian conflict in the region, which is also linked to the regional security complex dynamics in the Persian Gulf (based on thesis theory of RSC) on one hand, and the permeability of the Arab state system on the other, have been main factors behind the rising of Daesh.

The Syrian flirtation with Islamic movements can be traced back to the first year of Bashar's power in 2000, in which he inherited this policy from his father Hafez al-Assad. As Pierret (2013, p.193) points out, this was partly as a result of Hafez's approach toward Islamic movements in the 1990s. This period witnessed an Islamist boom, in terms of building mosques, establishing Islamic schools, and the resurgence of Quranic studies. In addition, the flow of foreign Islamic finance, especially from Wahhabi establishments in Saudi Arabia, which took a very conservative reading of Islam, increased to religious institutions in Syria (Pierret, 2013, p. 213).

It can be argued that Hafez's openness to the Islamist groups was similar in many aspects to the actions of Saddam Hussein's regime in the mid-nineties, under the name of *al-Hamlah al-Imaniyah* or the faith campaign[83]. These

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[83] The Faith Campaign was formally launched in June 1993 by Saddam and led by Saddam's deputy, Izzat al-Douri. Al-Douri also supervised the criminal economy that smuggled oil and other commodities across Iraq's borders, often through the tribes, to evade the sanctions imposed on Iraq in the nineties. These campaigns led to a combination of Salafism and Ba'athist ideology, and effectively led to the growth of the armed insurgent movements of Ba'athi-Salafism. It can be argued that the Faith Campaign began cynically, as an attempt to win for the Saddam regime some pillars of support to avoid a repetition of the 1991 Shi'a revolt (see Baram, 2014; Orton, 2015).

campaigns had a great influence on both regime and society in Iraq. In the aftermath of the regime change in 2003, hundreds of former regime elements took the lead in organising the insurgency, and later became the nucleus of what is now called Daesh[84]. However, that does not mean, as Baram (8 April 2016) claims, that Saddam was responsible for the creation of Daesh, nor was Syrian regime, as has been stated by Lister (2015). Both Saddam's faith campaigns and Bashar's openness to the Islamist groups were part of strengthening the regimes' legitimacy at home. An example of the Assad regime's use of Islamic rhetoric is found in the words of Ahmad Hassoun, who became Grand Mufti after the death of Ahmad Kuftaro in 2005. Hassoun said, "Bashar al-Assad's election for a second term was comparable to a bai'a [oath of allegiance] similar to that of the prophet" (Lefevre, 2013, p.155).

On the other hand, we should not forget that part of Syria's alignment with Sunni scholars and moderate Islamists was mostly to use them against members of the Muslim Brotherhood and other extremists. For example, a prominent Kurdish cleric, Said Ramadan al-Buti, who has consistently backed the Ba'ath regime since the 1970s, accused the Muslim Brotherhood of having acted "in contradiction with the principles of Islam, and having brought *fitna* or civil war to Syria" (Lefèvre, 2013, p.155). More support to the Syrian regime has come from Salah Kuftaro, son of the prominent former Grand Mufti Ahmad Kuftaro, who stated in 2005 that "our religious community in Syria is always under surveillance by the government and I support that so no extremists sneak in among us" (Lefèvre, 2013, p 156).

It is evident that during 2004 and 2005 the Iraqi branch of al-Qaeda, which later took the name of Islamic State in Iraq (ISI) in 2006, was actively used by Assad's regime against U.S. forces in Iraq (see Filiu, 2015, pp. 200-201). The Iraqi and U.S. official accusation of the Syrian regime was an indication in that regard. According to U.S. and Iraqi officials, during 2004 and 2005 the Syrian

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[84] According to some intelligence estimations, the number of former Ba'ath officers who joined Daesh is between 100 and 160. Most of these officers occupy the middle and high-ranking positions in IS. According to officials, most of those who joined were former intelligence officers from Anbar province, and others were army officers from the city of Mosul, in addition to the members of the security services belonging to Saddam Hussein's clan from around the city of Tikrit (see Asharq Al-awsat, 18 Feb 2016).

regime actively collaborated with Sunni insurgent groups in Iraq, including AQI and other Sunni al-Qaeda-linked ideological groups. However, there has been evidence that in early 2005 Syrian intelligence started arresting AQI-linked figures in Damascus, Aleppo and Deir al-Zour, as a result of intense diplomatic pressure that both Iraq and U.S. put on Syria to stop the terrorist groups (al-Shishani, 2009; Lister, 2015, p.38; Pierret, 2013, p.197)[85]. The U.S deputy secretary of state, Richard L. Armitage, visited Syria in 2005 and met with Assad; he stated that, "Syria has made real improvements in recent months on border security, but we all need to do more, particularly on the question of foreign regime elements participating in activities in Iraq, going back and forth from Syria" (Lister, 2015, p. 38). The Iraqi former Ba'athists and officers have played a great role in smoothing the connections between the AQI nexus and Syrian Ba'athists. The pragmatic collaboration between al-Qaeda in Iraq and former Iraqi Ba'athists was made on an operational level inside Iraq and on a command level in Syria (Lister, 2015, p. 37; Filui, 2015, p. 200-201).

In October 2006, Muharib al-Juburi announced a state which was known by two names: the Islamic state of Iraq (Dawlat al-'Iraq al-Islamyya), and "the Islamic state in Iraq" (al-Dawla al-Islamiyya fi al-Iraq) (see Tejel, 2015, p.17). However, the announcement of that state drew little attention on the both official and popular level in Iraq. A statement of ISI's spokesman Al-Juburi in 2006 is a strong indication that the Islamic State of Iraq in 2006 was the reaction to the state-building that the U.S. conducted (or at least accepted), which in fact mostly involved the Shi'a and (to a lesser extent) the Kurds, when he described the new-born ISI as a Sunni zone:

After the Kurds have taken possession of a state in the north, and the Shi'a have been established in a federal state in the middle and south…it has become necessary for the honourable and free Sunnis among the mujahidin and engaged scholars and notables to give something [comparable] to their brothers and their sons…especially in light of the farcical drama known as

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[85] An active contributor of the jihadi website al-Faloja.com, Abu Fadil al-Madi, posted an article warning Salafist and Jihadist groups to reconsider their strategy toward Syrian regime. He claimed that there was a kind of unannounced agreement between Syrian regime and Jihadists to "stop mutual hostility" against each other. However the regime breached the agreement and launched a number of campaigns against all the Sunni Jihadist groups in 2005 (al-Shishani, 2009). The aftermath of the al-Madi statement can be seen as evidence for the influence of diplomatic pressures on Syria, and their attitude toward working with U.S..

'Maliki's state,' in which, sadly, traitorous Sunnis have played roles. (Bunzel, 2015, p. 18)

There have been many indications that the AQI (previously Jama'at al-Tawhid w'al-Jihad, JTWJ) was not just an anti-American organisation, but also rejected the whole political process and the new Iraqi government that was established after 2003; meanwhile, anyone who was working with or participating in the new political process was regarded as a traitor and an apostate. The anti-Shi'a perspective of the organisation became public when Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in September 2005 declared "all-out war" against Iraqi Shi'a, claiming that they were collaborators with the occupation. Zarqawi went further by asking Iraqi Sunnis to fight against the Shi'a, which he described as "al-rawafid" (the refusers) (Abd al-Hussein, 2015, p. 222). His deep hatred towards the Shi'a can be clearly seen in his letter to Osama bin Laden and al-Zawahiri:

…the Shi'a, have declared a secret war against the people of Islam. They are the proximate, dangerous enemy of the Sunnis, even if the Americans are also an archenemy. The danger from the Shi'a, however, is greater and their damage is worse and more destructive to the [Islamic] nation than the Americans, on whom you find a quasi-consensus about killing them as an assailing enemy (U.S. Department of State, 2004).

Al-Juburi's statement can be taken evidence for the Sunnis' position on al-Qaeda's strategy in Iraq; without Sunni support, the Jihadist success in Iraq would have been difficult. That can be clearly seen in both Bin Laden's and Zawahiri's points of view towards AQI strategy in Iraq. Although both Bin Laden and Zawahiri were supporters of the establishment of the caliphate in Iraq, Bin Laden advised Zarqawi not to attempt to establish it without first gaining support from the Sunni masses (McCants, 2015, p. 12). This was because both AQI's immediate goal of driving out the U.S. troops, and the longer-term ambition of establishing an Islamic emirate, required support from the Sunni masses and tribal leaders. However, the United States shut the door on the attempts of the AQI (or ISI) to engage deeply with the Sunni community and tribal leaders, by establishing the Sahawat (Awakening) militias of the Sunni tribes, and turning them against al-Qaeda. This strategy divided the Sunni insurgency, and isolated ISI and al-Qaida-linked ideological groups.

So it can be argued that from 2006 -2012 the notion of establishing an Islamic caliphate or Islamic state has been supported by a number of al-Qaeda

branches in Iraq. Both Zarqawi and Abu Ayyub al-Masri (who took leadership of AQI after the killing of Zarqawi by U.S. forces in June 2006) actively attempted to establish a caliphate, but all their efforts failed until 28 June 2014 when an Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) proclaimed its caliphate[86]. Despite the fact that ISIS was an extension of ISI, the movement was born out of the newly regional dimension of the sectarian conflict, as an extension from the Sunni territories in Iraq to the Sunni territories on the Syrian side. This can be taken as evidence for the sensitivity to the spill-over conflict among Iraq's neighbours, especially those countries which are linked with Iraq through regional security complex dynamics (in accordance with the thesis theory).

On this basis, it may be inferred that what is now called Daesh can be seen as a product of the sectarian-based state-building that U.S. fashioned in Iraq following their occupation in 2003 on one hand, and the regional dimensions of ethno-sectarian conflict in post-2003 Iraq on the other. What makes this argument viable is the involvement of the same neighbours that have been engaged in the process of state building in Iraq following the U.S invasion. The same actors (Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Syria, and including Iraq) again have been the major players, whether they are threatened by Daesh or took advantage of Daesh as a threat to the regional security dynamics. That is to say, the state-building process in Iraq has reshaped the dynamics of the regional security complex and regional balances of power, which led to Iraq's neighbours' involvement in Iraq and also to the rise of ISIS.

There is an important factor that has not given enough attention regarding Syria's openness to its Sunni community and Syrian Salafists after 2003. The Iraqi Sunni insurgency against the U.S-led coalition after 2003 was effectively influenced by the Sunni community and Sunni clerics in Syria. The Iraqi

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[86] In April 2013, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi released an audio statement in which he proclaimed that both Jabhat al-Nusra and the Islamic State of Iraq were merging under the name of "Islamic State of Iraq and Al-Sham". He stated that the Nusra Front was built up and supported financially by the ISI. However, soon after al-Baghdadi's statement, Nusra's leader al-Julani issued a statement which rejected Baghdadi's claim. Al-Qaeda's emir al-Zawahiri tried many times to arbitrate between them, but Baghdadi rebuffed Zawahiri's decisions. This disagreement between al-Qaeda and ISIS led to the point at which in February 2014 al-Qaeda officially issued a statement dissociating itself from ISIS's actions. For more details in this regard, see McCants, 2015, 93; Filiu, 2015, p. 204-205; Bunzel, 2015, p.29.

Committee of Ulama after 2003 had attracted the Syrian Ulama. Harith al-Dhari, leader of the Iraqi Committee of Ulama, was invited several times by Syrian Ulama to travel to Syria (Pierret, 2013, p. 200). Furthermore, the regime's authorisation of Aleppo's Ulama in January 2006 to establish the League of Ulama of Bilad al-Sham was a first step toward the rising of the Sunni community regarding political issues in the region. To an extent, from spring 2007, a number of influential Sunni Ulamas, such as al-Husseini, al-Buti and Salah Kuftaro, publicly criticised Iran for spreading Shi'ism (tashayyu') in Syria (WikiLeaks, 2007).

Arguably, it is hard to understand the rise of Daesh without understanding the transformation of Sunni communities in Iraq and Syria. The Arab uprising has opened two main doors for Daesh, which later played a major role in the rising of Daesh. One came in Iraq, through the oppression by Maliki's government of the Sunni opposition in Sunni governorates. To an extent, for many Sunni Arabs, the only realistic way to have their demands met was to resort to violent conflict against the Shi'a-dominated government (Cockborn, 2014, p.69). The suppression of Iraqi Sunnis pushed them to prefer anyone who could protect them from Maliki's government. Second, the Syrian conflict has provided Daesh with both manpower and money, to rapidly become a powerful military organisation and acquiring bases, such as the oil reservations in Deir al-Zur and Hassaka, which in fact proved to be further recruiting bases among Syrian Sunni Arabs (see Stansfield, 2014). The interaction between these two events paved the way for Daesh to take over Mosul in June 2014, and announce its state of the caliphate.

The fall of Mosul in Jun 2014 has raised two main questions regarding state building enterprise in Iraq. First is regarding how successful the state-building process that U.S has conducted after 2003 was. The second one demonstrates that both Sunni Arabs and Kurds so far have not integrated into the state structure that has been built in post-2003 Iraq. Unlike the al-Qaeda organisation, which had little interest in controlling territories, Daesh has attempted to fill the vacuum that has been created in both Iraq and Syria, and build a proper state in the territories it controls. A leaked 24-page document, obtained by the Guardian (Malik, 2015) shows how Daesh was building the rudiments of the state through establishing governmental foundations such as a

treasury, economic program, education system and military plan, as well as centralised control over oil and gas, in addition to other aspects of the state management. As Walt (2015) points out, Daesh is rejecting the current state-based international system. With Daesh's caliphate, al-Baghdadi has made clear that one of Daesh's objectives is to remove the old borders and destroy the Sykes-Picot map of nation states in the Middle East (Trofimov, 2015). Indeed, Daesh's fighters have destroyed a number of border checkpoints between Syria and Iraq. As Francis Ricciardone, a former U.S. ambassador to Turkey, said: "What we are witnessing is the demise of the post-Ottoman order, the demise of the legitimate states, ISIS is a piece of that, and it is filling in a vacuum of the collapse of that order" (Christiansen and Aldajani, 2015).

One can say that cultural, social and religious geography has a great importance in Daesh's ideology; even at the historical level, geography has a great presence in the Salafi ideology. For example, the geography of Afghanistan did not have any historical sacredness, and the country is geographically and economically poor compared to the al-jaz ra al- arabiyya (the Arabian Peninsula), which is rich and located in the heart of the Muslim world. This is in addition to the geopolitical position of both Iraq and Syria as trade centres not only for the Islamic world, but also for the whole world. All this is to say is that Iraq has played an important role in the Islamic history, especially with its legacy as a capital of the Abbasid Caliphate in 762 CE. Iraq has not only been a territorial attraction for Daesh, but also for al-Qaeda; for example of about 22 statements that were issued by both Osama bin Laden and al-Zawahiri, Iraq's name was mentioned 17 times, even more than Palestine (see Abdul Hussein, 2015, p.313).

However, despite the importance of Iraq as geopolitical ground for Daesh, historically the Wahhabi ideology was not favoured among Iraqi Sunnis. Even in the framework of political Islam, the Sunni interaction with Islamic parties has generally been through movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood and the Liberation Party, and not through any of the Salafist groups which did not have any official existence in Iraq until the faith campaign in the mid-nineties after a decision of the Ba'athist regime made in order to protect its regime from a repetition of a possible Shi'a uprising, similar to that occurred in 1991 in the Shi'i majority areas in the south of Iraq (see Ibrahim, 2015, p.111).

It can be argued that Saudi influence has played an active role regarding the rising of Salafi movements in the region. To an extent, Saudi Arabia has been an ideological ground for Daesh, due to a political marriage between Saudi rulers and Wahhabi clerics. This can be noticed in the number of Saudi foreign fighters in Syria, which, according to the Soufan group (Barrett, 2014, p.13) is estimated at three thousand, the second highest foreign national group that has travelled to Syria, after the Tunisians. However, that does not mean that Riyadh has been the cause of the rising of Daesh in the region. At present, there is no decisive evidence to prove that the Saudi government has financially supported Daesh. No one can deny that Daesh has received financial support from Gulf countries, mostly through private donations (BBC, 19 December 2015). Some social media fundraising groups highlighted the challenges of sending money to Syria or Iraq from Saudi Arabia, due to Riyadh's highly monitored financial sector, which is why they advised the donors to send their money to Kuwait (Boghardt, 2014)[87]. Moreover, the House of Saud is not loved by Daesh. Daesh may be a greater security threats to the Kingdom than to any other countries in the region. The concept of the caliphate in itself means the cancellation of the Saudi Kingdom. It is true that Riyadh might be taking political advantages from Daesh, and that Daesh may feature many Saudi Arabians in its ranks, but that is mostly due to the cultural commonality and sectarian solidarity.

The conclusion that can be drawn from the Syrian conflict is that the rising of Islamic State has had a great influence on the state-building process in Iraq. Meanwhile, the spillover influence of the state-building process in Iraq on the Syrian conflict after 2011 also cannot be ignored. Both events have been highly interconnected through regional security complex dynamics among Iraq and its neighbours on the one hand, and regional dimensions of ethno-sectarian conflict on the other. On this basis, it can be concluded that Iraq's neighbours' engagement in the state-building process in Iraq has contributed to the rising of such terrorist groups as Daesh.

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[87] The cable revealed by WikiLeaks in 2009 explained that the U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton had complained about Saudi donors as the most significant contributor to the funding of Sunni terrorist groups around the world (Cockburn, 2014, p.57).

5.4.   Conclusion: State-building versus regime survival

Syria's involvement in post-2003 Iraq can be understood through Syria's long practice of using non-state groups to destabilise moderate regimes and vulnerable states. This policy has been practised by the Syrian regime toward Palestine through Hamas and Islamic Jihad, Lebanon through Hezbollah, Turkey through the PKK and finally Iraq through Sunni insurgent groups and foreign fighters. Following the 2003 U.S.-led invasion, Iraq became part of the penetrated regional system, surrounded by a number of middle powers, including Syria, of which it has been said that its "foreign policy behaviour derives from the insecure nature of the state system and, specifically, that external threats precipitate power-balancing strategies" (Ehteshami &.Hinnebusch, 1997, p.3).

All the levels of local, regional and global of RSC have been operative in shaping Syria's RSC in post-2003 Iraq. However, the main driver of Damascus's engagement in the process of state-building in post-2003 Iraq has been rooted particularly in the threat of regime change by the U.S., the domestic legitimacy of the regime and the threats from Syria's ethnic and sectarian links with Iraq. The antagonistic policy of the Bush administration toward Syria, which the Assad regime was concerned, could mean that Damascus could become the next target for American military action, was the main factor that shaped Syria's policy over the state-building process in the new Iraq.

With these points in mind, it can be said that, in contrast to a number of studies, Syria's interference in state-building and the ethno-sectarian conflict in post-2003 Iraq until 2011 had less to do with sectarianism, especially regarding Syria's support for Iraqi Sunnis. However, Syria's engagement cannot be separated from ethnic calculations regarding Iraqi Kurds and their ethnic links with Syrian Kurds. At the same time, Damascus did not cultivate close relations with key Iraqi political players of both Shi'a and Kurdish sectors in post-2003 Iraq. Syria failed to build any institutional bases among Iraq's factions. The main goal of Syrian engagement in post-2003 Iraq was to curb the American plan in Iraq in a way which would deter the U.S. from targeting the Syrian Ba'ath regime. Although Damascus left a very negative impact on the state-building process in Iraq, especially with its support and facilitation for Ba'athists and Sunni insurgent groups, Syria lacked a plan to build any bases to exert

influence in Iraq, or to build long term relations with Iraq's official institutions, in the way that both Iran and Turkey have done with Iraq after 2003. Syria preferred to be in an alignment or position of sponsorship with Iraq's Sunni insurgent groups and former Ba'athists, to challenge the U.S.-led coalition forces in Iraq, whilst strengthening its regional power position in the international state system (Waltz, 1979, p.166). This stance from Syria could be attributed to the reason that Syria did not want to choose its allies on an ethnic and sectarian basis. Before 2011, Syria's internal and external dynamics of regional security complex with Iraq shaped the Syrian engagement in Iraq's process of state-building more than did regional dimensions of the ethnic and sectarian, while after the Syrian crisis this equation has been reversed. What now shaped the engagement of Syria's were the regional dimensions of the ethno-sectarian conflict, mainly influenced by the Syrian conflict. This can be seen as evidence of interaction between regional security complex dynamics and the regional dimensions of the ethno-sectarian conflict in post-2003.

Despite the long term Iran-Syria alliance in the region, Syria's strategy has been different from the Iranian strategy towards the state-building process in post-2003 Iraq. Until 2011 Tehran and Damascus backed opposite sides and disagreed on what post-2003 Iraq should look like. Iran wanted a Shi'i dominated government linked with Tehran, and to have an upper hand on Shi'a militia groups, such as the Mahdi Army and Badr Brigade. Alternately, Syria wanted a united centralised Iraq that could keep Iraq's main components of Shi'a, Sunni and Kurd under the umbrella of the central government. The Assad regime was fearful of the spillover of Iraq's inter-communal enmity to Syria, a threat that has become a reality after the Syrian uprising of 2011.

Chapter Six:

6. Iraq and Saudi Arabia: Between national harmony and sectarian hatred

"The potential for disintegration of Iraq was real and that that would bring other countries in the region into the conflict". Saud al-Faysal, previous Saudi Arabia foreign minister (cited in Nasr, 2006, p: 242).

Introduction

The role of Saudi Arabia has been one of the major issues regarding the rebuilding the Iraqi state, for both the Iraqi government and the U.S. post-2003. It would be hard to understand the process of state-building in Iraq and the regional dimensions of ethno-sectarian conflict without reference to the Saudi Arabian role, because of Saudi Arabia's regional, religious and demographic positions in the Persian Gulf. I have argued in the previous chapter that the Syrian engagement in the process of state-building in post-2003 Iraq has been rooted from both external and internal threats which have all stemmed from the concern with regime survival. Further, Damascus did not make any effort to build institutional bases among Iraq's main factions of Shi'a, Sunni and Kurd, as has been the case with Iran and Turkey. The main questions that this chapter seeks to answer are, how has Saudi Arabia been engaged in the rebuilding of the Iraqi state after 2003? What are the main reasons that are driving Saudi Arabia's engagement in Iraq?

In order to cover the above mentioned question, this chapter has been divided into two main sections. The first section will focus on the Saudi Arabian strategy in post-2003 Iraq, which examines two aspects of the Saudi engagement in Iraq. The first is examined through Riyadh's engagement in post-2003 Iraq, to undermine the Shi'a-dominated government in Baghdad. Further, to see how rivalry, alliance, and balance of power shape the RSC pattern among the main powers in the region, (see Buzan and Waever, 2003, p.47), the second section addresses Saudi Arabia's efforts to restore a regional

balance of power in the region. It is asked to what extent this is related with the Saudi concern towards the potential disequilibrium of the regional security system in the Persian Gulf that has become a danger after the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003. Also, in order to frame the whole theme of the regional dimensions of the ethno-sectarian enmity among Iraq's rival neighbours, the second section analyses the ramifications of Saudi Arabia's engagement in Iraq regarding Iran and Syria.

6.1. Saudi Arabia's strategy in Iraq after 2003: How Saudi Arabia engaged in the process of state-building in post-2003 Iraq

It is difficult to understand Saudi Arabia's strategy in post-Saddam Iraq without first understanding the general security approach of the Saudi regime. As Gause (2011, p. 170) argues, Riyadh's main regional policy is concerned with maintaining the security of the regime against domestic and external challenges, such as transitional ideological challenges to the domestic stability and legitimacy of the regime on the one hand and external military threats on the other.. The internal threats are related mainly to the domestic stability of the Kingdom, which can be affected by the confessional enmity between Iraq's Shi'a and Sunnis. This is due to the Saudis' tribal and sectarian links with Iraqi Arab Sunnis on the one hand, and the rise of the Shi'a religious identity of the Iraqi Shi'a after 2003, which could mobilize domestic opposition to the regime on the other. What has made this factor significant is the role played by Hanbali-Wahhabi ulama within the Kingdom's political system; as Ismail (2016, p. 2) points out, "the Saudi ulama enjoy more power as religious authorities than the ulama of other Arab countries". Meanwhile, they have been a strong source of directing sectarian tensions, whether inside Saudi Arabia or outside Saudi Arabia[88]. That is to say, any development in the sectarian equilibrium in Iraq can

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[88] For more details about the political and religious role of Saudi ulama, see Mouline, N., 2014. *The clerics of Islam: Religious authority and political power in Saudi Arabia*, Yale University Press. Ismail, R., 2016. *Saudi Clerics and Shi'a Islam*, Oxford University Press; and Goldberg, J., 1986. *The foreign policy of Saudi Arabia: The formative years, 1902-1918* (No. 19). Cambridge, Mass. Harvard University Press.

affect Saudi Arabia. This is especially after 2003, when sectarianism has become a source of concern for both Riyadh's domestic and foreign policy in the region.

The domestic security element has contributed to Saudi Arabia's involvement in the state-building process in Iraq, from supporting Iraqi Sunni Arabs and insurgent groups, to creating difficulties for the building of an Iraqi Shi'a-dominated government in post-2003 Iraq. However, Riyadh has exploited sectarianism to strengthen its domestic legitimacy and regional policy in order to extend its power among Sunni allies, especially against Iran (Salloukh, 2017, p. 45) .The second security dimension for the Saudi kingdom has been related to the restoration of a regional power balance in the Persian Gulf, which has been imbalanced since the fall of Saddam's regime in 2003, with the balance now in favour of Saudi Arabia's traditional rival (Iran) in the Persian Gulf. It is, however, important to note that Riyadh also uses its regional policy to maintain political stability at home. This new reality has driven Saudi regional policy to engage in a number of proxy wars against the Iranian leverage in both Iraq and across the Middle East. In this context, most of Saudi Arabia's resources in Iraq have not been dedicated to the state-building process, but instead have been focused on thwarting the Shi'a-dominated government, countering Iranian hegemony, and restoring a regional balance of power in the Persian Gulf.

6.1.1.   Countering Shi'a-dominated government in Iraq

Since the creation of the Iraqi state in 1921, Iraq's political system, political elite, and political development have always been a source of concern for Saudi Arabia. From the monarchic Iraq to the republican Iraq, from Saddam's Iraq to the post-Saddam Iraq, Iraq has been a troublesome neighbour for the Kingdom. After the 2003 U.S.-led intervention of Iraq, these concerns reached a peak, when for the first time in the history of the modern Iraqi state the Shi'a were in control. From this perspective, the question that needs to be asked is what is the reason behind Riyadh's concern? Further, what are the ramifications of the Shi'a-led government in Iraq on Saudi Arabia's regional interests? The answer to these questions can be found through understanding the role of the security dimensions in Saudi Arabia's internal and external policies.

It is true that sectarian policies in Saudi Arabia have been implemented long before the Iraqi crisis, particularly after the Iranian Islamic revolution of 1979 (see Louer, 2008, p.166; Ibrahim, 2006, p.219). However, From Saudi Arabia's point of view, Shi'a-dominated Iraq can generate domestic and regional security challenges to Saudi Arabia. The domestic challenges can be seen in political disorder, sectarian tension and mobilising terrorist groups in the region. These concerns could challenge levels of the domestic political and security situation in the Kingdom. After 2003, Saudi Jihadists saw Iraq as an important place to wage Jihad, and worked regularly to mobilise young Muslims to travel to Iraq (Hegghammer, 2010, p. 223). Saudi Arabia shares its longest border with Iraq; most of this border is shared with the Shi'a Arabs of Iraq.[89] Saudi demographic and tribal ties with both Shi'a and Sunnis in Iraq may easily attract Saudi tribes and Islamic extremists to join the sectarian tensions in Iraq, especially in the form of experienced and trained fighters and al-Qaeda elements in the Kingdom who can infiltrate into Iraq. This happened in eighties with the Saudis who fought against Russia in Afghanistan with the Taliban and al-Qaeda; they developed their fighting skills at this time, and some of them returned to Saudi Arabia and worked with radical Jihadist cells aiming to transform the political system in the Kingdom (see Hegghammer, 2010, p. 223; McMillan, 2006, p.4). Iraq's sectarian conflict raised the opportunity of challenging the domestic security position of Saudi Arabia, whether related to the Saudi Sunni community or the Saudi Shi'a community.

The second challenge is that the Shi'a-run government in Iraq could inspire Shi'a minorities in the Kingdom as well as the wider Shi'a communities in the Gulf, which have mostly claimed persecution and discrimination at the hands of Sunni-dominated regimes.[90] For example, Saudi Shi'a welcomed the

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[89] In September 2014, the late King Abdullah announced the first phase of the Saudi border security program related to the 600-mile barrier that stretches from Hafar al-Batin, near the Kuwait-Iraq border, to the northeast town of Turaif close to Jordan. Saudi Arabia's project is a part of a security plan in order to protect its 800km border with Iraq; also, 30,000 soldiers have been sent to the Saudi-Iraq border after Iraqi soldiers withdrew from the area. (See Aljazeera, 2014, Saudi unveils 900km fence on Iraq border).

[90] The number of Shi'as in Saudi Arabia is about two million, which according to some sources means they comprise eleven percent of the population. They live in the oil-rich eastern part of the Kingdom, mainly in the provinces of Qatif and al-Ahsa. It can be noted that the Saudi Shi'a community have tried to strike a balance between their national loyalty and religious identity.

fall of Saddam's regime and viewed the Shi'a-dominated government in post 2003 as the rise of the Shi'a identity in the region (see Blanchard, 2010, p.20). In April 2003 the Saudi human rights activists Hamza al-Hasan said that the revival of the Iraqi Shi'a would have a "great psychological impact on Shi'as in Saudi Arabia" (The Affairs of the Saudi Shiite in Saudi Arabia, 2003). The Saudis may see the Shi'a-centric government in Iraq as inspiring the rise of Shi'ism in the Gulf communities, especially in Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, and many political events have occurred after 2003 and 2011 which can be assessed in this context (see Matthiesen, 2013, p. 21, Wehrey, 2014, pp. 109, 112).

Indeed, Saudi engagement in the state-building process in post-2003 Iraq has been more complex than the Iranian and Turkish involvement. This may be due to the Saudi approach to dealing with the regional and foreign affairs, which according to Gause (2011, p.178) and Yaphe (2011, p. 125) is mostly based on risk aversion and non-direct confrontation with regional neighbours, particularly in Iraq. However, this view of Saudi Arabia's foreign policy might have been reasonable until the Saudi-led coalition entered Yemen. After the Saudis launched attacks on 26 March 2015 against al-Houthis in Yemen, it can be said that the Saudi foreign policy has entered a new phase regarding dealing with its rivals. On the other hand, the Sunni-Shi'a division has provided Riyadh with a more involved role in the Arab world. This is not through classical military state-to-state confrontation, but as Salloukh (2017, p.38) argued through proxy domestic and transnational actors, such as Sunni groups in Iraq and other fragile Arab states in the region. Therefore, to address how Riyadh became involved in the post-2003 state-building process in Iraq, it is important to enquire about what are the means that Saudi Arabia depended upon on to counter the Shi'a-dominated government after the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

Iran has also been very cautious in playing the Shi'a minority card in Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, the Saudi Shi'a have distanced themselves from the regional rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia. In 2007, Ayatollah Nasir Makarim al-Shirazi advised Saudi's Shi'as to avoid provoking Sunnis. He said "we are observing your conditions carefully and continuously because of the exceptional situation you are living" (Kamrava, 2011, p.77; Wehery, 2014 p.116; Pelham, 2008 pp.225, 226).

Saudi engagement in post-2003 Iraq can be examined on two levels. The first can be formulated as a non-state funded level or socio-religious level, which has mainly been based on the religious establishment of Salafis and Wahhabis, which has doctrinal control over Saudi society through its social, political and religious power. The Saudi religious institution, especially after the Shi'a revival in Iraq, has systematically worked on the mobilisation of the Sunni community, whether inside Saudi Arabia or outside, to fight alongside their Sunni brothers in Iraq, which means against the Shi'a-dominated government in Baghdad. The religious establishment (the Wahhabi ulama), played an influential role of mobilising young Muslims and collecting private donations for foreign fighters to fight in Iraq. Thousands of foreign fighters, including many Saudis, travelled to Iraq in order to undermine the Shi'a-dominated government and Iranian influence (See Hegghammer, 2010, p. 223). The second level of the Saudi engagement in post 2003 Iraq can be called a state level. Riyadh has been very cautious regarding its intervention in both the political process and ethno-sectarian strife in Iraq. This cautiousness has been attributed to the U.S.-Saudi coordination, especially during the presence of the U.S. troops in Iraq until 2011 (see Gause, 2011, p.181). However, Saudi official caution toward engagement in Iraq does not mean that Riyadh has not been part of the sectarian conflict in Iraq. It does mean that Saudi engagement in the state-building process has been done indirectly and secretly. Despite Iraqi and U.S. accusations over the Saudi involvement with Sunni insurgent groups and foreign fighters in Iraq, until 2015 it was difficult to find decisive evidence to prove that for the purpose of academic research. However, the WikiLeaks publishing of more than half a million cables in June 2015, including Saudi top secret documents sent from Saudi state institutions, has changed this.

A close analysis of the WikiLeaks documents that related to Iraq can explain Saudi engagement in post-2003 Iraq through two consistent approaches (WikiLeaks, 19 June, 2015b): first, through financial and political support for Sunni insurgent groups, former Ba'athists and tribal leaders, and all those who were in opposition to the central government; and second, the attempts of Saudi official institutions to establish close links with Sunni and Kurdish political figures who were opposed to the government of al-Maliki. On this basis, the Saudi Foreign Ministry suggested a three-phase plan for connection and cooperation with the Iraqi Sunni tribes and politicians. The Saudi Foreign

Ministry proposed providing "all possible support to the Sunni groups and national leaders that firmly stand against Maliki's sectarian project" (WikiLeaks, 19 June 2015c). It can be argued that these official documents can confirm the Iraq and U.S. accusation against Saudi Arabia's interference in the state-building process following the U.S.-led invasion.

However, Saudi Arabia's involvement in Iraq, especially from 2003 to 2011, still remains problematic, due to the ambiguity of their interference on one hand, and the obscurity of their methods of involvement on the other hand. This ambiguity of Saudi Arabia's policy toward post-2003 Iraq has led to some doubt as to what form of state Riyadh would prefer in post-2003 Iraq. Another factor that provides ambiguity to Saudi Arabia's involvement in Iraq derives from two main reasons. First, as has been mentioned earlier, Saudi Arabia's engagement in post-2003 Iraq was conducted through Iraqi Arab Sunnis. In contrast to Iran and Turkey, Saudi Arabia lacked the Shi'a and Kurdish links which made Iran and Turkey to be important strategic partners of the new Iraq's governments from 2003 until the U.S. withdrawal in 2011. Due to Sunnis' lack of political power inside the new governmental body and the Sunnis' lack of an obvious political agenda after 2003, Saudi Arabia's engagement in the state-building process also remained unsystematic. Secondly, following the 2003-U.S. intervention of Iraq, the Sunnis were isolated from the political process, and have lacked power in both the political process and governmental institutions. The Sunnis main sources of political power came via the Iraqi Army and Ba'ath Party; however, both of these structures were disbanded in May 2003 by the CPA (Coalition Provisional Authority).

Furthermore, as a result of the lack of a proper regional strategy on the one hand, and a lack of success in building institutional bases in post-2003 Iraq on the other, Riyadh's capacity in Iraq remained weaker than that of Iran and Turkey. This may have been because, as Gause (2011, p.178) observes, Riyadh's traditional tools for the achievement of its foreign policy goals were mainly based on financial support on one hand and the Saudis' leadership position in the Islamic world on the other. Financial support has played a big role in Saudi Arabia's regional strategy in supporting their allies in the region, rather than resorting to direct confrontation on the ground. In the same way, the Saudis backed Saddam Husain's regime financially by over $25 billion during

the Iran-Iraq War (Gause III, 2011, p.178). However, the religious position of the Saudi foreign policy had also played an important role in the Saudi involvement in Iraq[91]. Saudi efforts have been focused on consolidating its leadership in a Sunni regional order (Lynch, 2016). In December 2015 Riyadh led alliance of 34 Muslim majority countries as an "Islamic Coalition" against Huthis in Yeman or what Riyadh called "terrorism" and has showed the Yemen war coalition as a model for Arab collective action. The religious dimension in the Saudis' rhetoric on the ongoing sectarian tensions in Iraq provided Saudi Arabia with a prominent leadership role of the Sunni Muslims across the Middle East. This role has expanded even more after the Arab uprisings in 2011, as has been seen in Bahrain, Lebanon and Yemen.

Saudi Arabia has been accused many times by both the U.S. authorities and Iraqi officials of supporting Sunni radical groups in order to thwart the state-building process that has been led by a pro-Iranian Shi'a government in post-2003 Iraq. However, it is important to note that the Saudi Arabian role was limited during the presence of the American troops in Iraq. This may be a result of the U.S.-Saudi Arabia traditional alignment in the region.[92] Nevertheless,

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[91] Religion has formed an active part of the Saudi foreign policy since the regime's coalition with the religious establishment of Wahhabism, dating back to the founding of the state. This coalition provides Saudi Arabia with internal and external legitimacy. This has been used against the Kingdom's enemies inside, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, the Saudi Shi'a community, and liberal voices. The religious institution which is characterised by Wahhabism has also played a prominent role in external conflicts, through providing religious justification for the Kingdom's behaviour against its rivals; this has been used against Iraq's new government by the Saudi Ulama and Muftis through encouraging people to fight alongside Iraqi Sunnis against what they called "Shi'a threat" in the region. For more details, see Lacroix, S., (2011). Awakening Islam, *Harvard University Press.*

[92] Despite the Saudi-U.S. alignment, Saudi Arabia has been accused by U.S. officials of not being helpful in Iraq and the Levant. This has especially been true after the U.S. rapprochement with Iran regarding the Iranian nuclear program in 2015. The Saudis felt ignored by the U.S., to the extent that the U.S. Vice President Joe Biden in a Harvard University speech in October 2014 blamed the U.S.'s allies in the Middle East, saying "Our allies in the region were our largest problem in Syria," explaining that Turkey, Saudi Arabia and the UAE were "so determined to take down Assad," that in a sense they started a "proxy Sunni-Shia war" by pouring "hundreds of millions of dollars and tens of thousands of tons of weapons" towards anyone who would fight against Assad (Harvard Institute of Politics, 2 October 2014).

according to media and intelligence reports (The Los Angeles Times, April 28, 2003), 85 percent of the 1200 foreign fighters who wished to travel to Iraq during 2003-2005 and were arrested in Syria were Saudis (Nasr, 2006, p. 245). However, there is no decisive evidence that these fighters were supported by the Saudi Arabian government. The presence of the Saudis can most likely be attributed to the non-state sponsored groups, which had received most of their support from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf state donors, not the states themselves; they were outside the control of Saudi Arabia's authorities. This is in contrast to Iran's engagement, which has been solely through government-sponsored groups.

The above argument can be further justified when the serious procedures instituted by the Saudis after 2004 to curb the activities of Islamist militants at home are taken into account. From 2004 to 2006 the Saudi Interior Ministry allocated a security budget estimated at $10 billion for personnel recruitment and equipment as part of a counterterrorism plan (see Hegghammer, 2010, p. 227). The number of foreign fighters in Iraq and Syria has increased dramatically after 2011. According to the UN Security Council report, this number has reached up to 22,000 fighters from over 100 countries around the world, of which the highest percentages are from Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Morocco (BBC, 2 April 2015; Abdul Husain, 2015, p. 416-421).

It can be argued that despite social and sectarian ties between Iraqi Sunni tribes and Saudi Sunni tribes, Saudi Arabian Sunni clerics have been the primary ideological inspiration for Saudi involvement in Iraq. There may be evidence to suggest that the Salafist and Wahhabist clerics were the main drivers behind encouraging people in Saudi Arabia to travel to Iraq and take part in the Sunni insurgency against both through Shi'a dominated government and U.S. interests in Iraq. Most Wahhabist clerics' fatwas have showed Shi'ism as a kind of heresy. As Michael Scott Doran (cited in Nasr, 2004, p. 19) indicates, in the Wahhabi perspective the Shi'as are a "fifth column for the enemies of true Islam…The danger of the [Shi'a] heretics to the region… is not less than the danger of the Jews and Christians''. This anti-Shi'ism view from Saudi Arabian Wahhabis is manifested in the twenty-six Saudi clerics' fatwa on November 5 2004 when the U.S. Army launched an attack on the Iraqi insurgency in Fallujah (Jones, 2011, p. 113). This is mainly due to the

Wahhabist religious scholars' control over the public discussion in the Kingdom in return for their support for the legitimacy of the ruling elite[93].

The Saudi clerics sent an open letter to all Sunni Muslims, and called on Sunnis, wherever they were, to help their Sunni brothers in Iraq through participating in the Jihad against the U.S. The letter states "Jihad against the occupation is mandatory for those who are able… our Muslim brothers must stand by their brothers in Iraq by supporting them as much as possible." (Jones, 2011, p. 114). Meanwhile, the hatred against Shi'as took political, sectarian and regional dimensions when thirty-eight Saudi clerics and Islamic preachers gathered in Istanbul with Iraq's prominent Sunni leaders in December 2006, as an act of solidarity with Iraqi Sunnis. The meeting included Harith al-Dhari of the Muslim Scholars Association and the Islamic Army of Iraq, and Adnan al-Dulaimmi of the Iraqi Accord Front. The declaration was published on a number of websites of Saudi ulama, including those of the progressive Shaykh Salman al-'Awdah and the Shaykh Safar al- awali. The clerics called on all Sunni Muslims to unite against the Shi'a in Iraq and to provide support for the Sunni cause by all appropriate means (Ismail, 2016, p. 113).

The accusation that Saudi Arabia was supporting Sunni insurgent groups in Iraq was taken as an official stance by U.S. officials. In July 2007, the U.S ambassador to the UN, Zalmay Khalilzad, clearly remarked on CNN television that "Saudi Arabia and a number of the countries are not doing all they can to help us in Iraq. At times some of them are not only not helping, but they are doing things that is undermining the effort to make progress" (USA TODAY, 29/7/2007).

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[93] The power of religious ideology in Saudi Arabia is not because of the high religiousity of Saudi society, but because the religious realm offers significant opportunities for political mobilisation. The Saudi state's ideology provides political support for religious activities. This has been protected by a rentier system that has supplied luxury for the unproductive religious sector. The official Wahhabi scholars are very influential in the education sector and the judiciary which both contribute to the shaping of Saudi foreign policy. The local organ of the Higher Council of Ulema (HCU), headed by the Saudi grand mufti, often provides legitimacy to political decisions through their *fatwas* (See Hegghammer, 2010, p.232; Cordesman, 2009, p.20).

Despite the U.S. and Iraqi officials' accusation toward Saudi Arabia, one may argue that Saudi Arabia's official institutions have not been involved in sending money and weapons to insurgent groups in Iraq. This may have been credible before the U.S. withdrawal from Iraq, because of two reasons. Firstly, after the 2003 invasion, Saudi Arabia expected the U.S. not to allow Iraq's new government to be led by pro-Iranian Shi'as, due to both countries' fear of Iranian leverage in Iraq. Thus, throughout the American presence in Iraq, Saudi Arabia monitored Iraq's political evolution cautiously, particularly the role of Shi'a and Iranian interference in Iraq. They warned the U.S. officially about their concerns with Iranian engagement in Iraq and the exclusion of Sunnis from the political process. The Saudi Foreign Minister, Prince Saud al-Faisal (20 September 2005), in an interview with Fareed Zakaria in September 2005, made clear that "We fought a war together to keep Iran from occupying Iraq after Iraq was driven out of Kuwait. Now we are handing the whole country over to Iran without reason." Secondly, Saudi Arabia seriously feared of acting as a direct counter to the Iranian intervention during the American presence in Iraq.

For many, it would be hard to deny that Saudi funds were channelled to the Sunni insurgency in Iraq. It is important to note, however, that Saudi Arabian support for the Sunnis and other insurgents that have fought against the American forces and the Iraqi government were mostly channelled through private charitable funds, especially via Saudi religious clerics, which may have been outside the control of the Saudi authorities. The Iraqi Study Group Report and Associated Press (2006) found during some interviews with Saudi truck drivers that money was coming from Saudi Arabia to Iraq to support the insurgency against the U.S. and the Shi'a-led government. The money had been collected in the name of *Zakat* for Islamic purposes and charity and came from private individuals and was given to clerics. Some of the donors already knew that the money was being spent in fighting against American coalition forces in Iraq. The report (Iraq Study Group, 2006, p. 25) remarks that "funding for the Sunni insurgency comes from private individuals within Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states". That does not mean that the Saudi Arabian authorities were behind these processes. This was not because of their rejection of post-2003 Iraq, but because of their security concerns at home. Moreover, Gen. Mansour al-Turki, a spokesman for the Saudi Interior Ministry in 2005, stated that "There isn't any organised terror finance, and we will not permit any such unorganised

acts" (The Associated Press, 2006). The Saudi official view does not, however, negate the fact that Riyadh had been in contact with various Sunni insurgent groups and political leaders to curtail the building of a Shi'a-dominated state in Iraq after 2003 (see WikiLeaks, 19 June 2015b).

However, after the U.S. withdrawal from Iraq at the end of 2011, Saudi foreign policy has changed its tone, moving towards playing a more muscular role in both Iraq and the region. In other words, U.S. policy has had a direct observable impact on Saudi foreign policy, partly explainable by the close U.S.-Saudi relationship and the U.S. allowing the Saudis a relatively free hand to act (Heathlain, 2010, p. 155). This is noticeable in the statements of a previous adviser to the Saudi government, Nawaf Obaid[94] (2006), made in his article in the Washington post in 2006. Obaid stated that after the U.S. pull-out from Iraq, Saudi Arabia would revise its policy toward Iraq. According to his article, there would be three options on the table from the Saudi side. He stated that:

Options now include providing Sunni military leaders (primarily ex-Ba'athist members of the former Iraqi officer corps, who make up the backbone of the insurgency) with the same types of assistance -- funding, arms and logistical support -- that Iran has been giving to Shiite armed groups for years. Another possibility includes the establishment of new Sunni brigades to combat the Iranian-backed militias. Finally, Abdullah may decide to strangle Iranian funding of the militias through oil policy. If Saudi Arabia boosted production and cut the price of oil in half, the kingdom could still finance its current spending. But it would be devastating to Iran, which is facing economic difficulties even with today's high prices. (Obaid, 2006)

It could be argued that Saudi Arabia has resorted to all of Obaid's options to varying degrees. From providing political and financial support to Sunni insurgent groups and involving Iraq's Sunni tribal leaders, to manipulating oil prices in the world markets; all these options have been practised by Riyadh, aiming to prevent a Shi'a-dominated state and alter the balance of power in Iraq against Iranian dominance. In contrast to Iran, Saudi Arabia has been cautious about dealing with radical militia groups. Saudi engagement has been mostly with state institutions, such as Riyadh's support of the Lebanese Armed Forces,

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[94] Nawaf Obaid served as Special Advisor for National Security Affairs to Prince Turki Al Faisal from 2004 to 2007, and from 2011 to 2015 as the Special Counselor to Prince Mohammed bin Nawaf, Saudi ambassador to the United Kingdom. Saudi officials denied that Obaid's opinion stated in his article represented Saudi Arabia's official policy toward Iraq and soon after publishing that article, Obaid lost his job as an advisor for National Security Affairs.

the Palestine Authority, Saudi support to the Kingdom of Bahrain and to Abdel Fattah el-Sisi in Egypt. However, in Iraq the case has been different, due to Riyadh's lack of any political links with the Shi'a and Kurds as the two main players in the rebuilding of the new Iraqi state after 2003[95].

The political character of Sultan Bandar, Saudi intelligence chief from July 2012 to 2014, also cannot be ignored in drawing Saudi Arabia's policy toward the state-building process in the new Iraq[96]. According to Iranian media reports, he was the mastermind behind al-Qaeda activates in Iraq, funding terrorist groups in Syria and backing Islamic extremists in Lebanon in order to undermine Hezbollah (Henderson, 2010). Bandar had also been criticised privately by the U.S. secretary of state John Kerry for displaying an aggressive foreign policy toward regional issues, especially related to Iran and Syria (see Cockburn, 2015, 104).

One can assume that Saudi Arabia has been always concerned about instability in the Persian Gulf. However, it can be observed that the Saudis regional policy has witnessed a dynamic alteration from a 'consensual' foreign policy to a 'confrontational' foreign policy (Al Tamamy, 2012, p.148). This shift can be seen in four successive cases that faced Saudi Arabia's foreign policy after 2009. The first one was against the Houthis in 2009, in Yemen, and the second was Saud's reaction to the Bahrain uprising in 2011. Third is shown in the Saudi-led coalition that went into Yemen in March 2015, in addition to Saudi

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[95] Saudi relations with Iraqi Kurds have witnessed a new stage, especially after the rise of tensions between KRG and al-Maliki government. In December 2015 the KRG's President Massoud Barzani visited Saudi Arabia and was warmly welcomed by Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdulaziz. A week after Barzani's visit, Riyadh announced a Muslim 'anti-terrorism' coalition, which included almost all Muslim countries apart from Iran, Iraq and Syria, despite the sharing of a common enemy which is the Islamic State; the new Saudi coalition will contribute to the further regional rivalries with the Iranian Shia-led bloc.

[96] Bandar bin Sultan was appointed as Director General of the Saudi Intelligence Agency from July 2012 to 2014. He replaced Muqrin bin Abdulaziz, without any official reason for the appointment being provided. His appointment took place amid growing tensions between Sunnis and Shi'as in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. Bandar's appointment was considered as a move on the part of Saudi Arabia to display a more aggressive foreign policy toward the regional challenges coming from Syria and Iran.

Arabia's anti-terrorism coalition in December 2015[97]. All these cases are indications of a growing willingness from Riyadh to engage in Arab issues, from which Iraq cannot be excluded.

The Saudi Arabian engagement in the state-building process following the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq can be examined through the methods of state sponsorship of terrorism. This has been enabled by the publication of the Saudi WikiLeaks cables in 2015, which provide evidence for Riyadh's involvement with Sunni insurgent groups and Sunni Arab tribes (see WikiLeaks, 2015a). There are several types of state sponsorship of terrorist groups, depending on the level of support that is on offer to terrorist groups (Byman, 2005, pp. 59-65). There are passive supporters, which take a blind eye to terrorist activities, in addition to the active supporter who supports terrorism socially, politically, logistically, financially or militarily. Also, state sponsorship of terrorism can be in secret, through involvement with the terrorist groups, which is very common. It might be argued that, according to Byman's classification, Saudi Arabia can be placed as both a passive and an explicit supporter of terrorism in Iraq.

An important factor that must be considered regarding the intercommunal enmity in post-2003 Iraq is that the Sunni tribes sometimes prefer to ally themselves with al-Qaeda and Ba'athist insurgency groups rather than compromise with the Shi'a government in Baghdad. This could be attributed to the extent of distrust between both Shi'as and Sunnis in post-2003 Iraq. This has happened many times in the populated Sunni cites, such as Falluja, Anbar, Saladin and Mosul[98]. Furthermore, due to the close tribal links between Iraqi Sunnis and Saudi Sunnis, the Sunni community in Iraq after 2003 viewed

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[97] This shift of Saudi regional policy might be attributed into more than one reason. The rise of the Shi'a identity in the region after the fall of the Ba'ath regime in Iraq alarmed Riyadh into playing a more influential role in the region, especially against Tehran's interventionist policies in the Arab world. Furthermore, the rise of Saudi Arabia's leadership role after 2011 has allowed Riyadh more manoeuvring toward Arab and Muslim issues. This is especially so after the fall of a number of Arab regimes, in Libya, Tunisia and Egypt. Additionally the continuation of crises in Yemen and Syria made it more difficult for the Saudis to continue to act as observers.

[98] When Islamic State took over Mosul and other Sunni-populated provinces in Iraq in June 2014, a number of Sunni tribes allied themselves with Islamic State and fought against the Iraqi Forces. The Sunni cooperation had been one of the main reasons for IS's quick spread in the Sunni provinces of Anbar, Saladin and Mosul (Al-Quds Al-Arabi 11 Jun 2014).

Riyadh as supporter of the Sunnis in Iraq. The resorting of some Sunni tribal leaders and politicians to Saudi Arabia's support might be a strong indication in that sense (WikiLeaks, 19 June 2015c). What makes it really hard to uncover the extent of Saudi Arabia's financial and logistic support for insurgent and political groups in Iraq is the Saudis' dual policy towards the Jihadists and Sunni extremists. The Saudis encourage Jihadists and extremist groups to fight against the Shi'a-led government in Iraq and abroad, while suppressing them as a threat against security issues at home (see Cockburn, 2015).

6.1.2. RSC formation through restoring a regional balance of power

One of the essential patterns of RSC formation among the main powers within the region is a balance of power (Buzan and Wæver, 2003, pp. 45, 47). This formation derives from the interaction between balance of power and the anarchic structure on the one hand, and the concerns of local geographical proximity on the other. From this perspective, Saudi involvement in Iraq derives from balancing against not only regional threats but also against domestic threats that have arisen after the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq (see Gause, 2010, p.9). Prior to the 2003 invasion of Iraq, there was a traditional regional balance of power of sorts in the Persian Gulf sub-region, especially among the three main regional players, Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Iraq, despite being heavily affected by the first Gulf War and a decade of international sanctions, was not so weak as to remain a target for its neighbours. Iraq, prior to the 2003 U.S.-led invasion, had been a protector of the eastern flank of the Arab world for a long period of time, and a counterweight to the Iranian leverage in particular for the Gulf countries. The expense of that role had not been without burden for the Gulf countries. Saudi Arabia alone provided about $25 billion in financial aid to Saddam's regime during the eight years of the Iran-Iraq War (John & Harvey, 1989, p. 160).

The point that the following section will attempt to argue is that, despite the ideological (Arab-Persian tensions and sectarian differences) and geopolitical rivalry (the Arabian Gulf against Persian Gulf and the Iran-Iraq War) between Riyadh and Tehran, the main concern for Saudi Arabia following the U.S.-led

invasion of Iraq stems from the shifting of the balance of power in the Persian region in favour of Iranian hegemony. Therefore, a significant part of Riyadh's engagement in the process of state-building in Iraq can be examined in this context.

The most perceived threat for Riyadh according to most Saudi Arabian officials is Iran has been that Iran has been the main security threat in the Persian Gulf. For instance, a former intelligence chief, Prince Turki al-Faisal, in April 2014 told a security conference in Bahrain that the GCC must be prepared for any possible consequences from Iran's nuclear talks with P5+1 group. He stated that:

> We, as a Gulf grouping, work to create a real balance of forces with it, including in nuclear know-how, and to be ready for any possibility in relation to the Iranian nuclear file. Any violation of this balance will allow the Iranian leadership to exploit all holes to do harm to us. (Reuters, Apr 23, 2014).

Additionally, Adel al-Jubeir[99], the former foreign affairs advisor to Prince Abdullah in November 2003, told a press conference in Washington, "we are concerned that the situation in Iraq unless we deal with it in a positive way could erode and unravel". Sectarian calculations have become a major tool that has directly impacted the regional balance of power between Saudi Arabia and Iran. The countries have different strategies to deal with their rivals. Iran has claimed that their competition in the Middle East has nothing to do with Shi'a-Sunni tensions. Ali Fayad, head of the Consultative Centre for Strategic and Documentation Studies, a Hizbullah think tank, claimed that:

> At the heart of Iran's foreign policy are two key issues: the Palestinian cause and confronting Washington's hegemonic schemes in the region. There is nothing particularly Shia about the two issues. Indeed both have been presented as the causes for the majority Sunni Arabs. In this sense Iran's foreign policy is Sunni. One can say that the Islamic Republic has transcended the sectarian issue in its foreign policy. (Abdel-Latif, 2007).

Despite that, both countries are well aware that sectarian tensions could lead to a regional spill-over which would effect both countries. However, Saudi Arabia has attempted to mobilize sectarian tensions abroad and show that Iran's policies are based on sectarian calculations. The Saudis may perceive

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[99] After the death of Saud Al-Faisal in Jun 2015 who held this post for 40 years, Adel al-Jubeir was appointed in July 2015 as Minister of Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia. Jubeir is the first person to head the foreign ministry position from outside the country's royal family.

that pushing Iran into the sectarian direction could lead to thwarting Iran's rise in the Arab world, following the high point of Hezbollah's war with Israel in 2006, and Iranian support for both the Iraqi Shi'a-led government and the Assad regime in Syria, have strongly damaged Iran in the Arab world.

Following the downfall of the Ba'athist regime in 2003, Iraq no longer remained a strategic balance against Iran, and rather became in ideological alignment with Iran. After the Shi'a took power in Iraq, and built a Shi'a regime friendly with Iran, Saudi concerns became more profound. This was due to the House of Saudi being well aware that Iraq, throughout its history, had not been an easy state for the Gulf countries to manage. The Persian Gulf has usually been under Iran and Iraq's control. Gulf countries, including Saudi Arabia, have never been a spearhead against Iran. However, Saudi Arabia has regularly been an indirect part of the regional rivalry against Iran, mostly under the leadership of Iraq, for example during the Iran-Iraq War. Iraq's being an ally of the Iranian regime limits Saudi Arabia's capability to build any successful regional security system in the Persian Gulf. The Shi'a led government in Iraq has not only altered the balance of power in the Persian Gulf, but also changed the balance of power between Shi'a and Sunni in the Persian Gulf and across the Middle East (see Nasr, 2004).

In order to maintain the new balance of power in the Persian region, Saudi Arabia has worked on both financial and ideological levels (see Gause, 2011, p.178). Both these tools have been exercised in post 2003-Iraq, the Saudis supported political Sunni forces through financial aid, directly through political support to the Sunni parties and indirectly through charitable financial aid from Saudi citizens. This accusation has been officially reported by high-ranking Iraqi politicians, such as former Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, or other security characters in the Iraqi government. It can be argued that Saudi Arabia came to believe that it was impossible to win in Iraq. A close look at Riyadh's regional policy after 2011 reveals that since the Syrian crisis has begun, the Saudi focus has been shifted from Iraq as a hard battleground to countering Iran in Syria as an easier battlefield on which to defeat Iran. Riyadh has realised that it lacks the means to achieve hegemony in Iraq's political arena, especially after Islamic State took over of most of the Sunni-populated areas in 2014. Iran has intensified its presence in Iraq politically and militarily. Meanwhile, Iraqi Shi'as

have become a part of the Iranian axis. Despite the on-going rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran, Saudi Arabia may lose its hope of claiming post-2003 Iraq as a member of the Arab world under Saudi Arabia's leadership.

Alongside the balance of power pattern, Saudi Arabia resorted to two other RSC patterns of "rivalry" and "alliance" to counter new regional security formation in the region (in accordance with thesis RSCT). Following the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, Saudi Arabia has engaged in a number of defensive alliances, setting up a new security structure in the region. Riyadh's concerns were serious enough in 2014 for it to suggest to the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council to form a defence system, an Arab NATO, for a military alliance among GCC countries and expanding to other Arab Kingdoms, such as Morocco and Jordan (Stratfor report, May 2, 2014).[100] After the Arab uprisings, Riyadh has felt threatened by the rise of a new Shi'a revival in the region. That concern has alarmed Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries, especially at the time of the negotiations between Iran and the U.S. over Iran's nuclear program. Riyadh may be successful in turning Iranian engagement in post-2003 Iraq into a phobia of the Shi'as in the region, especially among Gulf countries. This policy has provided Saudi Arabia with a more muscular role among GCC countries and allowed it to form alliances with other rivals of Iran in the region.

Another approach that Saudi Arabia has adopted to restore a balance of power in its interests was an aggressive oil policy against Iran, by decreasing the price of oil. This policy has let the Kingdom expand its oil production and stabilise the oil price in the world markets. On the other hand, it has harmed the Iranian oil sector by $1 billion per month, since both Iran and Russia have depended on the international price on being above $100 a barrel. In 2015 the international oil price fell to below $50 a barrel (BBC, Business report, 19 January 2015). The Saudi strategy of using oil as a political weapon is aimed directly at Iran, and might have more than one purpose. In the long term, it may

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[100] It can be said that a military coalition among Arab Sunni countries has increasingly become realistic after the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen in March 2015, when the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Jordan Egypt, Morocco and Sudan participated in a military attack against al-Houthi Shi'a rebels and their allies in Yemen, who have been accused of Iranian support. This political and military coalition can be regarded as the first Sunni coalition against Iranian hegemony in both the Persian Gulf and the Middle East. The coalition has also been supported by non-Arab countries, such as Turkey and Pakistan.

push Iran to suspend its nuclear program, at least temporarily. Moreover, it might thwart Iranian support to Hezbollah and Bashar's regime in Syria. Meanwhile, the decreasing price of oil has also damaged the economy of Russia, which has been one of the main supporters of Assad's regime in Syria. The role of the U.S. in the region as part of the RSC has been in play even after the U.S. withdrawal in Iraq. According to some reports, both Saudi Arabia and the U.S. have been involved in the fall of oil prices, with the intention to directly harm Iran's and Russia's economies. This stance of Saudi Arabia has angered Iran. Ali Lariani, current chairman of the Iranian parliament in December 2014 said that "this time, we will not forget which countries schemed to lower the price of oil" (MEMRI, December 31, 2014).

The financial and ideological (Sunni Islam in the form of Salafism) power has enabled Saudi involvement in Arab issues across the Middle East, in order to affect the regional balance of power in the region. This is especially true in the areas of influence that share Saudi Arabian and Iranian hegemony. In this regard can be seen Saudi Arabia's intervention in Bahrain to keep the Sunni ruling family in power, the Saudi military invasion of Yemen against the Houthis, Saudi financial and military support for the Syrian opposition, especially the Free Syrian Army, supporting Lebanon's government against Hezbollah, and engaging in the diplomatic negotiations between Fatah and Hamas which led to the Fatah-Hamas national unity government in 2007 in order to disengage Hamas from the Iranian camp (see Mason, 2015, p. 49). This was in addition to the Saudi involvement in Mohamed Morsi's overthrow in Egypt, and supporting Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. All these efforts can be examined through the leadership role that Saudi sought to play in the new Arab regional order. Meanwhile, all these indications cannot be divorced from Saudi Arabia's overall plan of countering Iranian leverage in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen and Palestine.

After 2011, Syria has become an important zone of influence in the Middle East in which Saudi has attempted to reduce Iranian leverage on the Levant. Saudi Arabia views the Syrian turmoil as a historic moment to enhance its regional position. Many Saudi commentators see the Syrian civil war as a test for the emergence of a new Saudi regional leadership (see al-Hamid, 2013; Wehrey, 2014). Although Saudi Arabia possesses most of the means to play a pivotal role in regional leadership in the Persian Gulf and the Middle East, it will

be difficult to confront Iranian leverage in Iraq. It seems that Saudi Arabia is betting highly on the possibility of defeating Assad's regime in Syria to establish a new balance of power in the region. It can be argued that Syria might be the last chance for Saudi Arabia to rebuild a regional security system and restore the balance of power against Iran in the Middle East. However, from the end of 2016 this eventuality has looked less likely after the Syrian regime has strengthened itself on the battlefield and won gains with Iranian and Russian support.

Saudi mechanisms of engagement in post-2003 Iraq can be analysed through the capabilities of Saudi Arabia as a regional player. From this point of view, it can be said, as Kamrava (2011, p. 177) points out, that Saudi Arabia lacks the bases of regional power capabilities, such as military capacity, population bases and ideological bases that would provide Riyadh with the ability to play a regional leadership role. However, the said argument could be debatable, particularly due to Saudi Arabia's possessing of some peculiarities that could drive it to play a regional leadership role in the Persian Gulf. Saudi Arabia is the largest exporter of total petroleum liquids in the world, controlling 16 percent of the world's known oil reserves (International Energy Statistics, 2013). Furthermore, Saudi Arabia is also a religious centre for Muslims across the world, as well as the de facto leader of the Sunni community around the world. Finally, the 'Arab uprising' has also provided a good chance for Saudi Arabia to have a greater leadership influence in the Arab world, especially amongst Sunnis (see Lynch, 2016). The reasoning behind this can be traced back to the failing of most traditional Arab regional power regimes in the Arab world, such as Iraq, Syria, Libya and Egypt. The new Arab political order has provided an opportunity for Saudi Arabia to take a leading role in regional Arab affairs, as well as domestic conflicts in countries like Libya, Syria, Bahrain, Egypt and Lebanon.

However, maintaining the sustainability of that leadership role might not be such an easy task for the Saudi foreign policy, due to Saudi Arabia's cautious stance in dealing with regional conflicts, and avoiding direct confrontations with other regional powers. The future role of Saudi Arabia as a key player in the region will be more about building strategic bases for its leadership, and this could force Saudi Arabia to open more fronts with other rivals in the Middle

East. Furthermore, the Saudi approach to restoring a balance of power through supporting insurgent groups in Iraq and Syria has not been successful, since this strategy created a crisis for Saudi Arabia in its relations with the U.S.. This also meant indirect support for those groups which also wished to destabilise the Kingdom's regime at home. As Gause (2011, p.177) points out, the Saudi regime views the potentiality of an ideological threat as more immediate than the possibility of a military threat. Thus, Saudi Arabia's engagement in the process of state-building has been primarily about containing Iranian leverage in Iraq, rather than about building a certain form of state in post-2003 Iraq. It could be argued that patterns of rivalry, balance of power and alliance with friendly countries and local proxy groups which have been characterised by ethnic and sectarian tension, especially between Tehran and Riyadh, has contributed to the Saudi engagement in the state-building process in post-war Iraq.

6.2. Rivalry and alliance: Syria's and Iran's concerns

After the U.S. invasion of Iraq, the magnitude of the regional rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia has substantially increased across the Middle East. This has created a hostile and competitive environment between the two countries, to the extent that they are at odds on almost all the political issues in the region. In addition to the historical, geopolitical and ideological differences, between both countries, they are also on opposite sides to each other in a number of open crises, such as the Iranian nuclear program, the rise of Shi'ism in the Middle East, the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, the sectarian division in Lebanon, the Syrian crisis after 2011 and the Saudi-Houthi conflicts in 2009 and 2015. All these disagreements have fuelled the intensive Saudi-Iranian rivalry with regional repercussions. This is especially so because the U.S. invasion of Iraq and later Syria's conflict have deeply affected the traditional regional security dynamics in the region and formed a de facto new security order in the Persian Gulf. This complex picture of the security dynamics of the Persian Gulf countries can be seen more clearly through the theoretical framework of Buzan and Wæver (2003, p.190), which explains how the security dynamics of these countries are profoundly linked to one another. The dynamics of the Persian Gulf sub-region have produced a type of relationship between Saudi Arabia and Iran that can be described as a "durable patterns of amity and enmity" (Buzan

and Wæver, 2003, p.190). All these spheres of influence between Iran and Saudi Arabia (and to lesser extent Syria) have produced a regional hegemonic competition between both countries. The domination of each country is directly linked with the national security of other countries inside the region. In order to see how the state-building process in post-2003 Iraq has become part of the regional involvement in the ethnic and sectarian conflict in Iraq, it is important to know what increased Saudi Arabian leverage would mean for others in the region. In particular, patterns of balance of power, rivalry and alliance are forming a RSC among Iraq's neighbours (Buzan and Wæver, 2003, p.47). The ramifications of Saudi Arabian hegemony in Iraq for both Iran and Syria can be assessed in this context.

6.2.1. The ramifications of Saudi Arabia's influence in Iraq: Iran's concerns

Iran could be the only country in the region that understands how difficult it would be to cope with an Iraq that is a part the Saudi-led Sunni axis in the Persian Gulf. The outstanding example of this is Iraq's eight-year war with Iran. Iran has experienced a long history of enmity with Iraq. Moreover, Iran has not forgotten the financial aid supplied by Saudi Arabia and other GCC countries to Iraq during the eight years of Iran-Iraq War. Moreover, Iran is surrounded by a large number of U.S. allies in the region, Afghanistan and Pakistan from the east, the instability of Iraq from the west, Turkey and Azerbaijan in the northwest, the Gulf of Oman and the Persian Gulf in the south which include all the GCC countries and the main U.S. military bases in the region. Therefore, Iran's concerns over Saudi Arabia's engagement in Iraq are reasonable. From the Iranian perspective, Saudi Arabia's hegemony in Iraq has two strategic levels of threat for Iran. Firstly, Iraq has become a part of the geostrategic calculations of Iran in the Persian Gulf. In particular when the survival of the Syrian regime is at stake, Iraq is the only state that can be an Iranian ally and a strategic alternative to the Assad regime for Iran in the Persian Gulf and the Levant.

Secondly, after the fall of the Saddam regime in 2003, the Shi'a majority got the chance to lead the new Iraqi government with the support of the U.S.

and the international community. That could provide a chance for the Shi'a community in Iraq and the whole region more than ever to form a new regional front against anti-Shi'i and Wahhabi powers that have mostly operated under the leadership of (or at least from) Saudi Arabia in the last thirty years. For example, the Saudi financial support of Islamist extremists in the Caucasus and Central Asia in the 1990s, as Vali Nasr (2004, p. 15) points out, had not been so much an Islamic project as it was a Sunni one, aiming to strangle Iranian leverage in the Middle East. Iran perceives the Saudi influence in Iraq as gradually morphing into a new Iraq in the Sunni Arab world, which will most likely be under Saudi Arabia's regional leadership, and also will most likely be hostile towards Iran. This is especially after the absence of Iraq's traditional role as a key power in the region.

Another point that could be worth considering is a deterioration of the Iranian influence on the Arab world, especially toward Palestine, Lebanon and Syria. This will be affected by sectarian calculations, in particular after the Arab uprising. For instance, the Iranian involvement in Iraq and Syria can be viewed through the lens of sectarianism in the Sunni Arab communities. Saudi Arabia has played an effective role in that respect. In 2010, King Abdullah strongly opposed Iran's support to militant Palestinian factions; he reportedly told Iranian foreign minister Manoucher Mottaki that "you as Persians have no business meddling in Arab matters" (Reuters, 13 May 2014). Riyadh has attempted many times to take Hamas away from Tehran's influence, for example by brokering a peace agreement between Hamas and the rival Palestinian faction Fatah in 2007 (see Mecca Agreement, February. 9, 2007). In this context, Iran will need an Arab state to manifest its regional polices toward the Muslim and Arab world. Iraq can play that role geopolitically and economically. In particular, this will be effective if Iran is able to expand the Shi'a-led government to include Iraqi Sunnis and Kurds working under the Shi'a leadership in Iraq[101].

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[101] In 2014, Iran abandoned al-Maliki, in order to strengthen the Shi'a house against Islamic State; Iran took into consideration the Kurdish and Sunni demands for changing the Maliki government, despite his close ties with Tehran. Iran has kept up its good relation with Iraqi Kurds, especially with the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). In June 2014 when Islamic State attempted to attack Erbil, Iran played a major role in preventing the success of the attack. The KRG President Masoud Barzani said "We asked for weapons and Iran was the first country to provide us with weapons and ammunition," (Al-alam, 26 August 2014).

There are three main aspects that raise Tehran's concerns regarding Riyadh's engagement in the process of state-building in post-2003 Iraq.

Geopolitically, Iraq has historically shared the traditional domination of the Gulf geopolitical environment with Iran (Mabon, 2013, p.55). In this respect, Iraq can be an Iranian gateway toward control of the Persian Gulf and the Arab world to spread the ideology of the Iranian revolution. Alternately, keeping Iraq away from Iranian control means Iran's isolation from its zones of influence, such as Syria and southern Lebanon. Furthermore, in the memory of Iranians, Iraq could always be a possible threat to Iranian national interests in the region, unless it is under Iran's control. Iraq has had all the economic, military and political capabilities to become again a regional player in the region, as it had been from 1958 to its fall in 2003.

Ideologically, following the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, Iraq's Shi'a community has seized the opportunity to build a Shi'a-dominated government with a strategic alignment with Iran. That change has totally altered the identity of the Iraqi state, from pan-Arabist Iraq with a Sunni identity to the openly Shi'a Arab country in the region. To an extent, Iraq has been an integrated area which binds Shi'a communities from Lebanon to Pakistan, with the central hub being in Iran. The Syrian sectarian conflict has shown this solidarity among Shi'a communities in Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, and even Afghanistan, from which Shi'a militia groups have come to fight alongside the forces of the Assad regime (see Rabi and Friedman, 2017, p. 434).

Moreover, Iraq's Shi'a-led government could have an influence on the Arab Shi'a communities in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Kuwait. Iranian ideological hegemony in Iraq could provide a chance for Iran to control the two holiest cities of Shi'a Islam (Najaf in Iraq and Qum in Iran) across the world; both Marja'yyas' of Qum and Najaf can play effective role in this regard (see Louer, 2008, p.270). Iran can thus take advantage of the religious influence in the export of fatwas and policies that serve Iran's interest. Also, due to the transnational role of Shi'a's religious reference (*marja' or marja'iyya*) Gulf Shi'a can easily make ties with Iraqi Shi'a through Iraq's religious education, pilgrims and business (Wehrey, 2014, p.113). For instance, the school of Najaf alongside Qum (excepting their differences of doctrine), as two coherent social and religious organisations, can play a prominent role in this regard. All these ideological

considerations could allow Iran a greater influence on the other Shi'a communities in the Gulf.[102]

Economically, following the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, Iraqi Shi'a holy places have become the most important destination for the 40,000 Iranian religious tourists that arrive in the area every month as part of the estimated three or four million tourists who make the Ashura commemoration each year (Eisenstadt, Knights, & Ali, 2011, p. xi). The size of the trade between the two countries has been increasing annually since 2006, and in 2013 reached $12 billion (Alsabaah, 26/10/2014). It would be hard for Iran to have all these economic links with Iraq if Iraq fell under Saudi Arabia's hegemony. Due to the dominant presence of Saudi Arabia, this would most likely undermine Shi'a dominance in Iraq. Meanwhile, all these economic links between Iraq and Iran have been mostly the productions of sectarian amity on one hand, and regional alignment between both countries on the other.

There is another factor that has not received enough attention relating to the Saudi-Iranian rivalry on Iraq, which is oil competition, especially inside OPEC. Saudi Arabia's oil policy is dependent on moderate oil prices and retaining their share in the market. However, that policy is inconsistent with the need of Iraq, which desires the maximum production and high prices in order to fund its national reconstruction. It can be argued that the direction of Iraq's oil policy from now and in the future will become closer to Iran's oil policy, as both countries need high oil prices to rebuild their national infrastructures (see McMillan, 2006, p. 13). It could be hypothesised that the Iran-Iraq alignment might create a new OPEC partnership between both countries. That would mean Iran would depend on Iraq, as the second largest proven oil reserve, to compete with Saudi Arabia's oil price, from which Iran has long suffered. All this is to say that although regional engagement has been a challenge for the state-building process in Iraq, the engagement of each regional actor can be a challenge for other actors in the region through the durable dynamics of RSC. It can therefore be concluded that the state-building issue in Iraq after 2003 has become a regional matter among Iraq's neighbours.

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[102] For example, according to some interviews, in the Eastern provinces of Saudi Arabia the most popular *marja'* is Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani in Najaf, to the extent that 70 to 80 percent of Saudi Shi'a follow al-Sistani's guidance (Wehrey, 2014, p.113).

6.2.2. The ramifications of Saudi Arabia's influence in Iraq: Syria's concerns

The challenges that Syria faces from Saudi Arabian domination in the aftermath of the 2003 invasion, may have stemmed from the ethno-sectarian polarisations that have emerged after the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq. These alliances have become more organised, and have taken the form of wider regional coalitions among most countries in the region, in addition to the involvement of external powers. This is especially after what is called the 'Arab Spring'. The nature of the political and security threats, alongside the permeability of the regional state system that has emerged during the Arab uprisings, has produced an ethnic and sectarian map in the Persian Gulf sub-region. The new map of conflict is established on the basis of political-sectarian alliances. Iran, Syria, Iraq and Hezbollah, or the Iranian-led Shi'a axis, is arrayed on one side, while the GCC countries, Jordan and later Egypt (under the rule of Abdel Fattah el-Sisi after 2013) can be seen as parts of a Saudi-led Sunni axis. Regarding Turkey, Iran's undisputed hegemony in Iraq, and later the Syrian turmoil, have pushed Turkey to become closer to the Sunni front, and also seeking for a leadership role in the Muslim world. The conflict in Syria has reached the point that Turkey and Iran are backing different sides of the conflict. One could argue that the Saudi-led military coalition in Yemen was the most striking embodiment of the regional sectarian polarisation.

Iraq and Syria have political, ethnic, religious and geo-economic links with each other. Both countries cannot be adequately addressed without a general picture of the regional security interdependency. Saudi hegemony in Iraq can provide Riyadh with much greater control of events in Syria. The social and ethno-religious links between western tribes in Iraq, such as the Karabila, Dulaym and Shammar, which extend from Jazira in Syria to Mosul, and Syrian tribes, has played an active role in the ethno-religious and political violence in both Iraq and in Syria's conflict (see Alaaldin, 2015, p.192).

Based on interviews with tribal leaders of the northern Sunni Arab-dominated border areas between Iraq and Syria, Dagher pointed out that:

Iraqi Sunni tribal leaders affiliated to Iraqiyya and hailing from Nineveh and Anbar are being asked by Gulf Arab officials or through intermediaries such as Jordan-based Iraqi businessmen to support the Syrian opposition, according to people taking part in recent meetings. (Dagher, 2012)

According to the RSCT (see Buzan and Wæver, 2003, p.45) the impact of geographical proximity on the security interaction between Syria and Iraq can be very durable and obvious in political, societal and military aspects. This ethno-religious interconnection between Sunni tribes on the Syrian side and the Iraqi side has been a major base for the Islamic State to plot its path in the Iraqi Sunni-populated cities, such as Mosul and Anbar. To an extent, the west of Iraq has become an extension of the Syrian crisis, as a belt that separates the Iranian influence in Baghdad from the Sunni zones of the Gulf States, Jordan and the eastern part of Syria. (see Cockburn, 2015).

To some extent, the interaction between the Syrian insurgency against Assad's regime and the Sunni insurgency in Iraq has had direct ramifications on Iraq's internal sectarian conflict. That sectarian solidarity has been clearly seen in the July 2013 Sunni demonstrations in the three main Sunni cites of Mosul, Anbar and Saladin. However, the Iraqi government predicted that Sunni unity would arise among the provinces of western and central Iraq on one hand and the Syrian Sunni insurgency on the other hand. Bayan al-Jabir, one of the leaders of the Iraqi National Alliance, stated that "if the Syrian insurgency wins, the fight will move to the walls of Baghdad" (YouTube, Interview with Bayan Jabr, 2014).

It may be argued that following the 2003 invasion of Iraq, and especially after Syria's crisis, Iraq's ethno-sectarian conflict has played an essential role in the Syrian crisis, and vice versa, internally and regionally. After the Syrian crisis, Syria and Iraq's ethno-sectarian conflicts formed a standard formation of RSC through all its three patterns of rivalry, balance of power and alliance (see Buzan and Wæver, 2003, p. 47). Any domination of Iraq by Riyadh will most likely put an end to the Assad regime in Syria in number of respects.

Firstly, Saudi dominance in Iraq means Syrian containment in four directions, to the east with Iraq, to the north with Turkey, in the south with Jordan and in the east with Israel. All these countries (except Iraq at current) have bad relations with the Syrian regime. Secondly, Saudi hegemony in Iraq

would mean a cut in the military and logistical supply for the Syrian regime, which Syria receives as a result of Iranian support. After 2011, al-Maliki's government in Baghdad played a great role as a bridge for transferring military equipment to the Syrian regime and facilitating the Shi'a militias, such as Asaib Ahl Al Haq, Kataib Hizbollah, the Mahdi Army and the Abu Al Fadhil Al Abbas Brigade to fight against the Sunni militias and Islamic extremists in Syria (see al-Mukhtar, 2015).

Thirdly, Saudi domination in Iraq would mean breaking Syria's alliance with Iran. Saudi views the Syrian crisis as a historic opportunity to break the Iran-Syria alliance in the region. Saudi's main goal in its Syrian involvement is related to Saudi Arabia's hope of having a leadership role in establishing a new Syrian government that will not be in alignment with Iran. Fourthly, Saudi leverage in Iraq would mean having a pro-U.S. regime in Iraq and ideologically far from Iran, which most likely would be against both Iranian and Syrian interests in the Middle East. It is true that the new Iraq is an American ally in the region, but it is also a pro-Iranian Iraq, as well as member of the Shi'a-led front under Iranian leadership. This had clearly been seen during the Islamic State war against the Iraqi government; the Iranian concern and attention was far greater than the U.S. concern for the Iraq Shi'a, and if there were not Iranian military troops on the ground and Iranian logistic support, Iraq could have collapsed[103].

It is important to know that since the Syrian crisis started, Syria's role has altered from being a regional player into a battlefield. Syria's position now is more about being a part of the regional rivalry between two fronts, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey in favour of changing Syria's regime on one hand, and Iran, Iraq and Hezbollah in opposition to the change of Assad's regime. Furthermore, Saudi engagement in Iraq and Syria, by supporting the opposition to the regimes, is motivated by decades of rivalry with Iran, in order to break Iraq and Syria's alliance with Iran. All this is to say that the relevance of Iraq's ethno-

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[103] During the preparation of the Iraqi Army and the Shi'a militias, of the *Hashd al-Shaabi* "popular mobilisation units" to drive ISIS fighters from the city of Tikrit, the Saudi foreign minister Prince Saud al-Faisal said in a press conference in Riyadh that "What is happening in Tikrit is exactly what we are worried about, Iran is taking over Iraq". (Aljazeera Net, Arabic, 5 March, 2015)

sectarian division is a durable interconnection with Syria's ethnic and religious tensions. The Syrian Desert borders two of the main Sunni-populated Iraqi provinces, Mosul and Anbar. This is in addition to Syria's border with the Iraqi Kurds, which links Iraqi Kurds with the Syrian Kurds; links of solidarity have been clearly seen during the Syrian Kurds fight with IS and Iraq's Kurds' support for Kobani in the Syrian side. The vitality of security interconnectedness between Syria and Iraq on the one hand and the permeability of the regional state system on the other, makes any form of the state that depends on balance among the ethnic and sectarian factions of Shi'a Arab, Sunni Arab and Kurd, in Iraq, affect directly Syria's situation[104]. So, it can be concluded that Saudi Arabia's engagement in the process of state-building in Iraq is a significant challenge especially for the Shi'a-led axis, namely Iran and Syria. The regional challenges that stem from the state-building in post-2003 Iraq are interrelated with the balance of power on one hand and regional security complex dynamics on the other. That is to say that the process of state-building in Iraq has become part of the ethnic and sectarian conflict among Iraq's neighbours in a form of RSC.

Since the RSC (Buzan and Waever 2003, p.51) addresses domestic, regional and global levels of analysis, the role of global powers cannot be underestimated in the Saudi involvement in Iraq without the U.S. role, whether as part of the regional security complex in the Persian Gulf or as a global power after their troops' withdrawal in the end of 2011. The U.S. role has remained functional in three main aspects after the troops' departure. First, the U.S. played an active role in mediating between Saudi Arabia and Iraq, aiming to integrate Baghdad into the Arab world in order to limit Iranian leverage in Iraq. Second, as has been addressed earlier, the U.S. was also involved in the fall of oil prices in 2014 with the intention to harm Iranian and Russian interests in the Middle East, particularly Iranian influence in Iraq and Syria (MEMRI, December 31, 2014). The third factor is the 2015 U.S. nuclear deal with Iran which has affected Saudi and regional security in the Persian Gulf. The nuclear deal, reassuring Tehran of the security of its position, may provide Iran with a kind of confidence to challenge U.S. allies in the region (see Kamrava, 2011, p.136).

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[104] This point has been explained in chapter five.

International developments also should not be underestimated in Saudi Arabia's involvement in Iraq. The U.S.-Iran nuclear deal has influenced Saudi Arabia's rivalry with Iran, especially in Syria and Yemen. As Lynch (2016) points out, the Iranian reintegration into the international system and its evolving ties with U.S. have been viewed by Riyadh as a significant threat to its own regional position, and might therefore yield more reason for mobilizing anti-Iran sectarianism, especially in Yemen, Syria and Lebanon. However, it is unlikely that the U.S.-Iran deal has produced significant tangible changes on the ground in Iraq, due to Saudi Arabia's limited opportunity to use it against Iran in Iraq. After the IS occupation of Iraq, Saudi Arabia had few cards to use against the Shi'a-dominated government in Iraq. Since almost all Sunni territories in Iraq were seized by IS, on the other hand the Sunni leadership were not in a position to make challenges to the political process after 2011. Most of their active leadership had been either excluded or marginalised from government by al-Maliki, such as Vice President Tariq al-Hashemi, Osama al-Nujaifi, and Rafia al-Issawi (Chaudhry, 2012).[105] In addition, Shi'a militias' have exerted significant control on the political process after the IS attack on Iraq in Jun 2014. Moreover, both Iran and the U.S., despite their different agendas in Iraq, were on the same side of fighting IS. Saudi Arabia was also part of the U.S.-led coalition targeting IS. For the abovementioned reasons, Riyadh did not have much space to manoeuvre against Iran in Iraq. This might be another reason which has left few options to Riyadh to mobilize sectarian tensions in Iraq as a reaction to the U.S.-Iran nuclear deal.

6.3. Conclusion: Saudi Arabia: balance against domestic and regional threats

Riyadh's involvement in the state-building process in Iraq, unlike that of Iran, has lacked a strategy for deep involvement. Relative to the Iranian involvement, Saudi involvement in post-2003 Iraq has been limited, and has mostly had a

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[105] Al-Maliki also damaged the credibility of Iraqiyya ministers in government. In August 2011, Maliki accused the former electricity minister Raad Shalal of signing fraudulent contracts worth $1.7 billion and forced him to resign. In a similar vein, Maliki forced Ayad Allawi's cousin, Mohammed Tawfiq, to resign as a communications minister in August 2012 (BBC, 27 August 2012.

consensual rather than a confrontational stance during the U.S. existence in Iraq. However, Riyadh's engagement with Iraqi Sunni and insurgent groups has led to the alienation of Sunnis from the state-building process after 2003. Since the fall of the Ba'ath regime, Saudi Arabia has not been part of any serious project of Sunni constructive participation in the Shi'a-Kurd dominated government in Iraq. This is to say that Saudi Arabia's policy toward Iraq can be described as a non-direct intervention policy, based primarily on a risk avoidance policy. The consensual nature of Saudi's foreign policy toward 2003-Iraq has two main reasons.

First, due to the long-term alliance Saudi Arabia has with the U.S., the Saudis preferred not to make troubles for the U.S. in Iraq. Second, one notes Saudi Arabia's avoidance of a direct confrontation with both Iran, and the Iraqi-Shi'a government in Baghdad. Riyadh used sectarianism to robust its domestic and regional stability against any preserved threats. These two reasons dominate Saudi Arabia's policy toward the state-building process in post-2003 Iraq.

Riyadh designed the process of state-building in post-2003 Iraq as a Sunni-Shi'a crisis in two levels. Domestically, Riyadh invested in this strategy to secure its domestic legitimacy and cast the new Shi'a-dominated Iraq as a domestic threat at home. Riyadh showed itself as a defender of Arab Sunnis in Iraq, and backed them through political, financial and diplomatic tools. Meanwhile, Saudi opposition to the Shia-led government in Iraq did not take the form of an overt military confrontation with the new Iraqi state. Saudi government officials have openly accused, and described the new political process in post-2003 Iraq, as a sectarian one. Regionally, Riyadh viewed the new Iraq as a crucial challenge to its regional security system that depends on the balance of power and regional stability (within the context of regional security complex). As Buzan and Waever (2003, p.49) argue, "the regional level matters most for the states within it".

To achieve both abovementioned goals Riyadh focused on countering Iranian influence in Iraq through Sunni political parties inside and outside the Iraqi government on one hand, and through its intelligence and diplomatic ties with the U.S. official institutions on the other, has been a pillar of Saudi Arabia's Iraq policies. Therefore, Riyadh has lacked any concerted strategic plan towards state-building in Iraq and the form of state that new Iraqi should look like. Saudi

engagement in Iraq has not been based on any institutional building, or building longstanding links through the influence with Iraqi groups, or durable ties with Iraq's official institutions, as has been the case with Iran and Turkey. Even in the case of engagement with Iraqi Sunnis, with the only part of Iraq's population with which the Saudis can claim links, has lacked any bases of institutional building, which has been one of the reasons behind the Saudis' weakness in Iraq. On the contrary, the Saudi engagement in Syria has been based on building institutional links with the local players on the ground, such as moderate Islamist, nationalist, or secular groups, under the banner of the Free Syrian Army (FSA). Saudi efforts to curtail the Shi'a-dominated government and to counter Iranian leverage in Iraq have shifted the state-building process in Iraq towards further sectarian tensions, not only among Iraq's components, but also as part of the wider proxy ethnic and sectarian conflict among Iraq's neighbours, particularly between Riyadh and Tehran.

Saudi policy in Iraq cannot be adequately addressed without understanding Saudi policy toward wider regional issues in the Middle East, particularly Iran and Syria. Iranian leverage in the Persian Gulf and the Syrian crisis have been the two major contributing factors of Saudi's engagement in Iraq after 2003 and particularly since 2011. This has made Saudi Arabia's policy in Iraq a part of the broader regional policy in the Persian Gulf, rather than focused on building a particular form of state in Iraq.

Chapter Seven:

7. Iraq and Turkey: The ethno-sectarian balance

"Mr. Maliki should know this: If you engage in a violent process amid a sectarian conflict in Iraq, it will not be possible for us to keep silent about that," (Today's Zaman, 26 March 2012)

Erdo an- On 24 Jan. 2012

Introduction

In the last chapter I showed how Saudi Arabia engaged in the process of state-building following the U.S. invasion of Iraq. In order to complete the sketch of the regional dimension of the ethno-denominational conflict in post-2003 Iraq, it is important to examine Turkey's engagement in Iraq on several levels. This is due to the fact that (with the exception of Syria), none of Iraq's other neighbours stands to be affected as profoundly as Turkey by the outcomes of the state-building process in Iraq, regarding in particular the Kurds. The main question that will be addressed in this chapter regards how and why Turkey became involved in the state-building process in post-2003 Iraq. To examine this key question, this chapter will have to take a number of sub-questions into consideration. The most prominent of these questions is, what has driven Turkey to engage in inter-communal enmity in Iraq? Furthermore, what made Erdo an suddenly become a main ally to the KRG after a history of enmity and conflict relationship which lasted until 2007?

In order to answer the abovementioned questions, this chapter is structured into two sections. First, it will discuss how the Turkish strategy has been shaped towards Iraq following the U.S.-led coalition in 2003, and how Turkey has been engaged in the state-building process in Iraq. The first one can be examined through the political and economic ties between Turkey and the KRG, and the second by investigating Turkish involvement with Iraqi Sunnis by creating a political balance between Iraq's main components of Shi'a, Sunni and Kurds. The second section of this chapter seeks to understand the sub-regional security concerns that have escalated after the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in the

Persian Gulf. In other words, what does Turkey's leverage mean for other players in the region such as Syria and Iran?

7.1. Turkey's strategy in Iraq after 2003: How Turkey became engaged in the state-building process in Iraq after 2003

It would not be logical to underestimate regional factors that have contributed to the formation of Turkey's policy towards Iraq after the U.S. invasion, in particular the change of the balance of power in the region, resulting from the demise of the Ba'ath regime after the U.S.-led invasion in 2003. Despite the cool relations between Saddam's regime and Turkey, Iraq had always secured the south-east part of the Turkish border, which connects Iraqi Kurds with Turkish Kurds. Second, the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq led to the rise of other regional powers, whose hegemony might cause concern for other players in the region. However, the main concern for Turkish foreign policy was not a change in the balance of power in the region, as has been the case regarding Iraq's other neighbours, but was related to domestic politics. As Aras (2014, pp.18, 159) argues, Ataturk's principle of "peace at home, peace in the world" can still be applied to Turkish foreign policy towards Iraq. It can be said that Turkish policy toward post-2003 Iraq is mostly a product of its domestic politics. From this point of view the Kurdish question is an essential factor for Turkish strategy in post-2003 Iraq, especially when for the first time in its history the Kurdish issue in Iraq took on a legal and constitutional character in regional and international relations. Meanwhile, the domestic change of Turkish policy due to the coming to power of Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) in 2002, with the adoption of a new foreign policy framework based on "Strategic Depth" and "zero problems with neighbours",[106] has been another factor left its

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[106] The concept of 'strategic depth' that has been adopted by Davuto lu is mainly rooted in classical realist geopolitical dynamics of the state territory. According to his interpretation, this approach offers a new 'geopolitical discourse' regarding Turkey's position in the world system, which has based on a liberal form of Islam towards those countries that had historical, geopolitical and religious ties with Turkey during the Ottoman Empire. The primary aim of this approach is to create a variety of alliances with Turkey's neighbours to achieve powerful regional and global influence. The 'strategic depth' can provide Turkey with the chance to transform its position in the international system from a 'wing country' and middle power to a 'pivotal state' and a 'global actor'. According Davuto lu's doctrine Turkish foreign policy should

influence on Turkish regional policy towards Iraq (see Müftüler-Baç, 2014, p. 39).

So, it can be argued that the Turkish strategy towards Iraq following the 2003 U.S. invasion has been largely based on two pillars (Bakir, 2015).The first is geopolitical security; since the occupation of Iraq in 2003 and up until this point in time, Turkey has been consistently concerned about the establishment of an independent Kurdish state in Northern Iraq[107]. The Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) factor has played a central role of reshaping the Turkish strategy toward the KRG, as it would be hard for Turkey to tolerate the PKK's free hand in Iraqi Kurdistan, which had been a strong possibility after 2003, with the PKK politically and militarily more active in Iraq[108]. This would be the case especially if Iraqi Kurds had offered logistic, military and financial support to PKK forces, which had been one of Turkey's accusations against the KRG after 2003. The second is an economic security issue. Iraq's stability can be a strategic gain for

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be based on five principles, (1) balance between security and freedom, (2) zero problems with neighbours, (3) proactive and flexible diplomacy, (4) multi-dimensional foreign policy and (5) 'rhythmic diplomacy'. (See Yalvac, 2012, pp.168-169; Ozkececi-Taner, 2017, pp.201-204).

[107] Although there has been a notable improvement in the Turkish stance towards an independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq, so far there is no clear statement that Turkey would be wholly supportive of a Kurdish state in Iraqi Kurdistan. Despite that, the AKP's spokesman Huseyin Celik's statement to the Financial Times in June 2014 (the Financial Times, June 27, 2014) stated "In the past an independent Kurdish state was a reason for war [for Turkey] but no one has the right to say this now", while he added that the division of Iraq is not the "number one choice", but if it happens Turkey "will live with it". This kind of perspective among part of Turkish political elite based on the vision that, if the new Kurdish state, comes into existence, will be under the Turkish sphere of influence in the region as far as Barzani has leverage on the KRG.

[108] Whether during my time in Iraqi Kurdistan or during my regular visits whilst conducting my PhD research in the UK, I have noticed the strong presence of the PKK in Iraqi Kurdistan, whether as support for their ideology or as Kurdish sympathy toward their struggle. They have gained a popular base in Iraqi Kurdistan, especially among young people in both Sulaimania and Erbil. This has been made more visible during the KRG fight with IS, to the extent that both the PUK and the Gorran movement, both parts of the KRG government, have provided a significant focus on the PKK and PYD fight against IS, particularly in Sinjar. They have also criticised the KDP and KRG for their negative relationships with the PKK and PYD. In addition, both the PUK and Gorran have used the PKK as buffer against KDP expansion to the Turkish and Syrian parts of Kurdistan, which have been in the sphere of influence of the PKK.

Ankara on political and economic levels (see Bengio, 2014, p. 274). This is especially the case at the level of energy security, because both sides possess valuable resources which could help achieve an economic integration between the countries. Iraq needs tremendous work on its infrastructure and Turkey has a huge contracting sector, not to mention the vital private sector, which could contribute effectively to helping Iraq and for the benefit of Turkey as well[109].

What has previously been underestimated in Turkish foreign policy toward Iraq is the role of identity, namely Sunni Islamic identity (Kosereisoglu, 2014). There are a number of indications which can confirm the role of Sunni Islamic identity in the AKP's regional policy, particularly after 2011, for instance the Turkish attitude toward its Alevi Turks during the Syrian crisis and Turkish support for Sunni extremist groups against Assad's regime. In the Iraqi context is the strong Turkish support of former Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi against his arrest warrant issued by the Iraqi state, as well as the former Mosul governor and head of the Nineveh Guards Atheel al-Nujaifi, who was also given a detention warrant from the Iraqi Federal Court for allegedly allowing Turkish troops into Iraq in 2015. These events damaged significantly Iraq-Turkey relations. Turkey's Prime Minister Erdogan stated that "al-Hashimi's involvement in these alleged crimes is out of the question" (cited in Kosereisoglu, 2014). However, the sectarian identity in Turkish regional policy has never been an independent factor, but has been either a reaction or a sub-factor subordinate to the central concern is security. Iranian active support for the Shi'a-led government in Iraq on one side, and the Syrian crises on the other, have made it difficult for Turkey to distance itself from the sectarian polarisation in the region.

I agree with both Bengio (2014, p.273) and Aras (2004, p.102) that the Kurdish issue has been an important factor in Turkish policy toward Iraq. However, Turkish policy towards post-2003 Iraq has not been constituted by a single stage. I will show that Turkish policy has gone through several stages,

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[109] It can be said that until 2008 the status of Kirkuk and the card of the Turkmen minorities living in Iraq were together part of the Turkish calculations in post-2003 Iraq. However, after the development of Turkish ties with the KRG these two factors have lost their importance in Turkish policy toward Iraq (see Altunıık, 2009, p.178)

and has been characterised somewhat by reluctance and ambiguity from the beginning. In this context, three main stages can be determined regarding the formation of Turkish strategy towards post-2003 Iraq.

The first stage lasted 2003-2008. The major Turkish issue at this stage regarding Iraq was security concerns, particularly the KRG's new constitutional position as a semi-independent federal region and the possible consequences of this for the Kurdish issue in Turkey. Furthermore, there was the potentiality for Iraqi Kurdistan to become a breeding ground for the PKK forces against Turkey[110]. To an extent, the Turkish stance on the issue of Kirkuk determined the Turkish attitude toward the Iraqi parliamentary elections in 2005. In contrast to the positions of Iraq's other neighbours, which welcomed the election results, Turkey saw the 2005 election results as not translating into a fair representation of the various ethnic and religious groups in Iraq, and called for a rebalancing of the elections, especially in Kirkuk (see Mursi, 2010). It can be argued that the Turkish attitude toward Iraq was driven by its calculation on the Iraqi Kurds, particularly after the Kurdistan Alliance recorded a significant success in 2005 parliamentary elections by winning 75 seats (25 %) of the total votes. The same attitude was expressed by Turkey towards the referendum on the new Iraqi constitution in December 2005, of which Turkey rejected some of the constitutional articles, especially on the issue of federalism and Kirkuk (see Lundgren, 2007, p.105).

This stage witnessed serious disagreements between the KRG and Turkey. In October 2007, Turkey threatened a military intervention against the PKK inside KRG territory. At this stage, Turkey was seeking allies with Iraq's other factions of Turkmen and Sunnis in order to curb the rise of the Kurdish Region. The only strong alignment Turkey had was the Turkmen minority. However, the 30 January 2005 election for the Transitional National Assembly in Iraq showed that the Iraqi Turkmen Front (ITF) won only 1.1 percent of the

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[110] It is true that the Iraqi Kurds cooperated with Turkey against the PKK in the 1990s. However, since the start of the Iraq War in 2003, and with the end of Saddam's regime, the KDP and PUK have disregarded that deal with Ankara. In due time, they suspended cooperation with Turkey against the PKK. Also, according to Western security contractors in Iraq, local Kurdish forces have protected the PKK and its associated groups by facilitating or providing them with logistical support (Onay, 2008).

total votes, and just 18.4 percent of the votes in Kirkuk which Turkey had long insisted was a predominantly Turkmen city, while Kurds won 60 percent of the total number of seats (Lundgren, 2007, p.105)).[111] As a result of the weakness of the Turkmen component and its size in the political process after 2005, Ankara abandoned the policy of only depending on the Iraqi Turkmen to counter the Iraqi Kurds. Instead, Turkey directed Iraqi Turkmen parties to cooperate with both Shi'a and Sunni parties in an attempt to curb KRG aspirations[112].

The second stage lasted from 2008-2011. This stage can be called a reconciliation of Turkish policy towards Iraq, in particular towards the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). Turkey played a constructive role in this period, especially regarding its political and economic relations with the KRG. Furthermore, the political relations between Iraq and Turkey improved quickly, and the former Iraqi Prime Minster al-Maliki visited Turkey twice. Moreover, the former Turkish Prime Minster Erdoan became the first Turkish Prime Minister for 18 years to visit Baghdad, which he did on 10 July 2008. In addition, in March 2009 former President Abdullah Gul became the first Turkish president to visit Iraq in 33 years (Todays Zaman, 2015). In this period, Turkey was looking for a role in managing the ethno-sectarian conflict among the main Iraqi factions, Shi'as, Sunnis and Kurds. It can be said that Turkey's main concern was to find loyal groups among the Shi'as, Sunnis and Kurds to work with. In this period, Turkey did not abandon the Turkmen card against the KRG, but it also advised them to cooperate with the Iraqi Kurds (Tatekin, 2014).

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[111] Owing to the Sunnis' boycott of the 2005 elections, they received only 6 percent of the votes, while due to the Kurdish enthusiasm for the political process in the new Iraq they won 27 percent of the parliamentary votes. The election results had a significant influence in altering the Turkish strategy toward the Kurds, in particular and in Iraq in general. The elections delivered the message to Ankara that the Kurds would have a strong say in the new Iraq. (see Oktav, 2011, p.65)

[112] Turkish use of the Turkmen card against Iraqi Kurds from time to time can be traced back to number of factors. First, to have an influence on the Iraqi Kurds and counterbalance the Kurdish desire to integrate Kirkuk to the KRG; second, to show that northern Iraq is multi-ethnic region and not only inhabited by Kurds; third, Ankara might also want to use the Turkmen card in Iraq's domestic disputes. They organised and armed Turkmens against Kurds before and after the U.S invasion of Iraq. (See Lundgren, 2007, pp.92-93)

The third stage was between 2011 and 2016. In this stage, Turkish foreign policy entered a new phase which was based on taking a sectarian side. It can be argued that a number of factors directed Turkish foreign policy towards that course. First, the U.S. withdrawal from Iraq at the end of 2011 offered Iran an opportunity to play an undisputed role in Iraq. This move left Ankara in need of allies in the region in order to counter the new rising hegemony of the Iranian-led Shi'a bloc. Second, Turkey found the Arab uprisings as a historic opportunity to boost its regional leadership in the Arab and Islamic world. Third, the AKP's doctrine of neo-Ottomanism, based on Ahmet Davuto lu's concept of "Strategic Depth", had a significant influence on the new Turkish policy in Iraq and the entire Middle East. Turkey tried to cultivate its historical soft power in the Arab and Islamic world as a multi-regional power in the Middle East (see Ozkececi-Taner, 2017, pp. 205-206). This role can be clearly observed in Tunisia, Egypt, Iraq and Palestine, and at its peak in Syria. To this extent, Turkey can be assumed to have spread its ruling model to other Arab countries.

Despite the rise of a Turkish regional role, Turkey has failed to deliver its model through the Arab uprisings, and the principle of zero-problems with neighbours has quickly turned into zero-friends in the region, in particular regarding Syria, Iran, Iraq, Israel and even Russia. This has also divided Turkish society on ethnic and religious lines, between Turkish Sunnis, the Alevis and the Kurds. The ethnic and sectarian framework of Turkey's policy toward Iraq can be clearly observed during the operation of Mosul in October 2016. Erdogan showed himself as a defender of the Iraqi Sunnis, and said in a televised speech: "we will be in the operation and we will be at the table…Our brothers are there and our relatives are there. It is out of the question that we are not involved" (Daily Sabah, 17 October, 2016). Thus it can be argued that identity (Sunni Islam) has also contributed to Turkey's engagement policy towards the state-building process in post-2003 Iraq. However, we should not forget that the factor of identity politics has also been an inseparable part of the Turkish RSC with post-2003 Iraq, which has been seen by Erdogan as a fertile field for investment in more regional conflicts as a source of power.

One can see many symbolic steps which have been taken by Turkey to show a non-sectarian face. For example, in December 2010, for the first time since the AKP came to power, Turkey's Prime Minster Erdo an publicly

attended the Shi'a holy day of Ashura in Istanbul (Kane, 2011, p10). By the same token in March 2011, Erdogan visited the Shi'a holy city of Najaf in Iraq and met with the Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani (Alwasat, 29 March, 2011). A fresh look at this period can provide a new insight on the Turkish policy towards Iraq's ethno-denominational composition and its regional links. These three above mentioned stages of Turkish involvement in post-2003 Iraq can be seen more accurately through the ways that Turkey engaged with both the KRG and Iraqi Arab Sunnis.

7.1.1. Turkey and the KRG: Security shaping a political and economic alliance

The main question that needs to be answered regarding the Turkey-KRG alliance is how and why Turkey reached a point where it became a close ally of the KRG, with all possible risks that the KRG might still hold for Turkey, not just in Iraq but in the entire region. These threats are due to the KRG's direct influence on other Kurdish communities in neighbouring countries, including Turkey. In the words of Turkish observer, "in Turkish security perceptions, there is no real separation between northern Iraq and south eastern Turkey: they are the geographic and ethnocultural extension of each other" (cited in Park, 2012, p.86). The Turkey-KRG alliance after 2007 may be better understood according to the logic of "Keep your friends close, and your enemies closer". From this point of view, a number of factors explain Turkey's changing policy towards the KRG, some of them looking farther than the KRG and Iraq, but to the whole region. These reasons can be reduced to four factors.

As has been pointed out by Lundgren (2007, p.4), Ankara's foreign policy toward KRG is an extension of its domestic politics at home. Consequently the first and most important factor is based on Turkey's strategy in its conflict with the PKK. Turkey, from its lengthy experience, has reached the point of believing that it is impossible to defeat the PKK through the use of military power. Therefore, Turkey has started to apply a strategy of countering the PKK both from the inside and the outside. Inside, Turkey initiated a peace process with its Kurds while outside Turkey has depended on the KRG, or more precisely on Massud Barzani the President of both the KRG and the Kurdistan Democratic

Party (PDK) as a counterbalance to the PKK. Turkey has depended on the political and ideological disagreements between the Kurdish parties. It has been noticed that Turkish relations with its own Kurds are closely related to its relationship with Iraqi Kurds (see Oktav, 2011, p.63). From this point of view, Turkey's main goal for its alliance with the KRG stems from an underestimation of the strength of the PKK leadership among Turkey's Kurds on the one hand, and the desire to show Europe and the U.S. that the PKK is not representative of the Kurdish question in Turkey on the other. By applying this policy, Turkey may want to shift the leadership of the Kurdish peace process in Turkey from the PKK and Qandil to the KDP and Erbil[113].That has been clearly noticeable from Erdogan's statements when he claims that ''the PKK organisation does not represent Kurdish citizens living in Turkey'' (Daily Sabah, 21 May 2016).

Turkey has failed to do that, especially after Turkey's 2015 general elections, when the Peoples' Democratic Party (known as the HDP) exceeded the 10 percent election threshold by polling 13.12 percent of the votes, and now is the third largest political group in the Turkish Parliament. Moreover, Turkey has used its relations with the KRG to facilitate the peace process with its own Kurds. In November 2013, Erdo an invited Masoud Barzani, the President of the KRG, to its re-election campaign in the south-eastern city of Diyarbakir. That led to objections by the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) (now part of the HDP), which saw Barzani's visit as support for Erdo an, instead of the HDP (see Daily News, 16 November 2013).

Arguably, Barzani's contribution to the Turkey-Kurdish peace process has been acknowledged with a Turkish blessing. Barzani has criticised the Democratic Union Party (PYD) policy in Syria many times. He accused the PYD of standing with al-Assad's regime and monopolising power in the Syrian Kurdish region. From the AKP's perspective, engaging the KRG through a political, economic and diplomatic alliance with Turkey, rather than isolating it, is a vital key to get KRG support against the PKK (Gönül Tol, 2010). However, this

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[113] Qandil is a mountainous area of Northern Iraq near the Iraq–Iran border. The Qandil mountain range stretches to a depth of nearly 30 kilometres inside Turkish territory. Qandil has become a main base of the PKK and has been bombarded many times by Turkish fighter jets; the last time was at the end of July 2015, when Turkey launched air strikes on PKK positions inside Iraqi Kurdistan.

view has not been feasible, since the majority of the KRG's population regard the PKK as an extensional part of the wider Kurdish national identity. Meanwhile, the main KDP rivals in northern Iraq, such as the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and the Movement for Change (Gorran) are sympathetic towards the PKK. That national sympathy has been seen clearly during the Islamic State (formerly ISIS) attack on the Yezidi town of Shingal in August 2014, when Kurdistan's Peshmerga forces and the People's Protection Units (YPG) fought together against IS. The same has been seen when the KRG parliament agreed to send fighters to help defend the northern Syrian city of Kobane from Islamic State forces, after their Turkish permission to cross its territory was received.

Second, it is true that the domestic Kurdish question in Turkey has played an important role for Ankara's new foreign policy towards the KRG as has been argued by Lundgren (2007, p.4) and Bingio (2014, p. 273). However, shifting Ankara's policy towards the KRG and Iraq has not only been related to Ankara's domestic calculations of the Kurdish question, but also has regional goals, especially what is relevant to the Turkish rivalry with other powers in the region. Since 2008, Turkey has considered that KRG has a greater strategic importance than the domestic Kurdish issue. The KRG can provide Turkey with more strategic goals, especially regarding Turkey's plan to become a centre of the energy transfer to connect the energy-rich Middle East and Central Asia with European energy markets (Park, 2012, p.146). It is important to note however that initially, Turkey was reluctant to go down this road, especially other two Turkish opposition parties, the Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, CHP) and the Nationalist Action Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi, MHP) (see Aziz, 2015, p.189), which expected that a KRG-Turkey alliance especially regarding energy issues could lead to a strengthening of the KRG's position, economically and diplomatically, and thereafter a step forward towards independence. They were correct to some extent; the KRG-Turkey energy alliances have contributed greatly to the enhancement of the political and diplomatic position of the KRG in the entire region.

However, it is important to note that an analysis of the Turkey-KRG alliance cannot be entirely understood without reference to the Justice and Development Party's (AKP) ideology, which is based on a version of

conservative liberalism on one hand and regional leadership on the other (Kosereisoglu, 2014). A powerful economy can play a significant role in strengthening the state's political power. According to the Davuto lu (2010, pp. 43, 446) doctrine, which has been driving Turkish foreign policy since 2002, economic interests can help resolve political differences, and promote the interdependence of the Turkish economy in the region. Turkey, in order to boost its regional and global hegemony, has to play the role of a regional energy hub for which Turkey's geopolitical position is suitable.

From this point of view, the Kurdistan Region can be a source for Ankara to diversify its energy channels. Aside from that, the KRG can provide Turkey-based energy firms with the ability to enter into the global energy sector through Turkey's investment in the KRG oil sector (see Müftüler-Baç, 2014, p. 549;). In addition, Erbil can provide Ankara with natural gas, which is very important to Turkey in its negotiations with Iran, Russia and Azerbaijan. Turkey's GNP has increased from $226 billion in 2000 to $794 billion in 2012, which according to the IMF coincided with the increase in energy demand (Balci, 2014, p.17). In 2001, Turkey's natural gas consumption was 16 billion cubic meters, while by 2011 and 2012 it had reached 46.3 billion cubic meters (see Figure 4).

In 2009, Ankara began to directly import oil from the Kurdistan region, and the prospect of a gas pipeline serving the newly announced Nabucco pipeline assumed greater importance for Turkey. According to the KRG's Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR-KRG report, 25 August 2013), such an export pipeline was expected to flow through the Kurdistan Region to Turkey by 2016. It can be said that the Kurdistan Region's gas can mark a major watershed in the Ankara-Erbil alliance in the region. It is important to note that in last few years the dependency of Ankara upon Russia and Iran has been an obstacle for Turkey's energy security, and makes Ankara unconfident regarding the Iranians and Russians in its regional calculations, especially regarding the future of the Syrian regime. Three-quarters of Turkey's supplies of gas and oil comes from Russia and Iran, while the size of Kurdish gas could total approximately 200 tcf (5.67 bcm) of natural gas reserves, which is about 3 percent of the world's total reserves (see MNR-KRG, 25 August 2013). The KRG's oil and gas can be an alternative to at least the gas of one of these two countries. Meanwhile, the

KRG's gas and oil does not impose any political burden on Turkey, because of the KRG's urgent need to sell its energy.
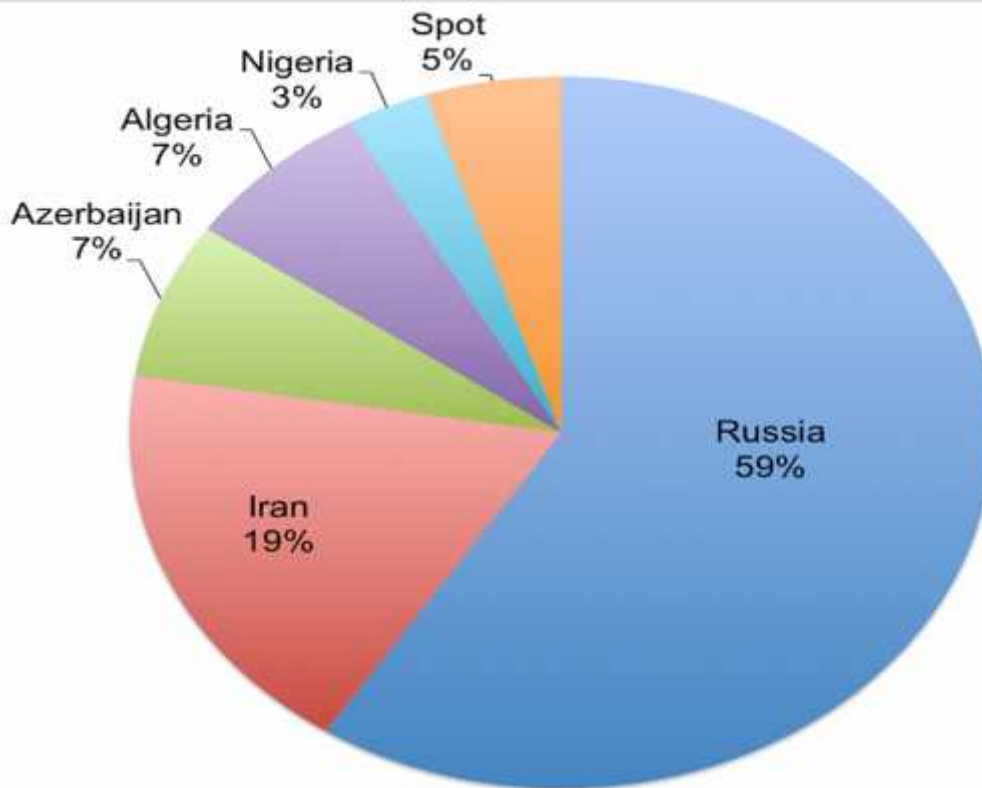

Figure (2) Turkey's natural gas imports in 2012

Source: EMRA, natural gas market sector, report 2012

Furthermore, the new KRG position on the global energy map could play a prominent role in the regional and global gas markets on one hand, and strengthen the KRG's political, diplomatic and economic positions towards independence in the region on the other. Turkey's Minister of Energy and Natural Resources Taner Yeldiz stated in 2012 that "Turkey's future energy requirement is 48–50 billion cubic metres of gas. Our neighbour has a significant role to play in this" (MNR-KRG, 25 August 2013). Furthermore, the average export volume of KRG oil exports from the Kurdistan Region via the Iraq-Turkey pipeline started at 100,000 barrels per day in early February 2011 and reached an average of 600,769 barrels per day (bpd) in November 2015 (Ministry of Natural Resources, 11 November 2015).

The Ankara-Erbil alliance is based on a number of energy agreements, some of which are long term contracts[114]. In March 2013, Turkey's Prime Minster Erdoan and the Kurdish Prime Minster Nechirvan Barzani signed an agreement to build a twin pipeline for crude oil and natural gas between Turkey and Iraq (Ministry of Natural Resource, 26 August 2013). In June 2015, Erbil exported 17,130,639 barrels of crude oil (an average of 571,021 barrels per day) through the Kurdistan pipeline network to the port of Ceyhan in Turkey (Monthly report of Ministry of Natural Resources, June, 2015).

Third, Ankara's relations with the KRG may be a source of Ankara's pressure on Baghdad. Despite this, Ankara did not prefer to break its relations with al-Maliki's government. However, their relations have deteriorated, directly after the U.S. withdrawal in 2011. This can be attributed to a number of factors. The issue of an arrest warrant against former Iraqi Vice-President, Tareq al-Hashemi in December 2011, worsened relations further between Erdogan and al-Maliki, especially when Ankara refused to hand him over to Iraq. Furthermore, Turkey expected Iraq to be supporting Assad's regime, unlike the Turkish government which has been strongly against Assad. Moreover, Davutoлu's visit to Kirkuk without Baghdad being prior informed was another issue that angered al-Maliki's government. Finally, there were the oil-selling deals with the KRG on the world markets. All these disagreements between Baghdad and Ankara can be assessed in this context. the collapse in relations between the countries resulted in the calling of the Turkish ambassador Younis Demerer to Baghdad in August 2012 .The Iraqi government sent a protest note to the Turkish government about the visit of the former Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu to Kirkuk without Iraq's consent.

Fourth, the KRG-Turkey alliance could be a means of curbing Iranian hegemony in Iraq. Ankara was long reluctant to accept the KRG as legitimate federal entity, or to accord the KRG a prominent role in post-2003 Iraq. However, following the U.S. withdrawal, Turkey felt it must put some eggs in the

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[114] In June 2014 the KRG Prime Minster Nechirvan Barzani said during a speech at the Kurdish Parliament in Erbil, "We have signed an energy deal with Turkey that goes for 50 years and can be extendable if necessary". The agreement could be regarded as a secretive framework agreement between both sides, and has provoked rejections from both Baghdad and the U.S. (Hurriyet Daily News, 5 June 2014).

KRG's basket, otherwise all the other players would have done this. Turkey's keeping away from Erbil may have meant that Erbil might have turned to Iran, which would mean full Iranian hegemony in the Iraqi arena. Ankara now through its political and economic relations with Erbil possesses a strong voice in Iraqi Kurdistan. The Turkey-KRG alliance has become a success story for the "strategic depth" approach. Despite the lack of an entirely cooperative relationship between Ankara and Baghdad, Iraq has become Turkey's second trade partner, as Turkish exports to Iraq have increased from $5 billion in 2009 to hit $12 billion in 2013, of which 70 percent was with the Kurdistan Region (Hurriyet Daily News, September/15/2014).

It can be noticed that, similarly to Iran, Turkey has built institutional bases for their influence in Iraq, especially in their political and economic links with the KRG, and to a lesser extent with part of the Iraqi Sunnis. These institutional ties can be exemplified through a 50-year deal for the export of Kurdish oil to Turkey signed in November 2013. This long term oil deal between Turkey and the KRG has angered the Iraqi central government. The Iraqi Minster of Oil Shahristani said, "This is a hostile action that no other neighbour has taken against Iraq" (Gulf News, June 2014). However, despite

Iraq's and the U.S.'s rejection of this deal, which was made without the permission of the central government, the KRG and Turkey have continued the flow of oil from the Kurdistan Region to international markets. Until now, the contents and terms of the deal have not been disclosed to public, the media, and even to the international audit company Deloitte, which is working with the KRG to provide transparency to oil revenue and production in the region (NRT, 1 January 2017). Some evidence has revealed that the agreement contains higher security issues, particularly the deployment of Turkish troops in the KRG and steps to minimise the influence of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in the region (see Niqash, 23 May 2015).

However, it can be argued that the KRG-Ankara alliances might not be as durable as has been claimed by some researchers, since Turkey and the KRG's ties and energy deals have been mostly done through the AKP's relations with Barzani's party (the KDP). This is possible because of Barzani's leverage on the most important parameters of the KRG's institutions, such as the premiership of the KRG and the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, and being the head of

the Kurdistan Region Security Council. All the institutions mentioned are headed by members of the Barzani family. The KRG-Turkey relationship has been based mostly on partisan and personal relationships, rather than institutional relations, and this could be a source of threat to these relations at any time. On the other hand, the Turkey-KRG alliance has been a source of disagreement and has been criticised, particularly by the PUK and the Gorran movement (see EKurd Daily, 21 July 2016). For instance, in July 2016 WikiLeaks released thousands of AKP emails, one of which showed that on 15 March 2016 the AKP provided the KRG President (Barzani) with $200 million in financial aid.

Turkey's engagement in Iraqi Kurdistan has not been only political, but has reached the field of investments as well. In 2010, the number of Turkish companies investing in Iraq reached 3,200, of which about 750 are operating in the Kurdistan Region (Turkish Weekly, 2 May 2012). It can be observed that due to the fragility of the KRG's economic infrastructure, the KRG has become to a significant extent a region dependent on Turkish products in all aspects. Erbil city, which is the capital of the KRG, looks more like Istanbul and Turkish cities than an Iraqi city. Turkish exports to Iraq and the KRG have increased over the last decade (Cagaptay, Fidan, and Sacikara, 2014). In 2007, the total size of Turkish exports to the KRG reached $1.4 billion, which meant the KRG was the nineteenth largest export market to Turkey. In 2011 the size of the Turkish export to the KRG stood at $5.1 billion dollars as the sixth largest export market. By 2013, the KRG had become the third largest export market for Turkey (see infographic 9 and 10).
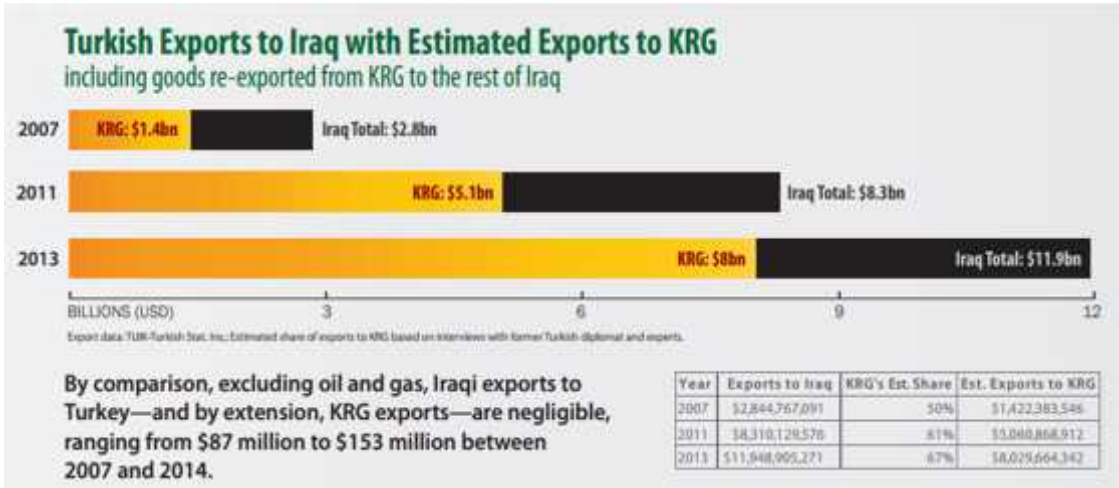
Figure (3)Turkish exports to Iraq with estimated exports to the KRG

Source: The Washington Institute For Near East Policy, 2015
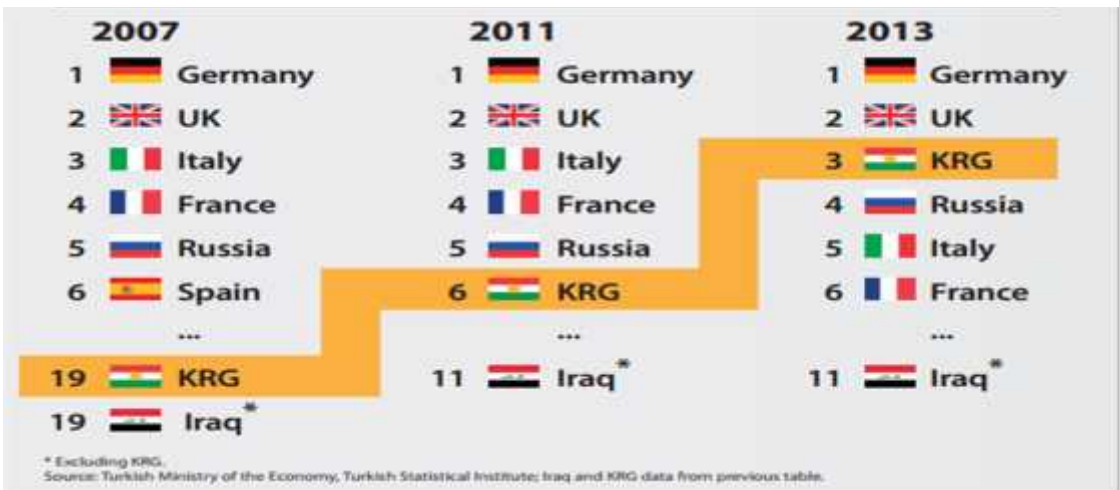
Figure (4) Country ranking for Turkey's export destinations

Source: The Washington Institute For Near East Policy, 2015

Despite the political and economic improvement of Turkey-KRG relations, Ankara's relations with Erbil are highly driven by security dimensions, particularly the interconnectedness of the Turkish regional security complex with Iraq on the one hand and with Iraqi Kurds on the other. The PKK factor has played a central role in shaping these relationships. Turkish engagement in the KRG has been driven by both internal and regional factors. Additionally, the KRG's political ambitions, relations with Syrian Kurds and KRG ties with other

regional powers in the region like Iran, might also have an influence on the Ankara-Erbil alliance. It is also important to note that, the Turkish policy towards Iraqi Kurdistan is a product of its nation-building project, which is still unstable and a non-integrated project. This is mostly due to disagreements over the national identity question in Turkey. Therefore, the Iraqi Kurds might remain a source of concern for the Turkish state.

7.1.2. Looking for a role in new Iraq: Turkey's engagement with Iraqi Sunnis:

The Turkish engagement in Iraq can be seen through the context of Turkey seeking for a role in the new Iraq on one hand, and the new regional security order that has been set up after the U.S. invasion of Iraq on the other side, in line with the redefinition of Turkey's foreign policy based on Turkey's historical, cultural and geopolitical position with neighbourhood countries (see Kalin, 2011, p.13). In the beginning, Turkey was looking to make a balance among the three main Iraqi components, which are Shi'a, Sunni and Kurd. The reason behind this was mostly due to the rise of Kurdish power as an important factor in Iraq and the region, as well as its influence on the other Kurdish communities in neighbouring countries, especially in Turkey. Ankara was highly concerned about the disintegration of the Iraqi state along ethnic and sectarian lines, particularly because of Kurdish aspirations. Thus, Ankara's main aim was to protect the balance among the three main groups (Sunni, Shi'a and Kurd) in order to protect the territorial integrity of new Iraqi state (see Lundgren, 2007, p.82). Other than the Turkmen minorities, it was difficult for Turkey to find a loyal ally among Iraq's components. Due to this, both of post-2003 Iraq's dominant factions, Shi'a and Kurd, were not looking for an alliance with Turkey. The Shi'a parties were in a close knit relationship with Iran, and the Kurds were in a frosty relationship with Turkey until 2007.

Despite Turkey's playing of Iraq's Turkmen card following the U.S. invasion, Turkey concluded that the Turkmen could not provide Turkey a sufficient role in the new Iraq[115]. That was seen when the U.S. besieged the city

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[115] The previous representative of the Iraqi Turkoman Front (ITF) in Ankara stressed this point clearly; he said, "The strategic value of the Turkomans is very limited, we have no power, no

of Tel Afar in 2004, during a joint operation between the U.S. Army and Iraqi forces to destroy the suspected insurgents' havens in the city of Tel Afar. This incident was widely reported in Turkish media, and the U.S. was accused of committing "massacres and ethnic cleansing" against Turkmen. This event had angered Turkey to take a hard stance against the U.S., and the former Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül stated that if the U.S. military operation continued, Ankara's relationship with Washington would be reviewed (Barkey, 2005, p.9).

The above mentioned argument supports the view that Turkey has been looking for a prominent regional role in post-2003 Iraq. In early 2007, when the Shi'a-Sunni tensions reached the point of civil war, Turkey tried to play a reconciliation role in order to strike a balance between them. One of Turkey's aims in participating in the seven-country meeting in Pakistan was to mitigate Iranian hegemony in Iraq. However, Turkey did not break its relations with the Shi'a groups in Iraq. During the Shi'a-Sunni conflict of Iraq, and until the U.S. withdrawal which coincided with the arrest warrant against the Sunni Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi, Turkey did not take sides, and tried to play the role of mediator in the region. In 2006, the Turkish Prime Minister, Erdo an, visited Iran, Syria, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia, and tried to maintain good relations with both the Sunni and Shi'a axis, as well as with al-Maliki's government during that period (CNN Turk interview with Davuto lu, on 2 January 2008). The evidence seems to be strong that Ankara was actively looking for a regional role, and Iraq was a good field to provide this role to AKP's new foreign policy..

However, it was difficult for Turkey to play a mediation role and find an ally at the same time. Turkey considered that both Shi'a and Kurds were pleased with their new role in Iraq. Iraqi Sunnis, however, were hopelessly looking towards a political process following the U.S. invasion, in particular after the National Assembly elections of 30 January 2005 in Iraq and the ratification of the Iraqi constitution, which made clear for Iraqi Sunnis that the new Iraq would never be a Sunni-dominated Iraq.

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people in the high-ranking bureaucracy and no geopolitical importance". (Lundgren, 2007, p.92).

In contrast to a number of studies (for instance, Kane, 2011), it can be argued that Turkish engagement with the Iraqi Sunnis from 2003 until 2011, which coincided with the American withdrawal from Iraq and the issuing of an arrest warrant against former Vice President Tariq al-Hashemi, cannot be merely assessed in the sectarian context. Rather, as Kosereisoglu (2014) points out, it could be as a result of a series of reactions to dynamic and arguably natural strains between the AKP's material political interests and symbolic identity. I would argue that the Turkish involvement with Iraqi Sunni parties can be attributed to both domestic and regional factors, which will be discussed below.

First, Turkey through its alliance with Iraqi Sunnis could thwart the Shi'a-Kurd dominance in the new Iraq on one hand and curb Iranian hegemony in Iraq and the entire region on the other. This hegemony provides Iran with an upper hand in Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon. These places could also be a zone of influence for the Turkish neo-Ottoman foreign policy in the region. Moreover, the exclusivity of Shi'a power could lead to the disintegration of the Iraqi state; the landmarks of this disintegration become obvious regarding the Iraqi Kurds. Also, during al-Maliki's government, the call of the Sunni region has become a political requirement for Iraq's Sunnis.

Second, Turkey perceived that through its relationships with Iraqi Sunnis it could acquire a card to use against the Kurdish ambition for independence. This is due to the fact that most of the KRG's border is with Sunni Arabs, especially territories that are called "disputed areas" between the KRG and the federal government, which includes the rich oil city of Kirkuk. The Turkish alliance with Sunnis, such as the al-Hadba party which was formed in 2009 in Ninawa, and al-Iraqiyya List, can be said to have contributed to this context. In Turkey's perception, Iraqi Sunnis were a buffer which kept the Iraqi state united against the Kurdish call for independence until the U.S. withdrawal at the end of 2011.

In the wake of the Arab uprising, Turkish relations with Iraq entered a new phase. The relationship between the countries started to sour when Turkey openly supported al-Maliki's rival Ayad Allawi in the parliamentary elections in 2010 (see Crisis Group Middle East Report, 31 July 2012). The issue of Tareq al-Hashemi, the former Iraqi Vice President, worsened relations between al-Maliki and Erdogan further in 2011, especially when Ankara refused to hand

Hashemi over to Baghdad. To this extent, it has been argued that the al-Iraqiyya bloc had been set up at Turkish former Foreign Minister Davuto lu's residence in Ankara (Bozkurt, 2012). Furthermore, it can be argued that Turkey also worked to bring Kurds and Arab Sunnis together to curb a Shi'a-led government in Iraq. The KRG's President Masoud Barzani's efforts with other Iraqi parties, especially al-Iraqiyya, against al-Maliki's power, and later the KRG's coordination with the Turkish-backed Sunni groups, such as that of the former governor of Mosul, Atheel al-Nujaifi, can be clear indications in that sense.

Turkey's focus on Iraqi Sunnis can be also examined through the extension of Iraqi Sunni identity to Syrian Sunnis. This is especially after the Syrian conflict; the Turkish engagement in the Sunnis' protests in Iraq's Sunni-populated governorates (Anbar, Salah al-Din, Ninewa, Diyala and Kirkuk) was intensive. This has led Iraq's Shi'a officials to see Turkey as part of the Sunni-led axis alongside the other Sunni-led countries in the region, against Iraqi Shi'as. That could clearly be seen in the statements of Iraqi officials; for example, Ali al-Moussawi (Crisis Group report, 31 July 2012, p.29), the former adviser to al-Maliki, blamed Turkey for Sunni insurgents in Iraq and said, "Turkey should change its policies toward Iraq; it should stop cooperating with our communities, stop fuelling extremism, sectarianism and terrorism in Iraq and Syria. It should establish friendly ties with the Iraqi state". By the same token, in a Crisis Group interview in January 2013, the National Security Minister Falih al-Fayyadh said:

This crisis is not only a domestic crisis. These are not like other protests in the region. It is a matter of Turkish interference and reflects the Muslim Brotherhood's project. Some demonstrators are normal citizens who have simple demands. But there are others who ask for the fall of everything – the government and the constitution – and are eager for a conflict. (Crisis Group report, 31 July 2012, p.29)

However, since late 2014, Turkey has lost control over the Sunni insurgent groups in large sections of Iraq and Syria. To an extent, some of these Sunni groups have turned to extreme terrorist groups, such as Jabhat al-Nusra and Islamic state. Therefore, there have been many formal statements from Iraq, Syria and even the U.S. blaming Turkey for not putting enough effort into preventing terrorist groups from entering Iraq and Syria. According to some local reports inside Turkey, in January 2014 the Turkish National Intelligence

Organisation (MIT) had transported a terrorist group into Tel Abyad to join the fighting against Assad's regime in Syria (Today's Zaman, 05 June 2015)[116]. It can be argued that, the Turkish involvement in Iraq and Syria has turned Davuto lu's doctrine of "Zero-Problems with neighbours" upside down with the Shia-led countries in the region. In December 2012, the former Iraqi Prime Minster al-Maliki in an interview with The Wall Street Journal said:

We welcome them [Turkey] on the economic cooperation front and we are open for them, but we do not welcome interference in political matters. Turkey interferes by backing certain political figures and blocs. We have continuously objected about their previous ambassador's interferences and they have admitted this interference. In political matters, they have an unacceptable interference. (12 December 2011).

Nevertheless, Turkey tried to recast its sectarian approach with the Iraqi Shi'a in November 2013. In this context, Turkey's former Foreign Minister Davutoglu visited the Iraqi Shi'a holy cities of Najaf and Karbala, and met a number of prominent Shi'a leaders including Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani and Muqtada al-Sadr. His visit was mainly intended to rebuild its relationships between both countries and eliminate sectarian barriers (al-Sharq al-Awsat, 12 November 2013). However, relations between both sides remained within the context of sectarian polarisation, in particular after Turkey's military intervention near Mosul and asserting its desire to participate in the liberation of Mosul in October 2016. The previous Iraqi Prime Minister al-Maliki accused Turkey of losing Mosul after he was blamed by the investigative committee report for the fall of the city of Mosul to the Islamic State (ISIS) in June 2014[117] (Aljazeera, 2015).

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[116] According to the Cumhuriyet report, which was based on the court record of an investigation, the Turkish National Intelligence Organization (MIT) had been involved in transporting Islamic State fighters and weapons by passenger buses to Tel Abyad in Syria. Turkish police had found weapons on two passenger buses in the Southern city of Adana. Further, significant amounts of ammunition had been found in these buses. The bus drivers confessed that MIT had rented them to deliver these fighters and weapons to Syria, under the guise of transporting refugees. For more details see Today's Zaman, 05 June 2015.

[117] In July 2015 the Iraqi Vice President, Nuri al-Maliki stated in Tehran that "The fall of Mosul was the result of a conspiracy which was manufactured in Erbil in cooperation with the Turks and intelligence services in Ankara." Maliki's statement came after his name was placed at the top of the list of the Iraqi parliament's report regarding the fall of Mosul city to the Islamic State group (ISIS) (RUDAW 16/8/2015).

It is important to observe, however, that despite the Turkish involvement in Iraq following the U.S.-led invasion, the success of Turkey's policy in post-2003 Iraq remains limited in scale. This can be attributed to several factors. The Turkish involvement in Iraq remains somewhat suspicious in the eyes of the three main components of Shi'a, Sunni and Kurd. This is especially so regarding the longstanding Turkish nationalist desire for the annexation of Mosul and Kirkuk to Turkey, which has been brought up by the Turkish nationalist elite from time to time (see Aras, 2004, p.105). In the advent of the Arab upheavals, Turkey's regional policy descended into its joining with the Sunni axis, especially after Turkey's involvement in Syria and its supporting for the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Tunisia. Turkey lost its neutrality in dealing with Middle Eastern political issues. Therefore, the Turkish policy towards Iraq will remain a source of concern for Iraqi Shi'as. These concerns reached a peak in October 2016 when Turkey's parliament voted to extend the deployment of an estimated 2,000 troops in northern Iraq (in Bashiqa camp), training Sunni fighters and Kurdish Peshmarga preparing for participation in the battle for the liberation of Mosul. This led to political and diplomatic tensions between Baghdad and Ankara. The Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi condemned the vote and warned of a potential regional war if Turkish troops remained in Iraq (The Telegraph, 5 October 2016). The Turkish attitude has been viewed as an attempt toward creating a Sunni buffer in Mosul against the Shi'a-dominated government and Iranian influence in the region. Regarding the thesis's RSCT argument, Turkey gradually became more active in Iraq through its processes of desecuritisation with Iran, which is clear in the case of Bashiqa, Tal Afar and Shingal (see Manis and Kaválek, 2016). A security analyst and former adviser to the Turkish military, Metin Gurcan, told Al Jazeera ''the U.S. believes that Turkey is trying to create a Sunni power-house around Mosul and it is not necessarily against this idea, a Sunni entity in northern Iraq may reduce Iran's influence in this region, and the U.S. would appreciate that,'' (Al-Jazeera, 14 October 2016).

However, Turkey's policy toward Iraqi Sunnis is not necessarily about curbing Iranian influence in Iraq. It is about using the Iraqi Sunnis as a political card in case Turkey wants to put pressure on the Shi'a-centric government or Iraqi Kurds. Moreover, Turkey has had historical links with Mosul, which gives Turkey the claim to see it as a possible sphere of influence for them in new Iraq.

In addition, the Kurdistan Workers Party's (PKK) presence after 2014 in Shingal, and their coordination with Iraqi government also should not be underestimated in this regard. Agid Civian, the commander of the (PKK) acknowledged that the Iraqi government had provided YPS (Shingal Protection Units, which were set up by the PKK during Daesh's occupation of Shingal) with logistics, weapons and monthly wages (Rudaw, 15 August 2016). On the other hand, Turkish involvement in Iraq, as has been discussed earlier, has been part of the ethnic and sectarian conflict in post-2003 Iraq, which has not been hidden by Turkish officials. In October 2016, Erdogan clearly confirmed this when he said that "only Sunni Arabs, Turkmen and Sunni Kurds should remain [in Mosul]" (Al-Jazeera, 2016).

Regarding the Kurds, despite the fruitful alliance between Ankara and Erbil, the Kurds are cautiously looking at these relations. Many Iraqi Kurdish parties, especially the PUK and the Gorran movement, see Turkey as using the KRG as a card to pressure the PKK on one hand, and as a vassal of Turkey through the KRG's economic dependence on Turkey on the other. Meanwhile, some Iraqi Sunnis have looked cautiously at the Turkish engagement in the state-building process, in particular with the Kurds and Turkmen minorities. After 2011, the Turkish rapprochement to the al-Hadba party, which was led by Atheel al-Nujaifi in Mosul, and the Iraqi Kurds, became a source of concern for some Iraqi nationalist politicians. The issue of vilayet Mosul, which was part of the Ottoman Empire, still remains in the mentality of Iraqis (see Aras, 2004, p.105). However, it is important to note that Turkey has been successful in establishing links with a part of the Iraqi Sunnis through building institutional bases of influence in Iraq. The Turkish military employment in the Bashiqa camp in northern Iraq, training Sunni and Kurdish local fighters for the battle to recapture Mosul at the end of 2016, can be analysed in this context. It can be argued that this kind of engagement by both Turkey and Iran has been a remarkable influence in favour of these countries' presence, not only in Iraq's political arena but also in the entire region.

7.2. What Turkey's leverage means for others in the Iraq: Syria's and Iran's concerns

Traditionally, the most vulnerable of Turkish borders are the ones shared with Iran, Iraq, and Syria (Imai, 2016, p.27). This can be better understood through the regional security complex, particularly, when it comes to the regional foreign policy agendas of Iran and Syria, as key actors in a penetrated regional system (see Ehtishami and Hinnebusch, 1997)[118]. The security dependency between members and their regional leadership role, has provided these actors (Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia and Turkey) with a durable pattern of amity and hostility (based on thesis theoretical areas). Therefore, the influence of Turkey in Iraq as a penetrated state has become a source of concern for others in the region, in particular Iran and Syria. The following sections will examine these concerns, and how the leverage of one country in the region is viewed as domination by the others.

7.2.1. The implications of Turkey's influence in Iraq: Iran's concerns

Despite the position of Turkey as an insulator state which sits among number of sub-regional complexes, such as the Balkans, Caucasus, Levant, Gulf, Maghreb, and Central Asia (see Buzan and Wæver, 2003, p.41), the Justice and Development Party's dominance regarding Turkey's domestic and foreign policy after 2002 provided Turkey's policy with a strong push towards engagement with most regional issues, mainly in Iraq and Syria. This has led to Turkey's becoming an active part of the Middle East RSC. Nonetheless, Davuto lu's guideline of "strategic depth", in which the Middle East has an important position, did not come at the right time. This was mostly due to the

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[118] It is worth considering that the role of Syria as a middle power in the global system and a key actor in the regional system (Levant) has changed after the Syrian crisis in 2011, from interfering state to interfered-with state, from bully to target. Syria, following the 2011 Arab uprisings, has become a battleground among other regional powers, namely the Iran-led Shi'a countries on one hand, and Saudi- and Turkey-led countries on the other. While Syrian impact on Iraq cannot be overlooked, whether as a neighbouring country of Iraq or as a political, ethnic, sectarian and regional extension of Iraq, what has changed regarding the Syrian influence on Iraq is its role, but not its influence. So far, the Syrian crisis has played a key role in the Iraqi scene and this could continue for an indefinite period.

fact that, since the U.S. invasion of Iraq, both the Persian Gulf and the Levant have become part of the political, ethnic and religious crisis which is on-going across the region. Meanwhile, Turkey's engagement in regional issues has not occurred without it taking sides. This is especially the case from the Arab upheavals onwards; Ankara's policy was based on supporting Muslim Brotherhood movements, alongside Qatar, particularly in Tunisia, Egypt and Syria (Keyman and Gümü çü, 2014, pp. 93-94). Turkey has been heavily involved in Syria and the backing of Sunni extremist groups alongside the Saudi-led Sunni front, as well as being part of the Saudi-led bombing campaign against Shi'a rebels in Yemen. In addition to supporting Sunni parties against al-Maliki's Shi'a-led government in Iraq, all these attitudes make Turkey appear as a durable part of Levant and Gulf's sub-regional complexes on the one hand, and as a hostile axis to the rising of the so-called Shi'a powers in the region led by Iran. If the U.S. invasion paved the way for the Turkish-Iranian rapprochement (see Koprulu, 2009, p.195), the U.S. withdrawal has done the opposite. Considering Turkish heavy engagement in the processes of securitisation in both Syria and Iraq, the regional level is crucial for security analysis, in line with the thesis RSCT (Buzan and Wæver, 2003, p.47). From this point of view there are three areas (factors) that may shape a RSC between Ankara and Tehran and provoke Iranian concerns towards Turkey's involvement in post-2003 Iraq.

First, in the Iranian perception, Turkey's influence in Iraq can be seen as a concern for undermining the Shi'a-led government that was founded after the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq. Ankara's support for the Iraqiyya List against al-Maliki, Ankara's hosting of former Vice President Tareq al-Hashimi in 2012, and Turkey's support for Sunni insurgent groups in the Iraqi Sunni provinces, and Turkey's deployment of troops near Mosul in 2016, can be assessed in this framework.

Second, Turkey's involvement in Iraq can be seen as an obstruction for Iran extending its hegemony among Shi'a-led countries in the region. Since the U.S. invasion, Iran has been working intensively in order to make a kind of Shi'a crescent to link Iran, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon. This crescent can have geopolitical, military and economic benefits for Iranian leverage in the region. The most important economic strategy for that crescent can be observed in the

Iran-Iraq-Syria gas pipeline project, or what is being called the Islamic Pipeline, which was agreed in July 2012, just a few months after the Syrian crisis began. This project is for a pipeline with a capacity of 110 million cubic meters of gas per day, which provides Iran with a supply of natural gas from Iran and Iraq to the Mediterranean coast of Syria and then on to Europe (see Minin, 2013; Ahmed, 2013).

The Islamic Pipeline project was viewed from the Sunni countries and Turkey's side as a Shi'a pipeline project against the Nabucco-West pipeline (also called as the Turkey–Austria gas pipeline) which could supply the KRG with potential supplies from Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Egypt, with gas to the Turkish-Bulgarian border and then on to Austria (Hurriyet Daily News, 30 September 2010). The main aim of this project is to diversify the natural gas suppliers for Europe, therefore reducing European dependence on Russian energy. The Iran-Iraq-Syria pipeline, if achieved, would make Iran completely independent of the transit ways of Qatar and Turkey leading to Europe. The project could mark a major watershed in regional relations and the balance of power in the region.

Third, Tehran views Ankara's leverage in Iraq as a significant obstacle to its desire to extend its hegemony in the region. The Turkish military base in Bashiqa, in order to train Sunni fighters and Kurdish Peshmarga preparing for engagement in the operations against IS in Mosul is an example of that (The Telegraph, 5 October 2016). Moreover, Ankara's active engagement in regional issues, especially after the Arab uprisings in Iraq, Syria and Yemen alongside Saudi Arabia and Qatar, is a strong indication of this. During the Saudi-led intervention in Yemen, Erdo an accused Iran in a press conference in March 2015 when he said "Iran is trying to dominate the region" (Al Arabiya, 27 March 2015). Erdo an regarded himself as a member of the Saudi-led coalition when he said that Iranian behaviour "has begun annoying us, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries. This is really not tolerable and Iran has to see this," (see Today's Zaman, 12 April 2015).

Fourth, Tehran has been worried about the Turkish-KRG alliance in Iraq. This is mostly due to the fact that from the Iranian standpoint, Ankara's hegemony on the political and economic sphere in Iraqi Kurdistan provides Turkey with further control on the Kurdish issue, not only in Iraq but also in Iran,

Syria and Turkey. This can be seen as a threat to Iran, as it allows Turkey to play the Kurdish card in other parts. This is because of the political, diplomatic and economic position of the KRG on one hand, and the KRG's influence towards Kurdish movements and parties in the region on the other. The Kurdish card has played an important role in the regional conflicts between Iran, Turkey, Syria and Iraq[119]. KRG political officials have mentioned many times that Iran has asked them to allow it to transfer weapons to the Syrian regime through KRG territory. A Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) advisor Baram Majeed Khan is quoted as saying that "Iran is worried about the fact that the Kurdistan Region has strong economic and commercial ties with Turkey" and added, "Iran feels that Turkey has crept into the Kurdistan Region more than it should" (Idiz, 2013).

Fifth, Iran sees Turkey as a buffer to the west and the U.S. in the region (see Weitz, 2011). In September 2011, Erdo an accepted the deployment of NATO's missile shield in Turkey, even without the consent of parliament. Despite Ankara insisting that the missiles were not against Iran, Iranian officials regarded this as a serious threat to the security and military balance in the region. Tehran warned that they would attack Israel and Turkey, if the U.S. or Israel attacked Iran (Akyol, 2012). Furthermore, a few days after the nuclear deal between Iran and the P5+1 countries, the Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu called on Iran to play a constructive role, review its regional policies and abandon sectarian politics, specifically in Syria, Iraq and Lebanon (Bekdil, 2015).

However, despite the abovementioned concerns (areas of conflict) that Iran has towards Turkey, it is hard to say if their divergent interests in Iraq will lead to a direct clash between them. The last two decades of their bilateral relations in the region show us that relations between Ankara and Tehran can be more converged than diverged, whether related to the integration of the Iraqi state, thwarting Kurdish ambitions, and regional stability in the region, or regarding economic interests, such as Turkey's dependence on Iranian natural gas. To this extent, Tehran is still the second largest supplier of natural gas and oil to Ankara after Russia; in 2014 Turkish-Iranian trade amounted to $14 billion (Reuters, 7 Apr 2015).

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[119] This factor has been mentioned in more detail in previous chapters.

The most divergent factor in Turkish-Iranian relations has been the Syrian crisis, which has distanced Baghdad from Ankara and brought it closer to Tehran. While the relations between both countries have not been without the playing of bargaining games in Iraq, both have accepted their leverages in Iraq. Turkey has acknowledged Iranian dominance in Baghdad, and to some extent, Iran has also recognised Turkish leverage in Iraqi Kurdistan. In the meantime, it is important to know that Iran has a prominent regional role in the AKP's doctrine of ''strategic depth'' (see Davutoglu, 2010, pp. 389-395). Iran and Turkey (Egypt was the third) are seen as two main axes of the regional triangle. The evidence seems to be strong that Iraq will remain as a sphere of influence between Iran and Turkey and the sustainability dynamics of this competition will be the Kurdish issue, the Shi'a-Sunni conflict, and economic issues, in particular energy issues. All of these mentioned factors will be the fuel of regional conflict over Iraq among Iraq's neighbours (Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Syria). The above discussion showed the sensitivity of the regional security complex of Iraq's neighbours, and how this complexity contributed to the state-building process (ethno-sectarian conflict) following the U.S. invasion of Iraq. This is to say the regional security complex position of the international relations between Iraq and its neighbours has made sure that the state-building process in Iraq cannot be divorced from its regional dimensions, especially regarding Iraq's four neighbours addressed in this thesis.

7.2.2. The ramifications of Turkey's leverage in Iraq: Syria's concerns

Over the past 20 years, Turkish-Syrian relations have gone through a durable pattern of amity and enmity. From 1998 to 2011 positive relations were enjoyed, which after 2011 totally collapsed (Scheller, 2013, p.116). Syria's concerns regarding Turkey's domination in Iraq can be explained in good part through the patterns of rivalry, balance of power, and alliance, as a durable pattern of RSC among the main powers in the region (see Buzan and Wæver, 2003, p.47).. Turkey's security in Iraq and the region means insecurity for Syria and others (according to the thesis theory RSC). From this point of view, Syria has a number of reasonable concerns regarding Turkey's domination of the Iraqi arena, whether prior to the Syrian crisis or during the Syrian crisis. It can be argued that since the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, Syrian policy towards Iraq

has been motivated by two key factors: the nationalist dimension of the Syrian policy was expressed in Syria's opposition to the U.S. occupation of an Arab country. However, after the Syrian crisis in 2011, the Syrian perspective has shifted from nationalist motivations to sectarian motivations (at least in the eyes of Sunnis). Turkey's regional policy, particularly after 2011, has been firmly on the opposite side to Syria's sectarian axis, which is provoking further reaction from Damascus.

It is important to know that events in Iraq have always been seen as a regional extension to Syria, especially the political events in both countries, which can be highly interrelated. This is to say that whoever has the upper hand in Iraq, can have the upper hand in the entire region. This is namely the case since the start of the Syrian civil war; Iraq has swung to the Iranian-led Shi'a orbit in the regional chess board. Meanwhile, since the start of the Syrian crisis, Turkey has openly joined the conflict through supporting Syrian opposition groups against Assad's regime both logistically and financially (see chapter five). In Syria's perception, Turkish leverage in Iraq can provide Turkey with two important pressure cards against Syria.

Firstly, Turkey through its leverage in Iraq can use the Iraqi Sunni card, which has been a crucial part of the Syrian crises after 2011, against Assad's Alawite regime in Syria. The sectarian sympathies between Iraqi Arab Sunnis and Syrian Arab Sunnis have been a part of both the Syrian crisis and the dominance of the Islamic State in Iraq, when the latter captured the Mosul governorate in June 2014. Since the Arab uprisings, Turkey's regional role among Sunni groups has been significant. Turkey's presence from Gaza, to the Syrian opposition stretching, to northern Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan, then to the Turkish alliance with Iraqi Sunnis, can be assessed in the context of Turkey's ambition towards creating a "Sunni crescent" in the region (see Karaveli, 2012). Syria therefore sees Turkey as a definite threat to Syrian national security. However, despite Turkish engagement with Iraqi Sunnis after 2003, there has been little evidence that Turkey exploited the Iraqi Sunnis against the Syrian regime after 2011.

Secondly, Turkey's leverage in Iraq will enable further Turkish influence on the Iraqi Kurds that have been playing a prominent role in the region after the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq. This can provide Turkey with an opportunity to

capitalise on the Iraqi Kurds, towards influencing the course of events inside Syrian Kurdish areas. Turkey has cooperated substantially with the KRG and its President Barzani to play a key role in shaping the Syrian Kurdish opposition (see Cagaptay and Evans, 2012, p.7). Ankara has made every effort to prevent the PKK from establishing a Kurdish entity in Syria[120].

In the meantime, Iraq had long been a source of economic benefits for Syria. On 23 April 1952, the Iraq-Syria pipeline, which connected the Kirkuk oil fields in the Kurdistan region of Iraq to the Syrian port of Banias on the Mediterranean, was opened, and has been a source of windfall profit for Syria of around $1 billion per year (Stratfor Global Intelligence, 13 December 2007).[121] The reconstruction of the Kirkuk-Banias pipeline was a key demand in Syrian-U.S. negotiations over Iraq during November 2007, in the Middle East peace conference in Annapolis. However, Turkey's hegemony in Iraq undermined this plan; Turkey's flow of northern Iraqi oil through the Kirkuk–Ceyhan Oil Pipeline (also known as the Iraq–Turkey Crude Oil Pipeline) has an operational capacity of 400,000 barrels per day (Monthly report of Ministry of Natural Resources, June, 2015). Northern Iraq has become Turkey's sphere of influence in the region, not only politically through the Ankara-Erbil alliance, but also economically.

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[120] In late July 2015, Turkey proposed a "safe zone" be carved out in Syria in order to allow some Syrian refugees in Turkey to return to the secure zone. However, such a proposal is not without political gains for Turkey, especially regarding Kurdish ambitions. The leader of the HDP (People's Democratic Party) Selahattin Demirtas told the BBC that, ''Turkey's real intention was to make an incursion into Kurdish areas in Syria so as to stop Syrian Kurds from controlling contiguous territory'' (BBC, 29 July 2015).

[121] The Kirkuk-Banias pipeline that was built in the early 1950s was the target of a U.S. airstrike during the invasion of Iraq in 2003. After the U.S invasion, the pipeline has become a target of Sunni insurgent groups several times, and has been completely out of action since the war began in 2003. The pipeline has a capacity of 300,000 barrels per day. In 2007, Russia's Stroitransgaz Company was awarded the repair job for the Iraqi side. However, in April 2009, the contract was abolished because the company expected that the rehabilitation of the existing pipeline would be more costly than building a new pipeline. Thus, Iraq and Syria reached to an agreement in September 2010 to build two new pipelines. One of them has the capability of 1.5 million barrels per day (240×103 m3/d) by carrying heavier crude oil, while the other pipeline, which would carry lighter crude oil, has the ability of 1.25 million barrels per day (199×103 m3/d). For more details, see Hafidh and Newswires, 2010; Bloomberg Business, 2010.

Although Syria has been removed from the list of major players in the region, Syria will play a central role as a battleground in the broader struggle for regional hegemony. This has significantly influenced the process of state-formation in post-2003 Iraq becoming part of the regional dimensions of ethno-sectarian conflict. The Syrian crisis has affected Turkey's role as an insulator state in the region. After the Syrian civil war, Ankara failed to build its security community with its neighbours. Meanwhile, its doctrine of 'zero problem with neighbours' has totally collapsed (Imai, 2016, p. 28). The inflow of refugees and foreign fighters has reduced Ankara's ability to control its borders, while military activities, societal threats and its RSC with its neighbours have been increased.[122] After the Syrian crisis the stability of Iraq and the entire region has been linked to stability in Syria. The regional security complex structure of the region (Persian Gulf and Levant), in addition to the ethno-denominational composition of the alliance in the region, has created further tensions with regard to the security dynamic.

It is important to note, however, that although according to the Status of Forces Agreement Status of Forces Agreements (SOFAs) the role of U.S. troops in Iraq after 2011 would be advisable, in term of security (control of airspace, counterterrorism and training Iraqi forces) and policy (reassurance to neighbours and continued U.S. engagement), the role of the U.S. must not be underestimated whether in Iraq or in the Persian Gulf sub-region after the U.S. departure in Iraq. At the end of 2016, the U.S. had about 500 Special Forces in Syria, and more than 5,000 in Iraq in assistance, training and advisory roles as part of the military operation against the Islamic State (Cox, 2017).

The international developments have also contributed to Turkey's involvement in post-2003 Iraq. The role of both the UN and U.S. has been important during a dispute over Turkish deployment of some 150 troops and 25 tanks to a base in the Iraqi Nineveh province at the end of 2015. This is especially noteworthy after U.S. President Obama's call to Turkey to withdraw

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[122] In 2016 the number of refugees who crossed over the Turkish-Syrian border is nearly 5,000,000; 2,800,000 of these are in Turkey. Also, in 2015, the Turkish government declared that they have detained 913 foreign fighters. For more see Imai, K., 2016. Rethinking the Insulator State: Turkey's Border Security and the Syrian Civil War. *Eurasia Border Review*, 7(1), pp.19-29.

any military forces in Iraq that are "not authorized by the Iraqi government" (Kalin, 7 January 2016). To an extent, the Baghdad complaint to the UN Security Council pushed Turkey to withdraw some troops to Iraqi Kurdistan. However, the international factor that is represented by the United Nations has not been effective in directing Turkish engagement in Iraq. This might be largely because of the dominance of both great and regional powers in the region which have been challenged the UN's ability in the Persian Gulf and Levant.

7.3 Conclusion: State-building as a regional security complex

Turkey's involvement in the state-building process in post-2003 Iraq has been driven by two major complex and interrelated factors, of which the sectarian factor has been the weaker. As has been analysed, the Kurdish question as a RSC has been one of the main factors that directed Turkey's involvement in the post-2003 Iraq. The Turkey-KRG alliance was a result of this policy, not the cause. Preventing the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) from transforming Iraqi Kurdistan to its safe haven for their political and military activates has been the essence of this policy. Moreover, Ankara through its alliance with the KRG and namely Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party wanted to inhibit the PKK from representing the Kurdish national identity in Turkey on one hand, and isolate the PKK from the political process in Iraqi Kurdistan on the other. That is to say, Ankara through its political and economic alliance with Erbil stopped the emergence of the Kurdish Syrian model, which has been dominated by the PKK's wing the Democratic Union Party (Kurdish: Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat, PYD) in Northern Iraq. Although Erdo an used the Sunni identity from time to time, Turkey's engagement in the state-building process in post-2003 Iraq, in contrast to those of other neighbours of Iraq, has not been through ethnic and sectarian kinship. It has been mainly through the Iraqi Kurds and to a much less through Iraqi Sunnis and Turkmen. This has provided Ankara an opportunity to design its leverage in Iraq through building institutional ties with the KRG, and, to a lesser extent, with Iraqi Sunnis, in contrast to other players, like Saudi Arabia and Syria, which have lacked the ability to build such institutional links with Iraq's main components.

It is true that Davutoglu's political paradigm of the "strategic depth" framework has contributed to Turkish engagement in Iraq, although this has not been the essential factor for the Turkish policy towards post-2003 Iraq.. Turkey's engagement with both Iraqi Sunnis and the Turkmen minority has been a sub-factor. Turkey has played a complicated and pragmatic game through its engagement with these ethnic and sectarian identities, utilising both the Sunni and Turkmen cards against Shi'a dominance and, once again, against Kurdish ambitions. Of note is that, at the same time, it used the KRG against the Shi'a-led government in Baghdad. Iraq's territorial integrity of Iraq and the threat of federalism was feared by Turkey until the withdrawal of the U.S. from Iraq and the beginning of the Syrian crisis, after which Turkish policy has been more understanding toward these issues.

Thus Turkey's engagement approach in post-2003 Iraq provided Turkey with political pressure cards against both Shi'a and Kurds on one hand, and with the utilisation of Erbil against Baghdad on the other. Despite Turkey's condition as a passive and insulator power according to the RSCT, since the U.S. invasion of Iraq Turkey's position has been more active as a part of Middle East RSC. Turkey kept its regional leverage in both Iraq and the region, which has enabled Turkey to compete with other actors in the region, namely Iran. Turkish military involvement in northern Iraq and in the process of the liberation of Mosul can be best exemplified in this context. All this suggests that the factors motivating Turkish engagement, i.e. security factors (the Kurdish question and protection of Iraqi unity) and seeking a regional role (Turkey's engagement with Iraqi Sunni and Turkmen, then the KRG) are factors which have together contributed in general to the regional dimension of the state-building process in post-2003 Iraq.

Chapter eight:

8. CONCLUSION

Introduction:

This research has intended to find out the engagement of Iraq's regional neighbours (Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia and Turkey) in the state-building process from the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq until the end of 2016. The relationship between ethno-sectarianism and state-building within its regional dimensions has been examined from an international security perspective. This thesis found that ethnic and religious conflicts have been an enduring part of Iraq's neighbours' engagement in the process of state-building in post-2003 invasion of Iraq[123]. The reason for this is that the ethnic and sectarian conflict in post-2003 Iraq has interconnected with the regional security dynamics of Iraq's neighbours within the framework of the regional security complex. . The theoretical tools of RSC has contributed to answering the thesis research question of how and why Iraqi neighbours have been involved in the state-building process and ethno-sectarian conflict in post-war Iraq. I have found that Iraq's neighbours have interacted with Iraq through multiple levels of internal and external factors. The internal factors can be demonstrated through regimes' domestic instability, which has largely been shaped along ethno-sectarian conflict in both Iraq and the entire region, and external factors through the rivalry and balance of power (based on the thesis theory of RSC). The thesis conclusion can be summarised in the following sections.

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[123] For the purposes of this thesis, Iraq's neighbours refer specifically to Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Syria.

8.1. The beginning of the contagion: The U.S. model of state-building in Iraq

The political architecture that was fashioned by the U.S. in post-2003 Iraq was in itself a major cause of regional interference in the state-building process and thereafter 'the ethno-sectarian conflict' in Iraq. The 2003 U.S. version of state-building in Iraq was built with similar methods and mentality as British implemented eight decades ago in Iraq. If the British version of state-building in the 1920s and 30s had led to a Sunni-dominated state, the U.S. version after 2003 has led to a Shi'a-dominated state. This is not because of the U.S.'s support of the Shi'a, but because of the state-building model which was fashioned by the CPA in the aftermath of the U.S. invasion. Both models failed (so far) to produce a secure foundation for a nation-state to integrate the three main groups (Kurd, Shi'a Arab and Sunni Arab) in the body of the modern Iraqi state. Almost all the U.S. steps of rebuilding the Iraqi state, from the Iraqi Government Council, the Iraq Interim Government, the process of de-Ba'athification, the disbanding of the Iraqi Army, the Iraqi parliamentary elections of 2005, the constitutional process, to the calls for ethnic-based federalism, all these significant milestones of the state-building process have led to the effective dismantling of the Iraqi state and therefore contributed to the regional involvement in post-2003 Iraq. This is mostly due to the interaction of Iraq's neighbours' ethno-denominational demographic composition with Iraq's socio-political structure. To an extent, not only from the perspective of the political elite, but also from the viewpoint of Iraq's components, any type of state-building process in Iraq is seen as a redistribution of power among Iraq's three main groups (Shi'a Arab, Sunni Arab and Kurd). The British version of state-building, which had been rejected by both Shi'a and Kurd, and the U.S. version of Shi'a-centric government which has also been rejected by Arab Sunnis, are strong indications of that.

The previously mentioned view spread regionally after the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003. The redistribution of power among Iraqi groups became part of Iraq's regional neighbours' concerns, particularly in its ethnic and sectarian structure, due to cross-border ethnic and religious links between Iraq's groups on the one hand and Iraq's neighbours on the other. The Turkish concerns regarding the Kurdish question and Saudi Arabia's fears of a Shi'a-dominated

state in post-2003 Iraq are the best examples in this context. Based on the thesis discussion, it can be argued that Iraq's state-formation is not merely Iraq's internal issue, but at the same time is also a regional issue. An important example of this is the model of ethnic-based federalism in Iraq after 2003. The Iraqi federalisation project has been facilitated by the regional engagement in the Iraq's internal affairs after 2003. As Kanan Makiya (cited in Salamey and Pearson, 2005, p. 200) points out, the calls for federalism have boosted ethno-sectarian tensions among states bordering Iraq, especially in the countries which have the same ethnic and religious mosaic as Iraq. This fragile form of federalism has led to further fragmentation among these identities and has stretched beyond national borders.

8.2. State-building as regional security complex dynamics

One of the central issues that this study has identified regarding Iraq's neighbours' involvement in Iraq is a constant interaction among three main variables (processes): security complex dynamics, ethno-sectarian conflict and the state-building process in post-2003 Iraq (see figure 7). The thesis shows that one of the main reasons of Iraq's neighbours' involvement in the process of state-building in post-2003 Iraq can be attributed to the enduring interaction between regional security complex dynamics that have been reshaped after the U.S. invasion of Iraq on the one hand, and the process of state-building in post-2003 Iraq on the other. This is mainly because of Iraq's neighbours' security interconnectedness within the framework of regional security complex with one another, and also with Iraq's ethno-denominational composition. The interaction between Iraq's socio-political structure, particularly its ethnic and religious communities, with those of its neighbours, has become critical to Iraq's neighbours' stability and their regional role.

The four states that have been addressed in this study are linked with Iraq through multiply multiplicity of domestic, regional and international security factors. The domestic factors have mostly been formed by ethnic and sectarian discord as security threats on the one hand, and RSC dynamics on the other; and this have played a major role in Iraq's neighbours' interference in the state-building process in Iraq. On this basis, Turkey's interference in Iraq has been

driven by both domestic and regional factors. However the domestic level has been the critical one. Turkey's active engagement with Iraqi Kurds after 2003 is a strong indication towards this. Ankara wanted to prevent the ethnic/political influence of the Iraqi Kurds on the Turkish Kurds, and the influence of the PKK on the KRG. With regard to Syria's involvement in post-2003 Iraq all three levels of RSC (domestic, regional, international) have been in play: protecting the regime inside and preventing the spillover of the ethnic and sectarian conflict into Syrian territory. Meanwhile, Syria was looking for a regional role in post-2003 Iraq; especially after the Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon in the end of April 2005, Syria felt isolated from its role as a regional player. The presence of the U.S. and the possibility for Syria to become the next target for invasion have been other factors of concern to the Syrian regime.

However, in the cases of Saudi Arabia and Iran the regional levels of security have a much more powerful role than domestic factors. That is to say that both Tehran and Riyadh have been less driven by their domestic factors, which at the same time means that both the Shi'a factor in Saudi Arabia and the Kurdish and Sunni factors in Iran have been lesser challenges for the domestic security in these two states. Iranian and Saudi engagement in the state-building process (and ethno-sectarian conflict) in post-2003 Iraq have been for both mostly for either building regional hegemony in the Persian Gulf, or countering each other's hegemony in the region. That is not to say that domestic levels of security were not in play; Saudi Arabia have also invested domestically in showing the Shi'a factor as a threat to legitimise its regime at home, and Iran has interacted with the Iraqi Kurds with a watchful eye on its own Kurdish population. However, the Iranian support for the Shi'a-dominated government in Baghdad and Saudi Arabia's efforts to weaken Shi'a-centric state-building have been essential parts of their involvement in post-2003 Iraq, thereafter altering the regional security order. The thesis also found that, despite the variation of the intensity of the Kurdish question among Iraq's neighbours (Turkey, Iran and Syria), the Kurdish issue has been part of the shaping of the RSC of Iraq's neighbours that have Kurdish minorities. Ankara, Tehran and Damascus to varying degrees have concerns about Iraqi Kurdish status in post-2003 Iraq.

Moreover, the thesis found that both Turkey and Iran have engaged through building institutional bases and cementing long-standing relationships

with Iraqi components. Ankara has built institutional ties with the KRG and part of the Iraqi Sunnis, while Tehran has built long-term political, religious, economic, and security links with the Shi'a and part of the Iraqi Kurds (such as the PUK). In contrast to Turkey and Iran, both Saudi Arabia and Syria have lacked the ability to build durable institutional links with Iraqi components, and this has been a main reason behind the weak position of both these two countries in the state-building process in post-war Iraq.

The Syrian crisis after 2011 has further demonstrated the regional security dynamics of the ethnic and sectarian rivalry in the region. One question that can be drawn from above discussion is, to what extent has the state-building process in post-2003 Iraq been part of the ethnic and sectarian conflict among Iraq's neighbours? The following section seeks to answer this question.

8.3. State-building as an ethnic and sectarian conflict in the region

As has been demonstrated in the preceding chapters, after the U.S. invasion of Iraq there has been a shift in the ethnic and sectarian tensions, not only on the level of domestic politics but also on the level of international relations, particularly in the Persian Gulf sub-region. The victory of the Shi'a list of the United Iraqi Alliance in the January 2005 parliamentary election, gaining 48 percent of the Iraqi votes, constituted a turning point in Iraq's ties with its neighbours. After the withdrawal of the U.S. troops in Iraq at the end of 2011, and especially in the wake of Syrian crisis, the regional security order has been shaped by the new interstate polarisation, which has been based on the ethno-sectarian identities as a part of regional security dynamics. To an extent, in the wake of the Syrian crisis the four mentioned regimes, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Syria, and even Iraq, have responded to the crisis according to the wider ethno-denominational calculations and the balance of power in the region.

Furthermore, one of the themes to emerge from my analysis of the regional dimensions of ethnic and sectarian conflict in post-2003 Iraq was the role of non-state actors. Non-state actors, such as the KRG, the PKK, Shi'a militia groups, Sunni extremist groups, and terrorist groups, such as al-Qaida and IS, have played a significant role on the domestic, regional and global levels as securitising actors, alongside state, and sometimes as proxy allies

with state-actors in escalating the relations between these three processes: state-building, ethno-sectarian conflict, and regional security dynamics. Based on the thesis theoretical area, the permeability of the Iraqi state or in Ayoub's (p.190) words "the low level of social cohesion" has been a main reason behind this penetration. In this context, this thesis explored the powerful contributions that non-state actors have made to the regional neighbours' involvement in the both state-building process and ethno-sectarian tensions in post-2003 Iraq.

It is interesting to note that in all four cases of Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Syria's engagements in the state-building process in Iraq, the ethno-religious calculation has been a persistent factor for Iraq's neighbours' engagement. The main factor which has transferred the ethno-sectarian discord from its internal context to a regional one is the regional security dynamics within the framework of RSCT. Thus, the state framework has been challenged by ethno-sectarian conflict in the domestic, regional and global levels, and has become the defining dynamic of RSC of each of those countries, whether domestically, in the cases of Syria and Turkey, or regionally in the cases of Iran and Saudi Arabia. To an extent, since the U.S. invasion of Iraq the ethnic and sectarian conflicts have become epicentre of violence in the region. It can be argued that the process of state-building in post-war Iraq cannot be divorced from its regional dimensions of ethnic and sectarian discord among Iraq's neighbours.

8.4. State-building as a balance of power

Another argument concluded from this study is the complexity of the state-building process in Iraq, which has morphed from an internal issue into a regional issue. This can be attributed to two main factors: first, the regional security complex structure of the region, which created a framework of security interdependency among Iraq's neighbours; and second, that both Iraq's geopolitical position and human geography gave some political developments in Iraq the capability to affect the Iraq's neighbours' stability, and vice versa. Thus, the ethnic and sectarian composition of Iraq's main groups of Shi'a, Sunni and Kurd, has been influenced even the nature of regional alliances. For example, the eight decades of Sunni domination in Iraq made this state remain in a semi-

persistent alliance with the Sunni countries of the Arab world, which was based mainly on countering the Iran-Syria hegemony in the region. However, the 2003 Iraq war has caused a significant shift in that regional alliance, and has swiped Iraq from the Sunni bloc to the Shi'a bloc, from amity with the GCC to amity with Iran and Syria.

It can be seen from the above analysis that after the U.S. invasion of Iraq, the ethnic and sectarian identities of each of Iraq's groups have been viewed as a political factor for control of the state. That is to say, the ethno-sectarian balance of power among Iraq's groups has become an influential part of the balance of power in the region. In the words of Buzan and Waever, (2003, P.46) "balance-of-power logic works naturally to encourage local rivals to call in outside help, and by this mechanism the local patterns of rivalry become linked to the global ones". This has been demonstrated through the implications of each state's involvement for the other involved states in post-2003 Iraq. The leverage of each group, and state, in Iraq has been viewed as a concern for the other players. It is important to recognise that in many cases the ethnic and sectarian balance between Iraq's three main groups (Shi'a, Sunni and Kurd) has been viewed as a source of challenge to the regional balance of power among Iraq's neighbours. Here we cannot agree with Gause (2010, p. 9) that "the most important and distinctive factor in the Gulf regional security complex is not power imbalance, but the salience of transnational identities". Both factors are in fact highly interconnected and complete each other in post-2003 Iraq and in particular among the four of Iraq's neighbours addressed in this thesis.

That can be clearly noticed from Saudi Arabia's official decision makers when they described the U.S. invasion of Iraq as a handing over of Iraq to Iran (see Prince Saud al-Faisal's interview with Fareed Zakaria, 20 September 2005). Thus, the process of state-building and transnational identities after 2003 affected the regional balance of power between Iraq's neighbours, through moving Iraq away from the Sunni bloc toward the Iranian-led Shia bloc. Hence, the thesis concluded that part of the regional engagement in the process of state-building in Iraq after 2003 has been for the setting of a new form of the balance of power in the region. This is because what shapes the RSC among the main powers in the region is a pattern of rivalry, balance of power and

alliance (according to thesis theory) (Buzan and Waever, 2003, p. 47). This argument may become clearer particularly with the Turkish insistence to participate in the Battle of Mosul in October 2016 (see chapter seven). The abovementioned argument also raises an important question of the state-building literature as to whether state-building is merely an internal issue or a regional subject as well. The next section will try to address this question.

8.5. State-building as a regional issue

It can be argued that a vast amount of academic literature has dealt with state-building as an internal issue. For example, Charles Tilly (1975) argued that, within the modern process of state making, the state-building process is an internal effort. Tilly's argument might be well applied to the western countries, especially those states that were formed through the Westphalian international system of nation-states. However, in the case of Middle Eastern state formation, most of the countries were made by western external actors, particularly in the last decade of the 20th century. However, my argument regarding Iraq's neighbours' involvement in the post-2003 state-building process in Iraq has demonstrated that all three levels of RSC, internal, regional and global, have been in play. Although the question of which level is dominant has not asked by RSCT, in this thesis the domestic and regional levels have been shown to be more powerful than the international factors, with regard to the security dimension that has driven the regional actors' involvement in the both the ethnic and sectarian conflict and the state-building process following the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq. For instance, the role of UN has been marginal compared to the role of the U.S. and other regional powers in Iraq. Despite their efforts to engage in political issues, due to other regional and great powers' deep involvement in post-2003 Iraq, the UN role has mostly been focused on humanitarian issues.

In contrast to Ayoob's study (1995, p. 189), the results of this study have not shown the domination of internal factors over the regional factors. Without underestimating the role of internal factors as a motivation behind Iraq's neighbours' engagement in the trajectory of state-building in Iraq, all three levels of internal, regional and international factors have contributed to Iraq's

neighbours' engagement in the state-building process. That is to say that the process of state-building in Iraq has been an enduring part of Iraq's neighbours' engagement in the ethno-sectarian conflict in post-2003 Iraq and vice versa. To a degree, the thesis showed that whenever the domestic conflicts between Iraq's three main factions have deepened, the regional penetration of Iraq's internal issues gets stronger. The sectarian civil war in 2006-2007, the Syrian crisis after 2011, and Daesh's occupation of Sunni territories in Iraq, are examples in this regard. It is, however, important to note that, according to the RSCT the U.S. belongs to neither Gulf nor Levant sub-complex regional securities, although it has played a significant role in shaping RSC in both mentioned regions, whether prior the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq or after the U.S. withdrawal in the end of 2011. The role of the U.S. has been effective regarding the involvement in all four of the addressed neighbours of Iraq in post-2003 Iraq.

Before jumping to a conclusion, it is important to ask when and where state-building tasks take a regional context, and why most of the processes of state-building that have been carried out around the world, even those sponsored by the U.S., EU, and UN, have not all ended up with regional involvement. None of the cases of state/nation-building, from Germany, Japan, Somalia, Haiti, Cuba to Afghanistan, have led to the regional neighbours' involvement as has been the case in Iraq. On the contrary, in most of these cases mentioned, the role of regional actors has been constructive (see Dobbins, 2003; Fukuyama, 2008).

The results of this study have shown that the state-building process can become a regional issue when the state-building enterprise linked with its neighbours in a regional security complex framework. In case of Iraq, each of Iraq's neighbours, from Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran to Syria, have links with Iraq through regional security complex dynamics (based on thesis theory of RSC). After the U.S. invasion of Iraq, these security dynamics have been demonstrated in the form of ethnic and sectarian lines. This regional structure has made the security of each of these states easily affected by any change or even political developments in the security dynamics in the region. The intra-state discord in post-2003 Iraq has become intertwined with the inter-state conflict, due to the spatial distribution of the ethnic and religious sectors of the

population in the one hand and the ethnic and religious cross-border links among these communities on the other hand. It can be concluded that any state-building process in the context of the presence of an active regional security complex (sub-complex) structure, the possibility of the shift of state-building from a domestic issue to a regional issue will be very likely, whether the structure of these security complexes is shaped by ethnic and sectarian dynamics or other dynamics, such as border disputes or economic factors.

8.6. The limitations of the study and recommendations for future research

The end of study is hopefully the start of a project rather than its completion, and of course the current work is not without limitations. The scale of this debate is large, and the issues are extensive and multifaceted; this thesis therefore is limited in addressing a number of aspects. The thesis has been limited in addressing the state-building process through institutionalisation theory, which focuses on state-building as internal process in post-conflict societies. However, the focus on the state-building process in the regional context did not allow this study to cover this area, which I think will be an interesting subject in political development studies for future studies. Moreover, this study has also been limited in not incorporating other neighbours of Iraq such as Jordan, Kuwait, and even the GCC countries other than Saudi Arabia, because of two main reasons. First, the thesis theoretical framework excludes those countries which are not in a regional security complex status with Iraq. Second, all of the four countries addressed in this thesis have played the roles of regional powers and at the same time have links with Iraq through both local and regional dynamics.

Moreover, this research has also been limited in investigating whether Iraq's neighbours can be blamed for the failure of the state-building process in post-2003 Iraq or not. Many studies and researchers have merely focused the blame on the U.S. and its method of state-building as a main cause for the failure of the state-building project in Iraq; however, very few studies have addressed Iraq's neighbours as another reason for that. Also the thesis has been limited in its coverage of the post-Mosul phase, which can be considered

as a turning point in both the ethno-sectarian framework and the state-building process in Iraq and the wider region.

Another field that can be fruitful for future studies which also this study has not covered, is a comparison between the post-conflict state-building process in Iraq, and other state-building cases in Latin America and Europe, such as Haiti, Panama, Colombia and the Western Balkan states. Namely, the case of the western Balkans can be very relevant to compare to Iraq's case; in both cases, the regional security complex dynamics have been very active.

One of the other interesting areas that this study identified during the discussion of the regional dimension of the state-building and ethno-sectarian conflict in Iraq is the possibility of both state-building and ethno-sectarian conflict in Iraq becoming part of the wider regional security formation in the future. All the above mentioned areas, as future research strategies, can broaden the scope of regional studies regarding the Middle East in directions which have been almost ignored in recent years. Most of the research areas in political science and international relations have either addressed the Middle East, or individual countries in the region, as units of analysis, rather than as inter- and intra-connected regions. However, Middle Eastern security dynamics might be better understood when examined at the regional level. Considering the whole Middle East as a single monolithic region may be limited for providing an accurate argument.

8.7. Conclusions

Iraq's neighbours' engagement in the state-building process following the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq has been driven by multiple factors of internal, regional and international dimensions of RSC. However, some levels of security are more dominant than others. Turkey's intervention in the state-building process has been motivated by internal and regional factors. The Kurdish question in Iraq and its ramifications on Kurds in Turkey has been a dominant factor of Turkey's RSC; in addition, Turkish engagement with Iraqi Sunnis has operated through the AKP's strategic approach of reengagement with the Middle East. All three levels of RSC were operative regarding Syrian involvement in post-2003 Iraq: the external threat of regime change by the U.S., protecting the legitimacy

of the regime inside, and looking for a regional role for use in its negotiations with the U.S., have been main factors that motivated Damascus to interfere in Iraq. On the other hand, despite domestic and global levels of security, Saudi Arabia's and Iran's interventions in Iraq's state-building process and ethno-sectarian conflict are associated largely with their regional hegemonic rivalry, rather than their internal dynamics of ethnic and religious factors. This relates particularly to what is called "state-to-state relations" in RSCT (see Buzan and Wæver, 2003, p.51). Also, the thesis noted that both Turkey and Iran have built institutional bases for their leverage in post-2003 Iraq, Turkey through the KRG and a part of the Arab Sunnis, and Iran through the Shi'a-centric state and part of the Iraqi Kurds, have built institutional links with Iraq's groups. However, Saudi Arabia and Syria lacked the capability to build such institutional relations with Iraqi factions, and this has been a main cause for their ineffective positions in the process of state-building in Iraq after 2003.

Based on the discussion and arguments outlined, the thesis found that Iraq's neighbours' involvement in the state-building process and ethno-sectarian conflict in post-2003 Iraq has been rooted in the multiple RSC dynamics of Iraq's neighbours with Iraq on the one hand, and with each other on the other. Meanwhile, Iraq's neighbours' engagement in the process of state-building has also been part of the ethnic and sectarian conflict in post-2003 Iraq. What can be concluded in both cases is the interdependent relation between the state-building process in post-2003 Iraq and the regional dimensions of the ethno-sectarian conflict. The question of what is the driver of this symbiotic relationship between state-building process and ethnic and sectarian conflict in the region has been a focal point of this research.

The thesis also concluded that what makes these two variables intertwined is the existence of regional security complex dynamics among Iraq and its neighbours within the framework of RSCT. Given this evidence, it can be argued that the process of state-building following the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq has influenced the domestic, regional and international security dynamics of Iraq's neighbouring countries. Although ethno-sectarian conflict in post 2003 Iraq has been a form of Iraq's neighbours' penetration in the state-building process and shaping RSC, it explains very little of their regional involvement in post-2003 Iraq. It was not a root cause in itself. The cause was that Iraq's

neighbours are linked with Iraq through regional security complex dynamics. Iraq's state-building process after 2003 has been very closely connected to Iraq's neighbours' involvement in the ethnic and sectarian conflict in the Persian Gulf sub-region.

What can be concluded regarding this thesis's main research question of how and why Iraq's neighbouring countries engaged in the process of state-building in Iraq after the fall of Saddam's regime? The regional security complex dynamics of ethnic and sectarian conflict have been an enduring part of the engagement of Iraq's neighbours in the process of state-building following the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq. The impact of Iraq's neighbours' involvement has negatively affected the trajectory of state-building in post-2003 Iraq, and will continue to do so as far as Iraq remains a part of its neighbours regional security complex, the permeability of the regional state system and the ethnic and sectarian discord in the region.
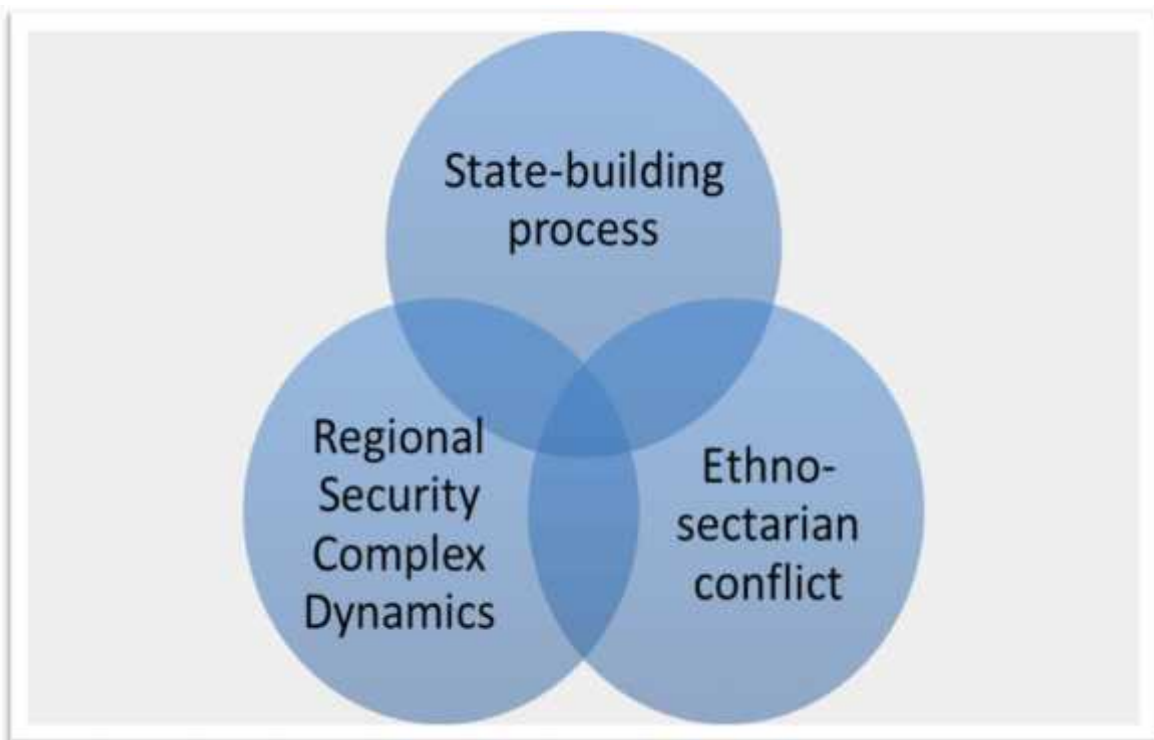

Figure (5) The regional dimensions of state-building in post-2003 Iraq

Source: Author's Own.

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